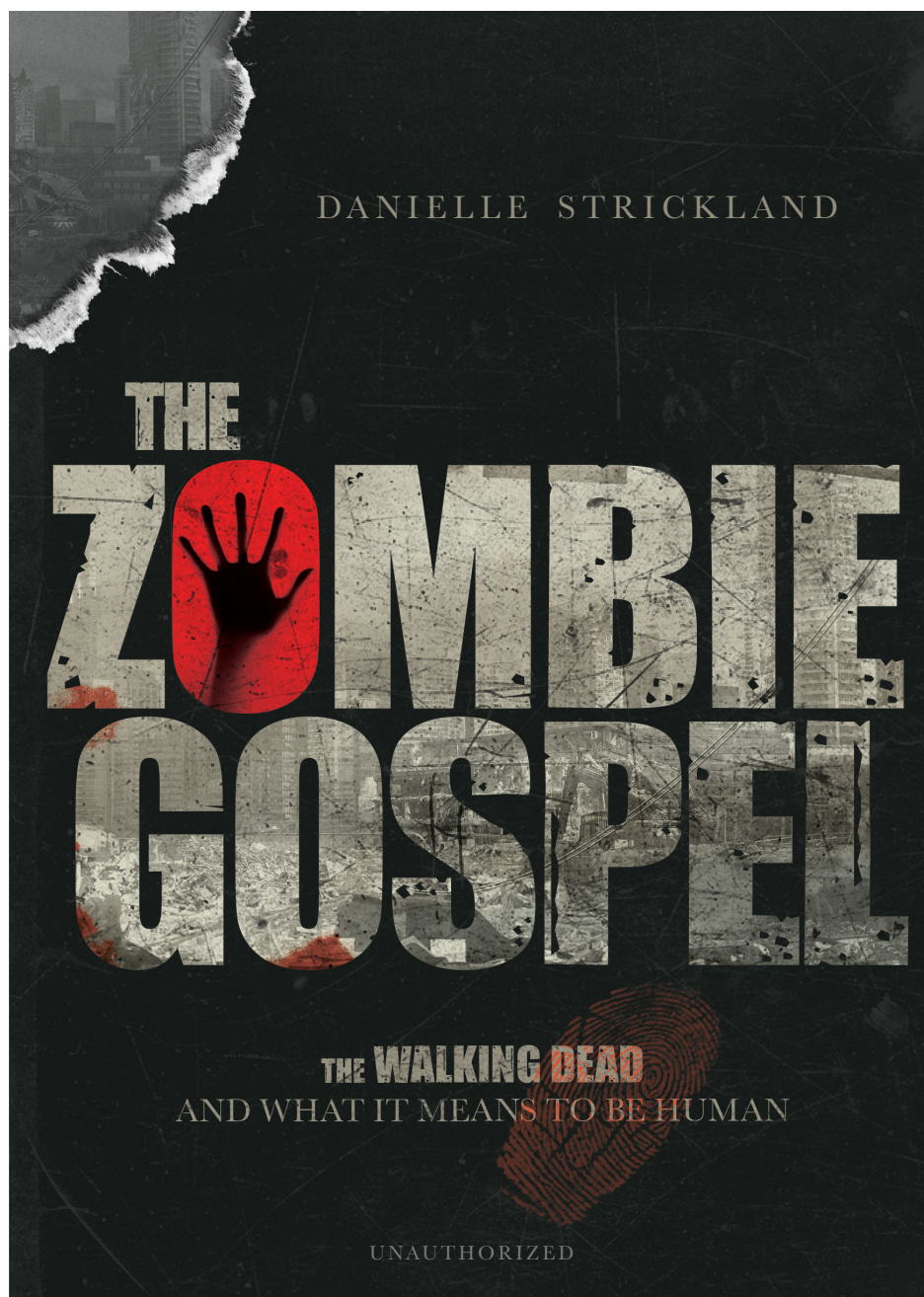


The Zombie Gospel

Discussion Guide



The Zombie Gospel
By Danielle Strickland
Questions for Discussion/Reflection

Introduction

- What is it about “The Walking Dead” (TWD) that you think makes it such a popular show? What were the things that drew you to it?
- The author writes that “the show offers us a window into the most important questions of our time.” Do you agree or disagree, and if so, why? What are some of those important questions that you believe the show catalyzes?

Chapter 1: It’s the End of the World as We Know It

- Put yourself in the shoes of Rick or any of the characters from TWD who have lost everything that has shaped their identity to that point (job, family, wealth, educational status, etc.) Imagine what that would feel like. What would you draw on as the source of your identity if all those things disappear? What would help you survive?
- What would you say matters most to you in life? What do you *want* to matter most in your life? Are those two things the same, and if not, why?
- Is it possible to live a life that’s less than human even in our current day and age, and what does that look like?

Chapter 2: Who Are You Now?

