

EMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Official Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

1. The title of this book is a play on the Rolling Stones song, “Sympathy for the Devil”. Discuss the difference between ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’. What does it mean to practice empathy for people we see as evil?
2. What persons or groups do you struggle to understand?
3. Who are your ‘favorite’ villains in books, TV or film? Why do you love (or love to hate) them?
4. Which of the villains in this book are you most interested in? Which are the least familiar?

CHAPTER 1: CAIN

1. What parts of Cain’s story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Cain? Describe how you felt as you read his story.

CHAPTER 2: YOU WOULDN’T LIKE ME WHEN I’M ANGRY

1. Who or what makes you angry?
2. How did God challenge Cain’s identity? Why did Cain’s identity need to be challenged?
3. What does it mean to say anger is a ‘secondary emotion’? (p. 24) Can you identify what’s under your own anger?
4. Jesus equates hatred and murder. How are they similar? Where have you committed the sin of Cain?

CHAPTER 3: DELILAH

1. What parts of Delilah’s story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Delilah? Describe how you felt as you read her story.

CHAPTER 4: I’M NOT LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE

1. What images does the word ‘holy’ conjure in your mind?
2. What is the story arc of the book of Judges? Why does it matter that Samson’s story is at the end?
3. How does Samson embody Israel’s sin in Judges?
4. “To be holy is not to wage culture wars. To be holy is to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, gener-

CHAPTER 5: JEZEBEL

1. What parts of Jezebel's story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Jezebel? Describe how you felt as you read her story.

CHAPTER 6: HOUSE OF CARDS

1. "Pride is at the root of every empire ever built, whether on the world stage or in an abusive home." (p. 75)
What power do you exercise in the course of your life? Where has your power begun to look like empire-building?
2. How do you think Jezebel saw her role as Queen of Israel? What was at the heart of Jezebel's conflict with Yahweh's prophets?
3. How does Jesus model the use of power?
4. Review Peck's stages of True Community (pp 82-84). Share a time you have chosen to enter the Emptiness stage. What did that look like?

CHAPTER 7: HEROD

1. What parts of Herod's story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Herod? Describe how you felt as you read his story.

