



WHAT IF IT'S WONDERFUL?

AN INVITATION TO
RELEASE YOUR FEARS, CHOOSE JOY &
FIND THE COURAGE TO CELEBRATE

NICOLE
ZASOWSKI

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

What If It's Wonderful?

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Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: What If It's Wonderful?

1. What has the pain you have experienced in life cost you?
2. What behaviors do you find yourself doing in an attempt to anesthetize painful feelings or protect yourself from hurt?
3. What are some characteristics that you know to be true about God but struggle to trust based on painful circumstances or events in your life?
4. Like the five daughters of Zelophehad, how might God be inviting you to trust His promises over your personal experience?

Chapter 2: Broken Toys

1. How has your pain—your own “broken toys”—been an avenue of growth and grace in your life?
2. How have your painful experiences complicated your relationship with joy and celebration?
3. Where do you picture God in the midst of your pain? Where do you picture Him in the light of your joy?
4. What pain might you be hanging on to simply because it's familiar and comfortable?

Chapter 3: The Shadow of Shame

1. How have your ideas about celebration been shaped by what you earn or deserve?
2. As you consider the apostle Paul's instruction to "take every thought captive" (2 Corinthians 10:5 NRSV), what are some practical ways you can fight for truth in your mind?
3. In what ways are you quick to believe criticism and slow to trust a compliment?
4. What "fig leaves" do you use in your life in order to hide?
5. Reflecting on your life, how has shame shaped your relationship with God and other people?

Chapter 4: Protective Pessimism

1. How have you experienced joy as foreboding or dangerous?
2. What are the ways you have protected yourself from possibility with pessimism?
3. In what ways have you assumed pessimism is a part of your personality rather than emotional reactivity?
4. What difference would it make for you and your relationship with God and others to choose to laugh with delight like Abraham instead of laughing with cynicism like Sarah?
5. Considering your own life, how might God be inviting you to walk the outer boundary of your gifts like Abraham?

Chapter 5: Comparison's Cost

1. When has God asked you to celebrate a dream in someone else's life that you would like to have for yourself? How did the opportunity to celebrate that person feel to you?
2. What has comparison cost you in your own life?

3. How have you experienced the difference between accepting others' gifts and success and celebrating others' gifts and success?
4. In what ways are you prone to give in to the scarcity mentality, assuming that someone's gain is your loss?
5. What difference does it make in your relationship with others when you consider that you have been the recipient of a joy that is anything but fair?

Chapter 6: This Is It?

1. How do you typically respond to opportunities to celebrate gifts and experiences in your life? How are you tempted to minimize your celebration or expect too much joy from your celebration?
2. Consider a time when you expected more joy from an earthly gift or celebration than it was meant to give. How did this displaced celebration impact you spiritually, emotionally, or relationally?
3. What are the potential consequences of your earthly joys "standing awkwardly in the wrong position" in your life?
4. What treasures in your life are currently in the wrong place in your heart or need to be moved off center?

Chapter 7: Where Is Jesus?

1. How have you experienced joy to be an avenue of growth in your life?
2. Considering the story in Luke 1, in what ways are you like Zechariah and in what ways are you like Elizabeth in response to your joy?
3. What does Jesus look like to you in the midst of your joy and celebration?
4. Where is Jesus in the room of your joy?

Chapter 8: Love Lavishly

1. How have you been tempted to consider beauty or fun as frivolous or unimportant?
2. Considering the sinful woman's lavish demonstration of love in the Gospel of Luke, in what ways have you responded like the Pharisees in response to extravagant celebration? In what ways have you responded like Jesus?
3. How have your ideas about spiritual maturity included or excluded the deep delight of God?
4. How has beauty or lavish demonstrations of love in your life led you to encounter Christ?

Chapter 9: Receive Affirmation

1. What messages have you chosen to believe about your identity that have served as a barrier to celebration?
2. In what ways has it required courage for you to stare into the expanse of your belovedness?
3. How have you witnessed both pride and shame causing you to focus on yourself?
4. What would it look like to acknowledge both your failures and your triumphs and celebrate who you are apart from both?
5. How do the stories of creation and the cross set you free to see and celebrate your belovedness?

