

Dare to Be Rare

One – Hey, Where are you going with that?

1. Remember this: God is way bigger than any problem you'll ever have. So instead of letting your worries overwhelm you, ask God to remind you of five things that are going well in your life. Write them down, and then ask Him to help you think about your problems in a new way. After a few days, try to notice if you're thinking a little differently about your problems. Write down any changes you notice.

2. Have you ever watched a best friend or family member worry about something that you just knew was going to work out? That's how God feels watching you worry. You can't see the outcome, but He can. What are you carrying around that's weighing you down, distracting, or exhausting you?

3. Fill in the blanks: "I feel like I can handle everything that's going on in my life, except _____." Now, imagine what your days would be like if you didn't have to worry about it. Say a prayer asking God to carry that burden for you, along with all the rest of your worries.

4. Have you ever gone to sleep worrying about something, then woken up in the morning and, for a moment, completely forgotten about it? How did that feel? When you let go of your cares, God takes them. How would it feel to be that free of your worries all day long?

Two – Light Reflectors

1. Was there ever a situation where you could have reflected God's light, but the darkness felt too deep and being a light reflector just felt impossible? Looking back, what could you have done differently? Try to imagine how things might have turned out if you had reflected God's light. In your notebook or journal—or in the margins of this book—write about the way that incident happened. Then write about how it might have happened if you'd been a light reflector for God. Write down a prayer asking God to help you let others see God's bright light shining through you.

2. Is there a particular situation, group, or place where it always seems hard to reflect God's light? Why? What can you do to help you make different choices?

3. We all find ourselves in situations ranging from dimly lit to pitch dark, but even when we can hardly see in front of us, God gives us ways to find His light. Maybe you have a gift for listening to a friend who's sad, or maybe you can help organize a plan when everybody else is worried and confused. Those are gifts from God that you can use to help reflect His light in dark moments. What are some special ways that you can reflect God's light? Write down some of your gifts and think about ways you can turn them into light reflectors.

4. Do you have a group of light-reflecting friends? Are there people you can think of whose shining company you can share regularly? Are there some darker situations where you're the one called to reflect God's light?

Three – Mirroring Honor

1. Think of a time when you went against your parents' wishes and you ended up regretting the way things turned out. How did you feel? How can you prepare yourself for the next time you need to honor your parents' wishes rather than doing things your way?
2. Write down a few reasons why you think God chose your specific parents for you. In what ways do they understand you better than anyone else? In what ways does that make things easier? In what ways does that make things harder?
3. Why do you think God chose this commandment over the others to be followed with a blessing? Why might the parent- child relationship be so valuable to God the Father (hint: look up John 3:16 and Matthew 3:17), and how does Jesus demonstrate honoring a parent's wishes (John 12:49 and Matthew 26:42)?

Four - In the Meantime

1. What was the last "meantime" you went through? Are you going through one now? How are you getting through it? What changes can you make to help you depend on God to get through it?
2. What season is your life in right now? Spring: new beginnings? Summer: carefree, relief of pressures? Fall: shifting gears, getting down to business? Winter: rest, barrenness, waiting? Look back over some of the other seasons in your life. What have you learned in each of those seasons? As you think about them, think about ways that God was at work in your life even when it seemed like nothing much was happening.

Five – Someone is Watching

1. Have you ever been in the middle of a very rough day when suddenly, something wonderful happened that turned everything around? God was watching—and so were you. Write a note to the person who made that day better, expressing your appreciation. Tell that person how God blessed you with their kindness—and say a big thank you.
2. Is there a hidden sin in your life that you know God wants you to give up? Why do you feel like it's worth hanging on to?
3. Think of three people you can bless without them knowing it was you. Carry those blessings out and then don't tell anyone else about it.
4. What happens when you're tempted to believe that God could never help you out of your particular mess? Does it make you want to give up on yourself? On God? Challenge yourself to trust God to forgive you and to help you forgive yourself.
5. God promises to always give you a way out of a tempting situation. What are some of the harder temptations for you? Write a prayer asking God to give you wisdom and strength to recognize (and take) His way out of your next temptation.

Six – Is Purpose a Bad Word?

1. Have you ever focused so hard on the bad things that might have happened that you missed a chance to do something good? Think about one of those times, and ask God to help you focus on the good things in the future.
2. How does doing things God's way on purpose (even when you don't feel like it) affect His special plan for your life? In what ways can it make your life harder to not purposely follow God's plan?
3. In what ways do you think you may have detoured from God's plan in your life? In what ways has God taken that detour and used it for good?

Seven – If Your Heart...

1. Have you been under the impression that God will love you more if you do certain things, and love you less if you don't do other things? What are those things? What's the difference between being loved by God unconditionally and trying to earn His love through what you do?
2. It's easy to believe in God's promises with your head, but more difficult with your heart. Think of a situation where you were tempted, deep down, to doubt God's promises for you. What are some words you used at that time that reflect unbelief in those promises? What other words can you replace them with that would affirm His promises for you?
3. When is it hardest for you to believe God's promises?
4. What circumstance, person, or group of people from your past or present do you feel you can't possibly forgive? Can you see how your unforgiveness affects your life (with anger, avoidance, bitterness, and inability to trust being critical) and not the other person's?

