

# **Good Enough Book Group Discussion Prompts**

## **by Keith Anderson**

### **First Gathering**

#### First Break Out

1. By way of introduction: Tell us who you are. Why did you decide to read the book? What has been your experience of the book thus far? (Can be reading it, a practice, carrying it around.)
2. From Preface Through Shiny Things
  - a. Buoyed by the Absurd: “Joy is the oxygen for doing hard things” (11). Has joy lifted you in challenging times? How?
  - b. Mourning a Future Self: “Acknowledging ‘this will never be’ is the precursor to imagining what might happen next” (16). Have you ever had to let go of something to move forward? How did you do it?
  - c. Shiny Things: “We fall in love with the things that are almost true” (25). Where do you see that in life, in the world?
  - d. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section?

#### Second Break Out

3. By way of introduction: Tell us who you are. Inspired by “The Foundation,” what is something you find yourself grateful for tonight?
4. From Building a Good Day Through The Foundation
  - a. Building a Good Day: “The structure of a good day is simply this: your biggest loves find their way in. God. Friends. Meaning. Family” (30). What is a good day for you? Have you had one recently? How do you make time for the things that matter?
  - b. Small Things, Great Love: “There are many acts of great love that are great because they are massive, monumental, and earth shattering. And some are great because they are incremental. Each small act adds up to something really spectacular. Small acts, great love” (35). When have you been the recipient or giver of this “little way” of love?
  - c. “We marvel at the God who loves us and stays by our side, regardless of how little we understand or how often we wonder if our savior is asleep” (42). Have you ever felt like God was asleep at the wheel?
  - d. The Foundation: “Thank God we are a group project” (53). Who are the people that are your foundation?
  - e. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section?

## Second Gathering

### First Break Out

1. By way of introduction: Inspired by Happy Enough, what is your version of “Danceland!”, your happy place?
2. From When You Are Exhausted to Needing Rules at All
  - a. When You Are Exhausted: “This exhaustion is not so much a place, but a signpost.” What are your signposts of realizing you are exhausted? What do you do (or not do) when you realize it?
  - b. Happy Enough: “Paul learned to be content, but it had nothing to do with his self-sufficiency, sheer luck, satiation, or comfort...his contentment came from God’s presence alone.” There is so much pressure in our culture to be happy. How do you experience that pressure? Have you found contentment, even in small ways?
  - c. Right After it’s Over: “You are not ruined or broken or a failure. You are simply in pain. And God is with you. This is God’s great magic act, in my opinion. The more we suffer, the more we can’t get away from God’s insistent love.” What does the image of the fallen tree growing back in a “U” shape evoke for you?
  - d. Needing Rules at All: “Focus on the small. Start tiny. And keep it up. Try not to break the chain. But if you do, just blink. And start a new one.” Size does not constitute importance. Small things hold great power. Did this chapter help you recognize any of your small daily practices as something more meaningful than you first thought?
  - e. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

### Second Break Out

3. By way of introduction: speaking of the Olympics, what fake Olympic event would you win gold in? For instance, baking chocolate chip cookies, your knowledge of 90’s music, ability to binge watch for hours, sending note cards, etc. (This is so random and my family laughs at me for it, but I would win the gold medal in naming college mascots. All those years of watching sports have filled my mind that useless knowledge!)
4. From For the Exiles through The Bad Thing
  - a. For the Exiles: “Just because we are not always wanted doesn’t mean we don’t belong.” We all know what it is like to feel rejected. How do you try to offer a welcoming place for others inspired your own experience? (BTW, I think Saint Rose would have liked Anna Kendrick’s song, “You’re Going to Miss Me When I’m Gone <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmSbXsFE3l8>)
  - b. “life is hard, and it is hard for everyone.” The saying goes, “Be kind. For everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.” How have you encountered that truth? (Brene Brown has a great podcast episode about comparative suffering here: <https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-on-comparative-suffering-the-50-50-myth-and-settling-the-ball/>.)
  - c. “We are not the bad thing. We are simply living our terrible beautiful days.” Have you ever felt like “the bad thing,” like you were too much? Have you ever experienced awe as you have journeyed with someone in pain?
  - d. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

## Third Gathering

### First Break Out

1. By way of introduction: What is your strangest or most surprising hobby?
2. From Hopping Off the Treadmill to No Reason Whatsoever
  - a. Hopping off the Treadmill: “What is it that is driving us, chasing us, propelling us, to continue this unstoppable effort? What are we trying to reach or achieve?” What is the treadmill that you would like to step off right now? It doesn’t need to be just your “work,” whatever that is. It can be something, even a good thing, that has lost its meaning.
  - b. Hello Goodbye: “Not every change is going to be a transformation. But every change can be an opportunity for grace.” Where have you found expected graces amidst life’s changes?
  - c. No Reason Whatsoever: “You can find incredible peace and joy when you discover you are doing something for *no reason at all*.” What is something you do or might do for no reason at all, just for the way it feels, or how it feels to try it?
  - d. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

### Second Break Out

1. By way of introduction: Do you have something like the Velveteen Rabbit—a comforting item, a token, talisman, or memento that reminds you of something meaningful?
2. From Becoming Real to Being Honest About Disappointment
  - a. Becoming Real: “As the Skin Horse explains, ‘Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. Bu these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.’” Could it be that our laugh lines, crows’ feet, achy knees, scars, and stretchmarks are not flaws but symbols of our being Real? Do you have a story or example of that?
  - b. #Blessed: “Sometimes the only thing that’s possible is to bless life’s every present moment—even, and especially, the hard ones. Blessings in those moments fall like a summer rain over the driest of times and places in our lives.” Do you or have you experienced feeling blessed in such times?
  - c. Loving What Is: “When we have more past than future, our desires change to love not simply what might be, but to love what already is.” A running theme through this part of the book is how a longing for the past can limit our hope for the future. How can we both look back with gratitude and look forward with expectation?
  - d. Being Honest About Disappointment: “Prayer...begins with acts of unbridled honesty.” Are you comfortable being radically honest with God?
  - e. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