Chapter 10: Joy in Sadness

1. How have you experienced the interplay between pain and joy in your own life?
2. Like the character Joy from the movie *Inside Out*, what feelings might you be tempted to contain and ignore? How

might acknowledging these feelings actually be helpful to you?

3. What difference does it make to your current circumstances to know that Jesus promises that we will rejoice and our joy will not be taken from us?
4. How has sadness helped you find joy in your life?

Chapter 11: The Dance of Grace

1. What messages have you received throughout your life about celebrating triumphs or victories?
2. How does knowing God as the source of your blessing encourage you to choose joy and find the courage to celebrate?
3. How does David's exuberant worship change your ideas about celebration?
4. In what ways are you tempted to respond to others' celebration like Michal in 2 Samuel 6?
5. How might your hesitancy to celebrate be a sign that you have made your gifts and accomplishments about you?

Chapter 12: Hope in the Middle

1. How have you struggled to choose joy in the "middle place"—between where you've been and where you would like to be?
2. What are some of the "shoulds" you often speak to yourself?
3. How has learning someone's story helped you understand his or her pain differently?
4. How does knowing Christ's ultimate victory as the end of the story allow you to see your pain in the middle place differently?

Chapter 13: Joining Others' Joy

1. What invitations do you have to love your family members or people in your community by celebrating what they love?
2. What does the apostle Paul's instruction to allow our lives to be interrupted by others' mourning or rejoicing look like in your life?
3. How has the practice of loving others by celebrating their loves allowed you to experience joy you might not encounter on your own?

Chapter 14: Keep the Thank-You Notes

1. How have you experienced the gift of expressing thankfulness beyond simply feeling grateful? How did it shape you personally?
2. Where do you see yourself in the story of the ten lepers from Luke 17?
3. How does it shape your ideas about gratitude to consider thankfulness as means of celebration with God?
4. What are some ways that thankfulness has improved your sense of well-being?
5. What are some ways you can "keep the thank-you notes" in your own life?

Chapter 15: Practice Savoring

1. How might the practice of savoring help you deepen your celebration of the ordinary gifts God has provided in your life?
2. Considering the Psalm's invitation to "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8 NIV), how can you use your five senses to savor and celebrate the life God has given you?

3. What are some ways you can accept Jesus' invitation to choose "the better thing" and savor time with Him?
4. How have you experienced laughter as a form of celebration in your life?
5. What would it look like to cement your celebration by sharing it with others?

Chapter 16: Be Expectant

1. When have you found your delight in Christ to be dependent upon your circumstances?
2. In what ways have you merely sipped on God's faithfulness by limiting your awe of God?
3. What are some opportunities in your life right now to have an expectant heart by knowing that God can, believing that He will, and trusting His goodness regardless of the outcome?
4. How can you cultivate joy in the future by celebrating the life you are living now?

Chapter 17: Share the Good News

1. What difference does it make in your joy when you share your good news with others?
2. How has sharing with others about the difference Christ has made in your life increased your joy?
3. In what ways have you experienced joy in your weakness when you depend on Christ? How do your vulnerability and limitations prompt you to celebrate?

Chapter 18: Learn to Play

1. How has hunting for beauty and delight kept you tethered to God's story?
2. What difference does it make to understand celebration as a discipline rather than simply a reflex?
3. In what ways have you passively been waiting for God to inject you with joy? What would it look like for you to become an active participant?
4. How have you experienced the difference between celebration and escape?
5. What differences between joy and pleasure-seeking have you witnessed and experienced?
6. Name five delights that are present in your life right now.

Chapter 19: Rhythms and Rituals

1. What rituals help you celebrate your relationship with God and other people?
2. What are some potential barriers to your practicing these rituals regularly?
3. How do rituals help you release your control and celebrate God's provision?
4. How might celebration be an invitation for you to release false securities in your life?
5. What is the difference between rhythms and rituals being our "help" versus our "hope"?

Chapter 20: The Source of Celebration

1. Reflecting on your own life, what are the messages you've received about God's view of celebration?
2. After reading this book, where do you picture God in the midst of your joy and celebration?
3. How does Jesus' character and His mission here on earth increase your courage to celebrate?
4. How is God inviting you to ask yourself, what if it's wonderful?