

To Fly Again

Discussion Guide, written by author Gracia Burnham

Chapter 1: Unfinished Lists

- Are you the kind of person who keeps a written “to-do” list, or is everything just stored in your head?
- Name one task that has been on your “to-do” list far too long!
- What if you suddenly couldn’t be as productive as you’ve always been? How would that rock your self-image?
- Was does the J. J. Lynch poem (page 13) say to you personally?

Chapter 2: The Guarantee Nobody Wants

- Have you ever paid serious attention to John 16:33? Read it again now. How would you paraphrase what Jesus is communicating here?
- Tell briefly about a time when this was true in your own personal life.
- Why do you think God *didn’t* deliver Martin Burnham? Or is this an impossible question to answer?

Chapter 3: What Defines You?

- Go around the circle and define yourself *without* mentioning your occupation, education, age group, gender, or material assets. Using deeper terms, tell the group who you really are.
- What did you think of Gracia’s reflection on the peasant woman who had come wanting to use her telephone (see pages 135–137)?
- What would you most like to be known for? “[Your name] is a person who _____.”

Chapter 4: Anger Doesn’t Help

- In the opening story of this chapter, would you say Gracia had a *right* to be angry?
- What did you think of Martin’s replies to his wife?

- Tell a personal story about a time when you consciously let go of your anger.
- In what ways would you like to be more mature in handling the aggravations of life?

Chapter 5: Rising above Revenge

- Give an example from current events in our world of how revenge is only making matters worse.
- Read together the story of the slave girl in 2 Kings 5. Then share what stands out to you from the account.
- Is the whole notion of “turning the other cheek” realistic? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: Worry Doesn’t Help

- Name your own top three personal worries at the moment.
- Can a person make himself/herself *stop* worrying? Or is it irresistible?
- What does the Chronicles phrase “to inquire of the Lord” signify to you?
- On page 65, Gracia tells about changing her style of prayer for water. How might you implement such a change in your circumstance?

Chapter 7: Rising Above Impatience

- Who is the most impatient person you know? Describe without using a name.
- When do you most easily show your impatience?
- How might you make a least a small amount of headway in this area?

Chapter 8: Weakness Is Normal

- How important is it to you that others perceive you as “a strong person”?
- Can you remember a time in your life like the Brooklyn pastor whom Gracia describes on pages 81–82, when God intervened at your moment of utter weakness? If so, tell about it.
- Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 together and apply it to your situations.

Chapter 9: We All Fall Down

- Did Gracia’s story about the homeless shelter stir any feelings in you? any sense of disagreement? If so, share your thoughts.
- Tell a story about something really dumb that you’ve done (like Gracia’s dropping the jar of food in the jungle, which she describes on page 91). How did you feel as a result?
- What are the secrets of letting God put you back on your feet again?

Chapter 10: No Losers

- Why does self-inflicted trouble seem worse than any other kind?
- Whom would God call a “loser”? Anybody? Everybody?
- Why is this kind of situation so difficult for us to process?

Chapter 11: A Contrite Spirit

- Had you ever thought much about the word *contrite* before? After reading this chapter, do you feel you have a better understanding of its meaning? How would you describe it to someone else?
- Why do you think this quality is important to God?
- In what ways are we like “clay pots,” as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:7 (see page 110)? How does this metaphor give us a different approach to self-esteem?

Chapter 12: Your Survival Kit

- Do you have a survival kit in your car? If so, what does it contain?
- What are the key elements that God has given us for emergency use?
- What’s the best part of Hebrews 4:14-16 to you (see page 117)?

Chapter 13: Flashbacks of Gratitude

- Think of at least two *new* things in your life for which to give thanks—things you’ve never consciously named in the past.
- Have you ever viewed what Jesus did at Calvary as something special *for you personally*? Have you ever told him thanks for this?

Chapter 14: Am I Accomplishing Anything?

- Do the same exercise Gracia did at the beginning of this chapter: Look back over the past twelve months and tabulate four or five things you've accomplished. Share these with the group.
- As a result of this exercise, are you proud of yourself or disappointed?
- Read several of the “being” Scriptures listed in this chapter, and talk about what they signify.

Chapter 15: What Role for Praise?

- Working as a group, pull together a list of the praiseworthy aspects of God. What is it about him that is truly admirable?
- Now go back and identify which of these aspects are most relevant to a person in distress.
- Why is it good to rehearse these things in the midst of a difficult time?

Chapter 16: The Power of a Gentle Word

- How hard or easy is it for you to give a gentle response in a hostile situation? Mention some illustrations.
- Who is your hero in this regard? Who represents the kind of person you would *like* to be?
- How might your life—and relationships—be different if you displayed the “Jesus Syndrome” that Gracia explains on page 155?

Chapter 17: The Long Road to Joy

- Is Christmas oversold as a “joyous” holiday?
- Would your friends describe you as a person of joy? If so, on what basis?
- What is the foundation for genuine joy when times are difficult?

Chapter 18: Suddenly

- The Lord's Prayer includes the plea “Deliver us from evil.” What is the most dramatic deliverance you've ever experienced?

- Did this come all at once (as with Joseph in the Old Testament) or gradually?
- How can we guard ourselves against the folly of demanding *instant* deliverance?

Chapter 19: Not My Home

- What do you think of Gracia’s rather novel attitude toward death?
- What do you think of the logic of wearing *white* to a funeral?! Does this make sense, or not?
- Have someone in the group read aloud the classic passage from *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Let yourself imagine this scene in vivid detail. Then share what it means to you.

Chapter 20: It’s Only Halftime

- If your life were compared to a basketball game, how far along are you currently? How has the game gone so far?
- Who’s going to be *more* honored in heaven: Jim Elliot or Bert Elliot? Or do you think they’ll be honored equally?
- Why do you think some people fade out and accomplish little in the “second half” of their life?

Chapter 21: God’s Best Is Yet to Come

- What did you think of Reverend Hartman’s little “Saturday night sermon” for Gracia?
- This chapter gives some unique definitions—or at least illustrations—of the word *grace*. Which ones stood out to you?
- Can you honestly accept Gracia’s statement that “God’s best is yet to come”? If you struggle with this, let the group know. Pray together about your individual futures.