Eight – Selling Yourself Short

1. Think about the ways you've looked to someone or something else (from clothing to lifestyle, music to social cliques, diets to boyfriends) to validate or define who you are. Which of these are good ways to help discover your true identity? Which are not?
2. How important is it for you to earn someone else's approval? Have you ever compromised who you really are or sold yourself short, just to please someone else who may not have your best interests at heart?
3. Is there someone whose value you're underestimating in your life? What might be keeping you from appreciating their worthiness and what can you do to show them their value in your life?

Nine – Distance From God

1. If you've ever felt distanced from God, did you recognize that's what it was? How did you feel? What did you do to bring yourself closer to Him?
2. In what ways do you feel like you've been loved conditionally by others? What conditions have you set up for those you love?
3. What sweet, personal blessings has God chased you with this week?
4. Do you feel like the prodigal son (or daughter) right now? Do you know someone who might have wandered from God's love? Do you believe that either of you can come home any time, your Heavenly Father doesn't love you any less, and He will run out to meet you? If not, why not? What's the first step you can take in your life that will put you back on the road home?

Ten – God's Timing; God's Ways

1. Think back on your life to when God's timing was definitely not your timing. Are you glad now that God didn't seem to answer your prayer the way you would have liked at the time? Was there something you really wanted then, but are so grateful you didn't get in hindsight?
2. Read again what God says in Romans 10:35–38. God's will is that you live your life by faith, staying confident that His timing is perfect. What character trait have you noticed God nurturing and developing in you as you wait for His perfect will to unfold (flexibility, patience, faith, hope, maturity, trust, or even a deeper relationship with Him)?

Eleven – Everyone Judging Anyone

1. What's the last thing you did (or didn't do) or say because you were concerned about what "everyone" would think?
2. Have you ever misjudged someone or something and been so wrong about it, after thinking you were so right? Has someone ever been that wrong about you? Think about how forgiveness can work a miracle in both scenarios.
3. What are some ways you can give people the benefit of the doubt the next time they misjudge you—for instance, you might imagine that they're having a really bad day or that they misunderstood what you said.

Twelve – Book of Remembrance

1. If you were to start your Book of Remembrance at this moment, what three things would top your list? Jot them down in your journal or in the margins of this book right now, and say a quick prayer of thanks for the blessings these things represent in your life.

2. When you're hanging out with friends or family, what topics do your conversations center around? Name a few ways you could steer the conversation toward things you're thankful for rather than problems you're working through.
3. How can you help encourage someone who is focusing on their problems to see how God has—and always will—come through for them?
4. The next time you're in need of hope or cheering up, in what ways can you help remind yourself of God's faithfulness to you in the past?

Thirteen – Bank on It

1. Have you ever felt that something you read in the Bible didn't match up with what you understood about God and Jesus at the time? Think about that experience. Has the way you understand the Bible changed since that time? In your journal, write about how your new way of understanding has helped you.
2. The story of the little boy's bank is a kind of parable—a story that can give us a deeper perspective of our growing faith. What experience has God used in your life to grow your faith (for example, being nervous in a new setting, or resolving a conflict with a close friend)? Try using your experience to write a parable about how faith grows and how God reveals more and more to you as your faith increases.
3. Do you have to completely believe or understand something in order for it to be true? When was the last time you put your faith in something you didn't completely understand (air travel, electricity, music downloads)?

Fourteen – Where is your Spiritual Location?

1. Imagine you had a GPS—global positioning system—device that helped you track not your physical but your spiritual location. Where would it be? Write down a description of your location in your journal. Are you in a different place spiritually than you were a month ago? A year ago? Write about the ways your location may have changed and why.
2. In what locations (other than Jesus) have you searched for your identity, only to come up empty-handed (books, music, movies)?
3. How well must God know you if He knew you before you were born! But sometimes it's still hard to trust God with our secret dreams, plans, and purpose. What do you have trouble entrusting to God? Write a prayer asking God to give you the courage to trust His work in your life.
4. Have you ever been in a great physical location, but at the same time a terrible spiritual location—maybe you were at a wonderful party, but worried that no one liked you, or you were on a great vacation but spent the whole time arguing with your family. What about vice versa? Have you ever been in a terrible physical location but a great spiritual location at the same time—maybe you got lost on your way to a friend's house

but didn't panic because you trusted God and knew you'd be okay, or you had a teacher who seemed to treat you unfairly but you stayed calm and showed God's love anyway. Write about one of those times, and think about how God was working in you through that experience.

Fifteen – Timing is Everything

1. Are you eager for one phase of your life to end and another to begin? Maybe you're looking forward to high school graduation or to finishing your last college course and finally getting out into the world. Instead of wishing today away, think of three things to gratefully participate in during this phase of your life.
2. Look at God's promise for you in Jeremiah 29:11. Is that particular promise easy to take personally, accept, and believe? Why or why not?
3. If God's timing and God's will are pretty much the same thing, consider the circumstances in your life. How does that take the pressure off you to fix things, rush things, explain things, or make sense of them?