- On p. 20, the author writes, “Wouldn’t it be refreshing to no longer be defined by external realities? But if your life is driven by looking good rather than being good, this thought can be terrifying.” Would you feel freedom or terror by no longer being defined by external realities? Why?
- Have you ever had the experience that you wish the world were different than it is? What are the things you long to see? Or do you think there might be a greater or different world out there than you can see? What do you think you need to be able to see that greater world?

Chapter 3: Fighting the Zombie Infection?

- On p. 27-28, the author writes, “We are raised with the idea that to consume is to be human...Make us consuming machines and every company wins. But who

loses? The zombie-like effect this has on our humanity is epic.” What is your response to this statement? In what ways do you agree or disagree?

- Have you ever tried a “buying fast” as the author has done? Would you consider some sort of similar fast in order to check whether consumption has become an infection in your own life?
- The author shares a tangible example of child working on a cocoa farm to illustrate the costs of consumption that are often hidden to us. Have you ever experienced an awakening to underbelly of our consumptive habits, and what was your response?
- What could be possible cures to the infection of consumption in our world and in our lives?

Chapter 4: Surviving the Apocalypse

- On p. 42, the author writes about her own survival journey from addiction. She says that those who are honest with themselves about their mistakes and poor choices “face [their] own pain and brokenness with strength and courage, and embrace a weakness that wins.” Are there ways in which you can resonate with her story?
- The Bible says that “the truth can set you free.” When have you experienced this in your own life?
- The author writes on p. 47 that Jesus “makes it possible to feel clean again. To start over...to emerge from death to life.” What is your response to these statements?
- TWD makes perfectly clear that surviving the apocalypse is not possible in isolation. Who are the people who help you experience life and hope?

Chapter 5: A New Way to Be Human

- On p. 57, the author writes, “being human is not merely about being alive physically. The key is retaining the essence of our humanity.” What do you think about this statement? What does it mean to retain the essence of our humanity?
- There is both extreme violence in TWD but yet also moments that celebrate the human spirit and the lifegiving nature of creativity. What are some examples of that spirit and creativity that you have witnessed in the show? In your own life?
- How can we foster the creation of new things over destruction, both in our individual lives and in the context of our local and global communities?

Chapter 6: The Longing

- What are the things you most desire in life? Is it possible that what you think you desire is actually different from what you truly desire?
- On p. 68, the author quotes Augustine who says referring to God, “Our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in you.” Has this been your experience in life? In what ways do you resonate with this statement?
- The author suggests a number of ways to help us get in touch with our deepest desires: journaling, prayer, counseling, a spiritual partner, good friends. Which of these have helped you get to the root of your deepest desires?

Chapter 7: No More Priests

- Who are the “heroes” in TWD? In what ways are they flawed people?
- What is your reaction to the idea that “priests, who were supposed to be special, weren’t. They *are* human after all” (p. 79). Is there such a thing as an invincible human being? Are there ways in which you attempt to be invincible in how you live your life, and what is the aftereffect of that way of living?
- How does it make you feel to know that “Jesus is the only priest we will ever need” (p. 80)? That “the church is liberated from an institution and is instead embodied in a people” (p. 83)? What do these statements make you think about institutionalized religion, or about the Christian faith?

Chapter 8: The Bravest and Most Powerful Thing You Can Do

- On p. 89, the author writes about the secret to actualizing world-changing possibilities: “Imagine a better world...and then live out that vision.” How realistic is that approach? Can it actually be that simple?
- Despite the constant danger, suffering, and loss, the characters in TWD continue to display moments of hope that punctuate the darkness. Michonne notices the Latin phrase “Dolor hic tibi proderit olim” written on the blueprints of Alexandria, which means “This pain will be useful to you.” What do you think about that perspective? How does it help you understand the suffering and pain that you or those you love might be experiencing?
- What is one way you can choose to imagine a different reality and live that reality out in your own life?

Chapter 9: Babies in the Apocalypse

- On p. 99, the author writes, “Maybe the big, ostentatious signs from the heavens we are looking for are the wrong ones. Maybe the signs and wonders of God occur in small places.” What do you think about these statements? Do you agree or not?
- Can you remember an encounter with a baby that has filled you with a sense of wonder and hope? Why did it do so?
- What does it say to you that Jesus’s first appearance on earth was in the form of a newborn baby? What could the reasons be for why he chose to appear in this way?

Chapter 10: Why This Could Matter

- Have you ever been stuck in life? What helped you get unstuck? Or what are you experiencing in life that makes you feel as if you are currently stuck?
- What are the things you know you could be doing to help yourself get unstuck?
- The author lists five ways to pursue transformation on p. 111-113. Which ones can you begin to focus on today to move forward in life?
 - Embrace your own humanity
 - Get the remedy
 - Join a community
 - Start now
 - Start the discussion