

Deeply Formed Life

Group Discussion Guide

Ch.5-6

Possible starting point: Go around the group and invite everyone to give 1 minute opening observations on the assigned chapters.

Ch.4 - Interior Examination for a World Living on the Surface:

Rich begins this section by describing how he entered the pastoral life as a “divided person” - struggling to be vulnerable/honest about things that angered him. (see pages 88f). His point being that *many of us have learned to live in a way where we are often significantly cut off from our true feelings.*

In the light of this, Rich writes, “To follow Jesus in this world requires us to embrace a fully human life, alive to the dimensions of our interior worlds that are often repressed, ignored, and explained away with Bible verses and in the name of responsibility. A rebellion is indeed needed—a rebellion marked by truth, integrity, and wholeness.” (p.90-91)

1. How did this introduction connect for you? Interesting? Terrifying? Relatable? Liberating? Other?
2. On pg.95, Rich introduces the Psalms as “a model of interior examination”. He writes, “Psalms reminds us and gives us permission to lay out our questions, doubts, fears, rage, unfiltered thoughts, praise, celebration, and joy to God. It’s as if [God] knows that the way toward divine union in worship is through a willingness to be human.” (96)
 - *How have you experienced the Psalms as a guide or mentor in interior examination, emotional awareness and expression?*
3. Reflecting on Psalm 139, Rich distills the concluding prayer of the psalm as simply, “Lord, show me **me.**” Two paragraphs later, he writes, “The way of interior examination is about deeply listening to **ourselves.**” (98)
 - *What have been the catalysts in our lives to seeking greater self-knowledge?*
4. On pgs.101f, Rich explores a number of factors that keep us from interior examination. **Discuss which you’ve seen in your own life.**
 - A fear of self-absorption
 - Deep emotional distress + a fear of what one may find within
 - Busyness
 - Compartmentalization
 - *something else?*

Ch.6 - Deeply Formed Practices of Interior Examination:

Rich begins this section by telling the story of his family's Thanksgiving 2018 plans and how the potential cancelling of this trip stirred up surprising reactions in him.

- He describes, "The real issue in this situation was not my anger at Rosie but my anxiety at the prospect of having to call my parents and cousin. This was the undercurrent at work in me. I was afraid that they would be disappointed with me. I was concerned that they would see me in a different light. I was anxious that I would ruin the holiday for them. This whole situation was not about Rosie at all; it was about me." (109)

[Feel free to simply talk through the four "Examinations" and where this was most helpful to members of the group. **Or** explore some of the following questions.]

5. Thinking about Rich's comments about "Examining our Family of Origin" (p111f) and the three categories of patterns, trauma and scripts.
 - Where did you feel like Rich was describing you, or speaking to your life?
 - How has reflection on your family of origin been helpful for making sense of yourself over the years, or of late?
6. Re: "Examination of our Anxiety"
 - We all experience anxiety at times (acute or chronic). What do you do to handle anxiety when it comes?
7. Re: "Examination of our Feelings"
 - How has your experience and relationship to your own feelings have been shaped by your family of origin? How has this changed over time?
 - Was Rich's distinction between emotions and feelings helpful for you.
8. Re: "Examination of our Reactions"
 - Where did this section speak to you, or help you?
9. Finally, throughout this chapter, Rich provides a few practical exercises or questions for intentional interior examination. (pgs. 118, 121, 125)
 - Was there one that stood out to you as a practice you'd benefit from?

Before You Close in Prayer: Go around the group and invite everyone to share one take away for them.

PRAY: On the final page of this chapter, Rich describes the three goals of self-examination as (1) *opening ourselves up to the grace and presence of God*, (2) *greater freedom from internal dysfunction*, and (3) *becoming a catalyst for wholeness in the world*. Take a few minutes to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of what's been discussed and shared tonight.