Sixteen – Are we a Nike Generation?

1. If someone put the squeeze on you right now, what kind of juice would come out? Would it be sweet (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)? Or would it be sour (anger, bitterness, impatience, unforgiveness, frustration, fear)?
2. Those sweet juices in the previous question are the fruit of the Spirit. Probably some of them come easier to you than others. Which comes easiest? Which one seems to be the hardest for you?
3. Have you ever been surprised by your own reaction when you got squeezed—either by exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit when you could have gotten upset or by losing your patience with someone when they perhaps did not deserve it? Think about ways you can exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in your life this week.

Seventeen – No Regrets

1. Think of a mistake in your life that you haven't let go of and no matter what you tried, you haven't been able to fix it yourself. If you continue to try to fix it yourself, that old mistake could remain a stumbling block—you might assume the worst without knowing the facts, repeat the mistake, or just keep living with ongoing guilt. In what ways could stepping back and letting God transform your mistake into a stepping-stone turn things around for you? (For example, you might be able to help someone with the same problem or avoid the same mistake, or you might even help to repair broken relationship.)
2. What sort of things might you do—that aren't necessarily bad—that turn your focus away from loving God and your neighbor as yourself?

3. The gate is small and the way is narrow (Matt 7:13–14), so that can explain why not everyone in the crowd is following God. When is living God's truth hardest for you? When is living God's truth easiest for you?

Eighteen – Faithful

1. Who are the people in your life who have been faithful to you no matter what? How do they show their faithfulness? What is it about their faithfulness that you appreciate the most?

2. Do you know a faithful person who might not ever get thanked or appreciated? Make a point to thank them for what they do. Write them a note or send them an e-mail. Ask God to show what to say.

3. Are you aware of it when your faith falters in yourself, in others, in God? Are you hard on yourself when that happens? Talk to God about receiving His forgiveness and ask Him to show you where He needs you most.

4. Have there been times in your life when “others” turned out to NOT be so faithful? Who did you turn to for comfort, understanding, encouragement? This was probably someone who is truly faithful to you. What do these people show you, through their lives, about the faithfulness of God?

Nineteen – Caller ID

1. In the last twenty-four hours, when was the last time you took a call from the devil in the form of fear, unforgiveness, worry, or confusion?

2. Have you noticed satan using one particular trick on you over and over again because he always has success with it? Now that you recognize his call, how will you be ready next time to not “give him a thought”?

3. Look up Matthew 4:1–11 in your Bible and read about Jesus' conversation with satan. Where did Jesus get the words He used to “hang up” on satan and to ultimately “reject his call”? What does that teach you about how to deal with satan?

Twenty – God's Kind of Love

1. Has God ever surprised you with someone's unconditional love when you were feeling or acting unlovable?

2. Has God ever moved you to be unconditionally loving toward someone who was feeling or acting unlovable?

3. Think about some of popular movies or advertisements in fashion magazines. What messages are they sending about your worthiness to be loved? Look at 1 Corinthians 13:1–9 and think about the ways God's love for you is totally different.

Twenty-one - Be still

1. Make a list of the things you “lay your head down on” at night. Turn that into your prayer list; give it all up to God. Write down a Scripture from this chapter that really speaks to you, then put it under your pillow when you go to bed.
2. If you’ve been asked by God to be still, but you just can’t, what do you think is stopping you? It may be your need to stay busy to feel productive, or it may be that it’s hard for you to trust God to work things out the way you’d prefer. Write a prayer asking God to give your heart peace while He works in your life.
3. Read Psalm 37:1—9, and underline all the things that are God’s job. Then go back through and circle everything that’s your job. Notice where you’ve tried to do His job in your life instead of your own. What part of your job is hardest? Easiest? What parts of God’s job have you seen Him working on? What parts has He asked you to trust Him to do without your being able to see?

Twenty-two – Coveting

1. Is there something you have a tendency to covet (clothes, electronic gadgets, circle of friends, boyfriend)? Is there a particular personality trait you have a tendency to covet (sense of humor, creativity, compassion, social skills)? Just acknowledging that you covet these things can help you be aware of a tendency and change your way of thinking.
2. What gifts of your own might you downplay or stifle because you’re busy coveting other’s gifts? Think of your gifts actually being put to good use. Who could benefit from them? Who is most in need of the gifts God has given you?
3. Do you know someone else who is focusing on what they don’t have, rather than what they do? How can you encourage them to discover and develop their God-given gifts?

Twenty-three – Giving it All

1. Have you ever gone out of your way to be nice to someone who was cruel or rude to you in return? Did their reaction affect the way you behaved the next opportunity you had to be nice to them? Can seeing that person as someone who may not have much to give make it a little easier to love them with God’s love anyway?
2. Think of how your life would have to look in order to treat someone the way the spiritually bankrupt treat others. What type of unbearable pain or sadness must that person have to endure? Does that make it easier not expect anything in return? Ask God to see them through his eyes, then pray for them from that perspective.

Twenty-four – God Keeps his Promises

In your own words, rewrite the Scripture passages from this chapter—or from other chapters in the book—that mean the most to you right now.