CHAPTER 8: BETWEEN ROME AND A HARD PLACE

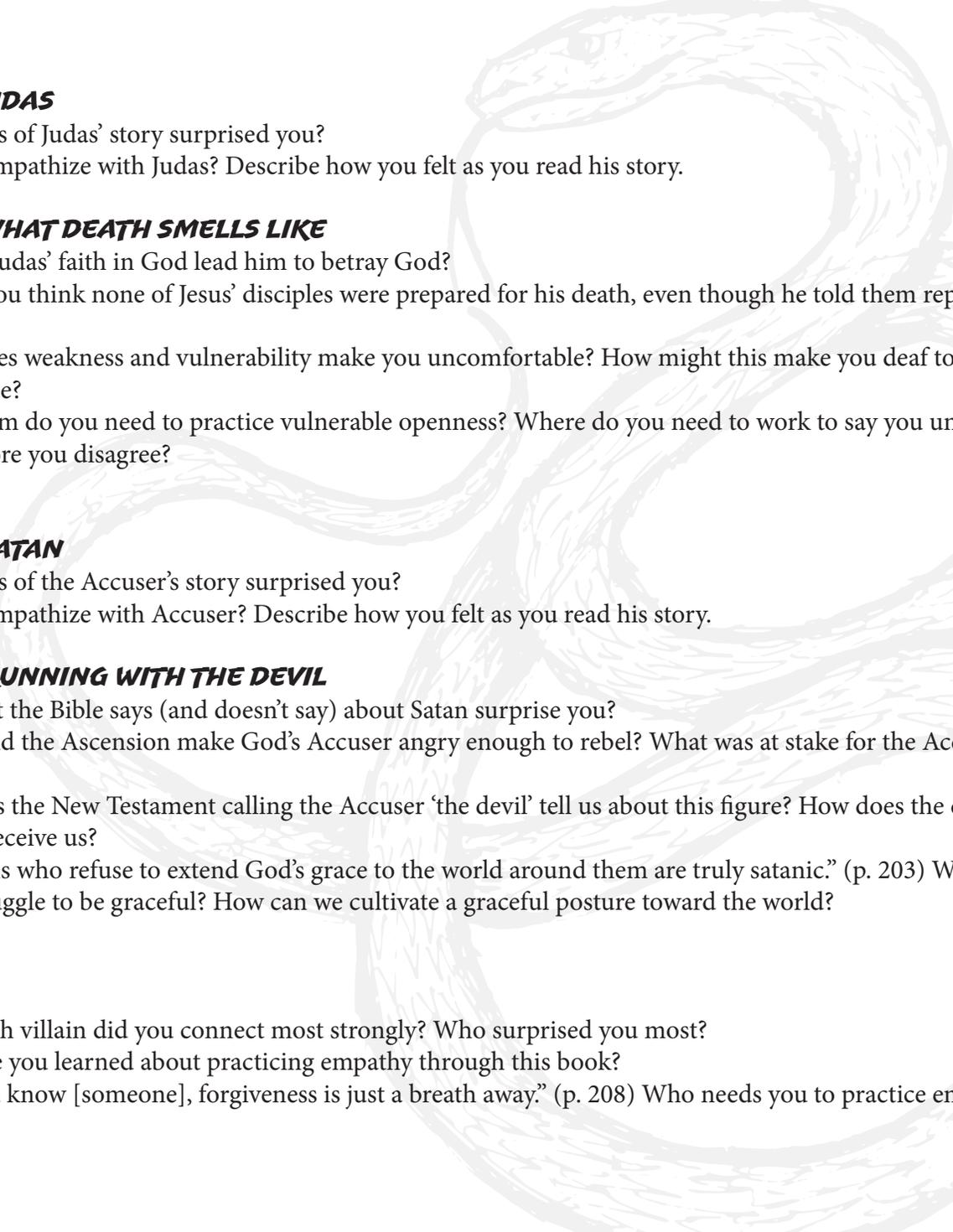
1. What did the arrival of the magi represent to Herod? How did his history with Rome affect Herod's reaction to their arrival?
2. What values would you list as most important to you? Do you ever feel torn between them?
3. Where in your life do you seek balance? Who gets overlooked in your quest for balance?
4. Where is God calling you to be present this week? What will it cost you to be there?

CHAPTER 9: HERODIAS

1. What parts of Herodias' story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Herodias? Describe how you felt as you read her story.

CHAPTER 10: THE CAT'S IN THE CRADLE

1. What is generational sin? What generational sin you can see in your family?
2. How did you feel reading through Herodias' family tree (p. 129-30)? Describe how Herodias probably thought about her family.
3. How can the Church help us overcome generational sin? What is necessary for the Church to fulfill this promise?
4. What legacies of life do you want to pass on to those who follow you?



CHAPTER 11: JUDAS

1. What parts of Judas' story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Judas? Describe how you felt as you read his story.

CHAPTER 12: WHAT DEATH SMELLS LIKE

1. How did Judas' faith in God lead him to betray God?
2. Why do you think none of Jesus' disciples were prepared for his death, even though he told them repeatedly?
3. Where does weakness and vulnerability make you uncomfortable? How might this make you deaf to God's voice?
4. With whom do you need to practice vulnerable openness? Where do you need to work to say you understand before you disagree?

CHAPTER 13: SATAN

1. What parts of the Accuser's story surprised you?
2. Did you empathize with Accuser? Describe how you felt as you read his story.

CHAPTER 14: RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL

1. Does what the Bible says (and doesn't say) about Satan surprise you?
2. Why would the Ascension make God's Accuser angry enough to rebel? What was at stake for the Accuser?
3. What does the New Testament calling the Accuser 'the devil' tell us about this figure? How does the devil work to deceive us?
4. "Christians who refuse to extend God's grace to the world around them are truly satanic." (p. 203) Why do we struggle to be graceful? How can we cultivate a graceful posture toward the world?

EPILOGUE

1. With which villain did you connect most strongly? Who surprised you most?
2. What have you learned about practicing empathy through this book?
3. "Once you know [someone], forgiveness is just a breath away." (p. 208) Who needs you to practice empathy?