

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Sex God

by
Rob Bell

THIS IS REALLY ABOUT THAT

1. “Sex. God. They’re connected. And they can’t be separated. Where the one is, you will always find the other” (p. xiv). Do you agree with this statement? If so, how has this connection appeared in your life? If not, why not? Before reading *Sex God*, how would you say you understood the relationship between faith and sexuality?

GOD WEARS LIPSTICK

1. Rob Bell shows that talking about someone only in sexual terms is all the more dehumanizing because it is a denial of the divine spark in each of us. Do you think

of yourself as an “image-bearer,” a “carrier of the divine spark” (p. 4)? If so, how does that perspective affect the way you think about your sexuality? If not, would thinking about yourself that way cause you to do anything differently?

2. What drives people to talk about others only in sexual terms? When have you engaged in such talk, and how did it make you feel about yourself? About the person to whom you were referring? What is the difference between viewing someone with lust and seeing that person as God sees him or her?
3. Bell writes, “How you treat the creation reflects how you feel about the creator” (p. 13). Can you point to a time when the way you treated some of God’s people affected the way you felt about God?

SEXY ON THE INSIDE

1. Bell describes our world as being in a state of disconnection and our sexuality as the way we go about trying to reconnect (p. 28). How do you experience this disconnection on a daily basis? Can you relate to the idea of sexuality as a way to reconnect with someone? How about as a way to reconnect with the world or with God?
2. Would you consider yourself a deeply connected person or one who tends to move from church to church or relationship to relationship? If the latter, how does it feel to think of this as sexual dysfunction (p. 33)?

Bell describes peace as a necessary ingredient for connection. Do you have the peace he describes?

3. Bell describes events or moments that have the power to connect us, like a song at a concert, as having a sexual dimension. Do you agree? What are some ways you have experienced a powerful connection with others that you haven't previously thought of as sexual? In contrast, he describes places such as the red light district in Amsterdam as unsexual because connection is almost wholly lacking there. How can you have sex without connection?

ANGELS AND ANIMALS

1. Bell writes, "Angels and animals. There are these two extremes, denying our sexuality or being driven by it, and then there's the vast space in between" (p. 46). Where do you place humankind on the spectrum between angels and animals? Where do you see yourself on the spectrum? What is the difference between us and animals? Between us and angels?
2. Instead of avoiding areas of ambiguity with outright bans, as Paul tells us the Ephesians did, Bell talks about living "in the tension" between the two extremes of animals and angels. "We were created to live in the tension. And when you lose the tension, you lose something central to what it means to be human" (p. 51). What would living in this tension look like for you?

LEATHER, WHIPS, AND FRUIT

1. When has lust been a particular problem in your life? Looking back, do you think there was a hole or gap in your life that you might have been seeking to fill? Conversely, when you were content, at peace, with your radar turned off, what were you channeling your energies into then?
2. God made us to be sensory creatures, but Bell describes lust as turning off this very quality. How does lust rob us of our appreciation for the very thing we crave? Have you experienced this?

SHE RAN INTO THE GIRLS' BATHROOM

1. Why are relationship and love such a risk? Does it change anything for you to consider the risk God runs in loving us?
2. Bell writes, "Instead of being something that distances us from God, causing us to question, 'Where are you?', we can see that every poem by a lover spurned, every song sung with an ache, every movie with a gut-wrenching scene, every late-night conversation and empty box of Kleenex are glimpses into the life of God" (pp. 99–100). What insight has your own heart-break given you into the heart of God?

WORTH DYING FOR

1. “When people are truly living in what’s called ‘mutual submission,’ you lose track of who’s in charge” (p. 111). Have you ever struggled with submitting to someone you loved, “dying” to yourself so that the other person could live? What does such an action feel like? In what relationships in your life have you experienced this feeling of losing track of who’s in charge?
2. Bell describes a key component of all healthy marriages as “mutual abandon” (p. 111), a feeling of letting go and losing yourself. Why doesn’t a marriage work if one person holds back or refrains? Why is letting go in this way so hard?
3. Agape love is a giving love, a love so strong it has the power to change. Through such love, he writes, we are pulled into our future, into who we *can* be (pp. 114–115). Who has loved you for the person you can be rather than the sinful person you are? How did such love change you?

UNDER THE CHUPPAH

1. Bell describes the power of the chuppah as its exclusivity. You choose that one person and no other. Why is this exclusivity so important? What does it mean to you for a marriage to be “under the chuppah”?

2. Why is our world so intent on trying to “pull sex out from under the chuppah” (p. 136)? What are the dangers in doing so?

JOHNNY AND JUNE

1. Bell points out that the Hebrew word used in the Bible to describe a man and woman becoming one flesh, *echad*, is the same one used to describe the oneness of the Lord (p. 147). He concludes that the union between man and woman therefore points to God. How have you seen this oneness in a marriage, your own or that of others, point to God or offer a glimpse of *echad* on earth?
2. Bell asks, “What would it be like to be with someone who loves you exactly as you are?” (p. 151). Does anyone give you this kind of love? Do you offer it to anyone else?
3. What is the difference between being naked with someone without shame, as Adam and Eve were, and simply having sex with someone? Have you ever experienced one without the other? How can you “pursue being naked” (p. 155) with a spouse?

WHOOPEE FOREVER

1. In the Bible, Paul and Jesus make it clear that marriage is okay, but that “the tilt is *for* being single, not away from it” (p. 160). Why do you think our churches often

react in the opposite way, acting as though those who aren't married aren't normal or don't fit? Have you ever experienced this?

2. Bell suggests that sex and marriage are a glimpse of eternity, a hint at what it will be like for God to dwell among us, as evidenced by the way Jesus's speech in John about preparing a place for us in heaven echoes the groom's traditional speech to his bride. How does this insight affect your ideas about heaven?

MORE BALLOONS, PLEASE

1. Bell describes a wedding in which a couple released balloons representing their past marriages, failed relationships, terminated pregnancies, and affairs. Consider what balloons you might have if you participated in this exercise. Are there any that you have not yet been able to release?
2. Despite the beautiful symbolism of the balloons, that couple's marriage failed. Have you ever suffered a loss from which you felt you could not recover? In what ways has God put you back together?