

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Under the Influence of Jesus by Joe Paprocki

Introduction

- Do you find it difficult to speak to others about God in this day and age? Why or why not?
- How would you rate your experience of living and celebrating the Catholic faith (1 = tepid; 10 = robust)?
- Who is someone you know personally who seems “intoxicated” when it comes to their faith in Jesus?

Chapter 1: There’s Got to Be Another Way – The Promise of an Alternate Reality

- Describe a time in your life when you experienced acute dissatisfaction with life in general. What was at the heart of this experience?
- Who is someone you know who lives like a true “kingdom-dweller”? What actions and attitudes indicate that they live in the “alternate reality” we call the Kingdom?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to let God be in charge of your life? Why or why not?
- How would things be different if God truly “reigned” in your life? What would change?
- What are the “flags” in your life to which you pledge allegiance? In other words, to what do you find yourself giving your loyalties to other than God?
- In which of the qualities listed on pgs 12-13 are you uninhibited already? In which would you like to be more uninhibited?

Chapter 2: An Unusual Poster Child – The Face of the Kingdom

- Who in your life do you most trust? Why?
- Why did the Jewish people greet Jesus’ claim to “messiahship” with such skepticism?
- How did the early Christians conclude that Jesus indeed fulfilled the expectations of the messiah? (pgs 20-24)
- Why is it that Jesus’ enemies (the demons) are the only ones who recognize his true identity as the Son of God?
- Describe an experience in your life in which you placed your trust in Jesus.
- How invested are you in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

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Chapter 3: Show Me a Sign – Jesus’ Mighty Deeds

- Describe an experience in your life that made you feel powerless. How do you tend to respond when experiencing a feeling of powerlessness? Cynicism? Aggression?
- Of the “Big Four”—sickness, lack of sustenance, natural disasters, death—which has impacted you most on a personal level?
- How has Jesus brought healing, sustenance, power, and/or new life into your life?
- Who are significant people in your life through whom Jesus has spoken? What moments of joy in your life point to the presence of God? Have you had a moment in your life in which God’s presence was almost palpable? What milestones in your life cause you to pause in gratitude to God?
- What mighty deeds has Jesus performed in your life that you can share with others? How can you reveal God’s mighty deeds to others through works of mercy?

Chapter 4: Wait, What? – The Cross of Jesus

- Recall a time in your life when you were wronged. How did you respond?
- What do we mean by “the Barabbas cycle”? (pg 46) How is this strategy self-defeating?
- How can the Cross of Jesus be thought of as a “weapon”? How is it a counterintuitive strategy?
- What did Jesus’ death on the Cross accomplish? What does it mean for a dying and defeated Jesus to say “It is finished.” (mission accomplished)?
- What human tendency in you needs to be “crucified” daily? What new habits do you need to cultivate in your life in order to be a more authentic kingdom-dweller?
- How does the Cross reveal Jesus’ true identity?

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Chapter 5: It Can't End Like This! – The Resurrection of Jesus

- What does it mean that our ultimate destiny, as Christians, is not to float on the clouds playing harps for all eternity? What then IS our destiny?
- How do you find yourself working to build and renew God's creation in your daily life?
- What does it mean to say that we participate in the "world to come" through the good works we do now? How can this be thought of as a "matching gift" program?
- Who are people you know who exemplify any of the 9 tendencies described on pgs 71-82?
- Which of these 9 tendencies would you most like to work on at this time in your life? Why?
- How do you/can you bring confident hope into the lives of others?

Chapter 6: Are You Out of Your Mind? – The Invitation to Follow Jesus

- If you were the recipient of a "Make a Wish" experience, what would you wish for?
- What does it mean to say that Jesus is not to be admired from a distance?
- Who is someone you know who has put on the mind of Christ?
- Of the "twelve baskets" of abundance that result from putting on the mind of Christ (pgs 89-105), which do you feel is already present in your life? Which is in short supply?
- Describe how the "virtuous cycle"—inspired by Ignatian spirituality—works. (pg 103)
- Where might God be lurking in your life to extend his invitation to enter more deeply into a loving relationship with him?

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Chapter 7: You Make Me Want to Be a Better Man – Coming to Grips with Our Brokenness

- In whose presence do you feel the need to be (or at least act like) a better person?
- Describe a time in your life when you came face-to-face with an experience for which you were ill-prepared. What did you learn from that experience?
- What kind of disturbances or “curveballs” have you experienced in your life?
- Who is someone who has counseled you in your lifetime, helping you to get out of your mind and into the mind of Christ?
- In what ways is God calling you to be a better person?
- What does it mean that Jesus helps us to “declare bankruptcy”? How is he helping you to reorganize your life so that you might emerge stronger?

Chapter 8: The Role of a Lifetime – Committing to the Kingdom

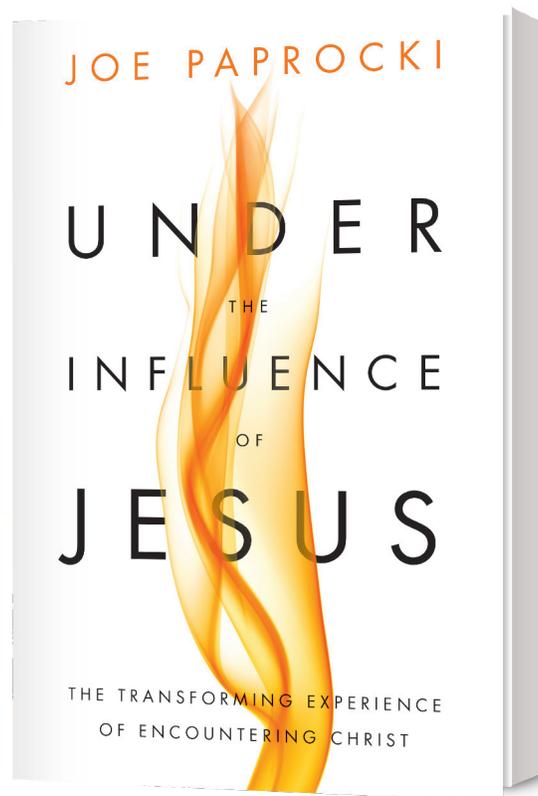
- What distracts you from giving your undivided attention to Jesus? What are you doing/can you do to immerse yourself more deeply into the life of Christ?
- How can participation in the liturgy deepen your immersion into the life of Christ?
- In what area of your life do you need to improve the quality of your interactions with others?
- How can you weave a conversation with God into the fabric of your day?
- Where in your life can you be more observant of the needs of others and respond with neighborliness?
- How can you reach out to those who have been pushed to the fringes of society and make a connection with them?

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Chapter 9: Hi, I'm Wilford Brimley – Speaking on Behalf of the Kingdom

- How can you communicate the nearness of God to others in your daily encounters?
- What are some of the ways that Christians can establish credibility with others in order to evangelize them?
- What is a ministry or activity you are involved in that might tap into the idealism and emotion of others?
- What kind of “spiritual residue” (pg 157) can you leave behind that speaks of your relationship with Christ?
- How has your faith helped you in practical matters such as job, family, health, outlook, etc.?
- What is a story from your life in which you experienced the nearness of God?



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