



WHOLEHEARTED FAITH

READING GUIDE

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WITH JEFF CHU

Prologue: Because They Said Yes

1. Evans pays tribute to people in her life whose examples have encouraged and emboldened her faith. Who in your life has had that positive effect on you and your beliefs?
2. Evans admits that her answer to the question “Why are you a Christian?” is often, “I don’t know. Why not?” (pp. 2–3). If you identify as a Christian, how would you answer this question for yourself?

Chapter 1: On the Days When I Believe

3. Evans describes faith as shifting and changing, saying that on some days she believes. “And then there are the other days” (p. 18). How have you experienced this dynamic in your own faith journey?
4. Prayer is a challenge sometimes for Evans; but she shares that, on the days she believes,

“a prayer feels as if it’s just another beautiful beat in a long-running conversation” with God (p. 18).

What is prayer like for you on the good days? How does it feel on the bad?

Chapter 2: My Wicked Little Heart

5. Evans describes the fundamentalist church of her childhood and gently contrasts it with the home her parents made, which she calls “a sanctuary” where she felt “worthy of love” (p. 28).
Who in your childhood made you feel most loved, and why?

6. **“Most people live with some uncertainty in life, even with—especially with—complex religious and moral questions” (p. 37).**

Which moral and religious questions are most challenging for you? Why?

Chapter 3: Where Stone Becomes Flesh

7. Evans writes about the risk that it takes to be vulnerable, and she confesses that she has sometimes preferred “the self-protection offered by cynicism, caution, and carbohydrates” (p. 42). We all have our favorite hiding places and our preferred shelters. Where have you sought solace and protection when it feels hard to take risks and to show vulnerability?

8. **“And somehow I have to believe—no, I want to believe—that the God of the creeds will meet us, as gentle and constant as the shepherd the ancients spoke of” (p. 48).**

How and when do you sense God most consistently meeting with you?

Chapter 4: The Liberation of the Know-It-All

9. Evans wrestles with the concept of truth, and she says that she has glimpsed it when reading the psalms or “a particularly lovely verse of Rilke,” the German poet. She also spots it “in the irrepressible honesty of my kids, in the gorgeous lilt of my singer-songwriter sister Amanda’s voice, in the candid company of a few dear friends” (p. 51). Where do you find glimmers of truth?
10. **“Faith is marked by the humility to let yourself question—which is not a shortcoming but an acknowledgment of one’s humanity,” Evans writes (p. 56).**

When you’ve been afraid or reluctant to let yourself question, what do you feel stirring in you? What has stopped you from wholeheartedly asking questions?

Chapter 5: Thick Skin, Tender Heart

11. Evans sketches out a divide between heart and mind in the typical Western worldview—and she claims that the mind and reason have typically been prioritized over the heart and emotion. Have you seen this dynamic in your own experiences? If so, where?
12. Some of the tougher moments that have challenged Evans to remember that she is loved include being called “a Jezebel” and being deemed “a Honey-Boo-Boo publicity whore and embarrassment to the church” (p. 63). She also says that sometimes, pouring a glass of expensive wine and eating really good dark chocolate also helps her remember to love herself well. What tangible things—in moderation!—help you to remember to care for yourself?

Chapter 6: Jonathan Edwards Is Not My Homeboy

13. How were you taught to understand the concept of sin? How has your understanding of sin changed throughout your life?
14. Evans cites the work of Brené Brown, who writes about the corrosive effects of shame and how shame “tells us that our flaws make us unworthy of love” (p. 75). What is one flaw you see in yourself that makes you feel unworthy of love?

Chapter 7: Beginning Again with Love

15. Evans describes the story of Adam and Eve as “etiological, explaining how things came to be” (p. 84). What is one mystery for which you wish you had a creation story to explain so that you could understand how it came to be?
16. In this chapter, Evans lists some of the sins in the world that she believes God rages against, “because these sins denigrate the dignity of those whom God made and dishonor the beauty of the world that God made” (p. 87). What sins in the world trouble you most?

Chapter 8: From Death to Life

17. Evans confesses that, while she's willing to sacrifice her time and her treasure for the sake of Jesus, she doesn't like to lose a debate or "to let someone else 'win' for the sake of maintaining the relationship" (p. 89). What is hard for you to sacrifice?
18. "In the Jewish tradition, there's a long history of faithful wondering," Evans writes (p. 97). If you could be guaranteed an answer, what is one question you'd like to ask God?

Chapter 9: The Steady Work of Living Water

19. "For me, the strange and ancient ritual of baptism reveals something at the heart of Christian identity" (p. 108). How do you understand baptism and its significance?
- 20.

"Water is a force that does its steady work on even the hardest rock—reshaping it, eroding it, marking it" (p. 114).

Where do you most clearly see evidence of God's "steady work" in your life?

Chapter 10: Many Voices, Many Masks

21. One of Rachel's favorite characters in Scripture is the biblical Rachel, her namesake. What character in the Bible most resonates with you, and why?

"We impose masks on God, choosing to emphasize particular perspectives and downplay others, lifting particular understandings while minimizing others" (p. 124).

What masks do you find yourself regularly imposing on God?

Chapter 11: Wilderness

22. Evans recounts the story of Hagar (pp. 128–130), whose eyes were drawn to a spring in the wilderness. Consider the times in your life when you've felt like you're wandering some kind of wilderness. Where have you spotted an unexpected spring offering a taste of hope?
23. Evans tells us about her favorite place in the world: Glacier National Park. She describes its beauty and says that it calms her soul (p. 132). What place moves you in that way?

Chapter 12: God Has Made a Home with Us

24. Evans admits that there have been times when the things on her heart seem “so trivial and stupid” that she can’t imagine God caring about them—though she wishes God would (p. 145). What would fall into that category for you?
25. Evans shares a litany of things that she has cried out to God about (pp. 150–151). If you were writing a similar list, what would you include?

Chapter 13: Loving Our Enemies

26. **“And starting with that acknowledgment that I can be my own worst enemy, perhaps I can begin to imagine how loving my enemies might look” (p. 160).**

What “enemies” do you have in your life? When have you been your own worst enemy?

27. Evans describes turning ugly comments made about her by others into beautiful origami—swans, cranes, boats. What ugly words would you banish onto a piece of paper (pp. 162–163), and what beautiful things would you want to create out of them?

Chapter 14: Dwelling in Sabbath

28. How has your idea of rest and Sabbath been challenged by this chapter?
- 29.

“The reality is that we weren’t created to go go go or to do do do. We were made to be” (p. 172).

What do you need in your life to help you rest—and simply “be”?

Final Questions

30. How has reading this book challenged your approach to faith?
31. What might you want to think about or live out differently in your faith journey as a result of reading this book?