



The Way Up Is Down

BECOMING YOURSELF BY
FORGETTING YOURSELF

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Questions for Discussion
and Reflection



An imprint of InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois

CHAPTERS 1 & 2

1. Marlena writes: “There’s always surrender to humiliation and crucifixion, an emptying, before the glory. There’s no way around it. For my own part, I wish there were. Emptiness comes before fullness.” Have you observed this to be true in your life? How?
2. Is there a place in your life where God is asking you to offer up yourself in surrender? How can the Christian community come alongside you?
3. Have you ever thought in-depth about the fact that Jesus was born at the bottom rung of society, the lowest place? What is stirred within you when you consider that?
4. What are some of the implications, if any, of his lowly birth for us today?
5. How has the money-power-influence rubric influenced your thinking and priorities as an individual? How has it influenced your society? How has it influenced the church in your experience?
6. What values from your culture might you have to renounce in order to follow Jesus?

CHAPTERS 3 & 4

1. Is it possible to be a person of prayer and justify hatred (ill will) toward our brothers and sisters? If not, why? If so, how?
2. In what particular ways is hatred of our brothers and sisters taking place today among those who claim to pray?
3. What is one way that you can be the answer to your own prayers? How could the Christian community be an answer to your prayers?
4. In what way have you been the bad Pharisee in the story of the Pharisee and tax collector? How has the church been the bad Pharisee?
5. How do you respond to this question: Are our lives a blessing or a curse to those around us? In what way is our individual and collective repentance related to the blessedness or cursedness of our lives?

CHAPTERS 5 & 6

1. Who is someone truly beautiful—seen by God and by you—but who has gone unseen by most of the world? Describe this person. What qualities stand out?
2. What are some ways in which you can be closer to the earth—*humus*—to our origins, *humble*?

3. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What does it have to say about the day of judgment? Is Matthew 25:31-46 literal or metaphorical?
4. Who are the Lazaruses at your gate? At your Christian community's gate? How can you learn from those Lazaruses?

CHAPTERS 7 & 8

1. Who are some of the most generous people you know? Why do you consider them to be generous?
2. Do you believe we encounter Christ in the poor? Why or why not?
3. How do you see love of money at work in the church and in our lives?
4. Are we as generous as we can be? If not, what obstacles get in the way of being generous?
5. What are some specific ways you and the church can become more generous?
6. Does the remembrance of your death make you sad? Do you try to avoid thinking about it? How can remembering your death, or practicing *memento mori*, help you prioritize what is important in your life and also bring you joy?

CHAPTERS 9 & 10

1. What sows seeds of discontent in your life?
2. How might letting go of a particular outcome in your life bring peace?
3. How might the perception that you have unlimited life options—that you can do and be anything at all—bring about anxiety?
4. What would happen if you accepted your life as it is and lived into the life God has given you instead of wishing it away? What specifically might change?
5. Who has embodied the life of Christ to you, and what have you learned from that person? How can you integrate those qualities into your own life so that you, too, are the servant of all?