## **Fourth Gathering**

### First Break Out

1. By way of introduction: Speaking of potatoes and food, what is your favorite foody guilty pleasure?
2. From Kindness Boomerangs to To My Body
  - a. Kindness Boomerangs: “We remember that no matter what is happening in our own lives, in our own orbits, we have the capacity to add a little goodness into the world.” What is a kindness, either given or received, that sweetened your day recently?
  - b. Give Up Already: “Something quite lovely happens when we let go, when we live with less, when we give up something dear. Somehow we make a little room for God to take up more space.” Did you or have you tried to fast from something? What was your experience?
  - c. Say Potato: “None of us is perfect, and somewhere in those imperfections we can be found.” What do you think of this idea that our flaws are what make us human?
  - d. To My Body: “Dear, dear body...you couldn’t help aging, changing, being human. I love you. I will try to be gentle and patient with your ways.” How can we be more attentive, gentle, understanding to our bodies (and therefore ourselves)?
  - e. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

### Second Break Out

1. By way of introduction: Is the something that you are happily mediocre at?
2. From Mediocrity for the Win to Refuge
  - a. Mediocrity for the Win: “The best part about [Gi-Gi] was that the way she tried and lived and loved was her true art.” How do you experience the pressure of perfectionism?
  - b. The Burden of Love: “What must be said, what must be given, is the permission to feel it. All of it.” There is a lot in this section about giving ourselves permission—to grieve, to rest, to let go of something, to be good enough? What makes it hard to give ourselves those permissions?
  - c. Refuge: “Right in the midst of the trouble, God is with you. You are never alone.” This is a beautiful reflection on God in the midst of our pain, grief, and loss.” What thoughts or feeling does this evoke for you?
  - d. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

## **Fifth Gathering**

### First Breakout

1. By way of introduction: Have you ever had a “gondola prayer” moment?
2. From Bottling Magic to The Reality-Show Gospel
  - a. Bottling Magic: “We can’t bottle magic. But we can learn to see the signs, to feel the moments swell around us.” Have you had any magic moments lately? What did you notice? What did you learn?
  - b. Gondola Prayers: “The mystery of prayer is that we may never understand exactly how it works, just that it draws us into intimacy with a God who hears.”
    - i. A bishop once shared one of her prayers practices that caught my attention. She keeps a box where she places prayers that she has written down on a piece of paper—these are prayers for things that are big and gnarly. She puts them in the box, and then on New Year’s Day each year, she opens the box and looks at the prayers. She sees that some have been answered or resolved and thanks God for that. There are others that still need time and prayer, and so she leaves them in the box until next New Year’s. It’s a great way to place those big prayers in God’s keeping. Is there a prayer that you’ve been praying for a long time? What has that been like for you?
  - c. The Cost of Caring: “It costs you to care.” Have you found this to be true? What costs have you experienced in caring?
  - d. The Reality-Show Gospel: “The Reality-Show Gospel can sustain us for only so long. When we run out of reasons, we need something else entirely. We need each other.”
    - i. When I was a hospital chaplain in seminary, I visited with a man whose father, who was in his 90s, had died. In a failed effort to be comforting, I said something like, “Well, he lived a good long life.” The man looked at me and his look told me that what I said was the opposite of helpful. I then said (thank you Holy Spirit), “But it is never long enough.” That’s when we connected at that human, caring, empathetic place. Have you ever given or received the kind of advice Job’s friends gave to him?
  - e. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

### Second Breakout

1. By Way of Introduction: What moment or experience do you wish you couldn’t have bottled up?
2. From When Words Fail to The In-Between
  - a. When Words Fail: “But allowing ourselves to pause and listen steadies our anxious minds and unsettled hearts.” What do you think of prayer as listening?
  - b. 2:00AM/2:00PM: “There was a long stretch of time when I was entirely a 2:00 P.M. person.” How do you show compassion to your 2AM self?
  - c. The In-Between: “Instead of trying to escape [the in-between], let us settle there for the moment. Knowing and trusting we aren’t alone. We’re in this strange middle place...together.” We have spent a lot of time in these last couple of years

in an in-between place, in more ways than one. What have you learned from inhabiting the in-between?

- d. If all else fails, what were your favorite parts of this section? What practices were most meaningful this week?

### **Concluding Chapters**

1. Two Few Sparrows: “How will we know we are on the right track? We can search for the signs—there will be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Those are the gifts of the Spirit which remind us that God is truly present.” How are you trying to navigate this polarized time? Where do you find the gifts of the Spirit in the midst of it all?
2. Bright Hope: “God is not done yet. When all we see is death and decay and destruction and disease, God sees hope.... God sees hard-won hope.... Hope with feet. Hope that works.” How do you see hope at work in you or in someone/something else?
3. A Good Gardener: “A gardener knows the kind of hope it takes to sow a seed in the ground, to cover it with manure, to bury it in the cold winter dirt surrounded by naked trees. To leave it be for months, trusting that with the magic amount of water, air, and time something new will be born out of a single seed.” What seeds in your life have you seen burst forth from the dark womb of the soil? What seeds are you still waiting to see grow?