

THE SEARCH

HNOJ Book Study Guide



Welcome to HNOJ's Lenten study of *The Search* by Chris Stefanick and Paul McCusker. As we journey through this holy time as individuals and as a parish, our hope is that the HNOJ community can share the experience of the book and/or video series as we search for our own answers to the questions "Who am I?", "What do I want?" and "Is there a point to my life?"

The following guide includes questions for each chapter that correspond to the book. If you choose to participate in *The Search* video series found on FORMED.org and would like a study guide for that format, please contact HNOJ.

This study guide will help readers go deeper into the material individually for personal growth and/or as a group using the questions as a tool for conversation. To encourage an understanding of the main themes in each chapter and to reflect on how you can apply the concepts into your daily life, we've provided two categories of questions.

- "For Understanding" Questions help the reader unpack the main points in each chapter. Questions are followed by page numbers so answers can easily be found.

- "For Reflection" Questions encourage the reader to apply the principles in one's life by going deeper through examining your own faith journey.

The HNOJ Formation staff and priests will be praying for your prayer and study this Lent. May God Bless your search for Him!

Got Questions about the Questions or Small Groups? Email Chris at ckostelc@hnoj.org

Chapter 1: What Are You Looking For?

For Understanding

1.1 What is your heart's deepest desire? What are the things you do to try to fill your deep desire for happiness, yet still leave you feeling disappointed? (p. 4)

1.2 What do all humans search for? Where do we look for happiness? (p. 7-8)

For Reflection

1.3 Are you afraid to acknowledge your desire for something more? Explain.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure...who are you not to be? You are a child of God." -Marianne Williamson

1.4 If happiness is ultimately found in God, then how should that reflect in your life? Spend time looking at your priorities and evaluating how you spend your time. How can you live a life intentionally pursuing true happiness?

Chapter 2: The Hunger Game

For Understanding

2.1 What are the typical things people pursue to try and make themselves happy? (p.13)

For Reflection

2.2 If we all have appetites for something, logically there should be a fulfillment to that appetite. What does it say about us if nothing in this world truly satisfies us?

Chapter 3: When Setbacks Are Setups for Comebacks

For Understanding

3.1 What part of Bill Hanzlik's story stood out to you? (p. 17-19)

3.2 What was the author's point in sharing Bill Hanzlik's story? (p. 19)

For Reflection

3.3 Think about a time in your life when you experienced difficulty, tragedy, or failure, and it ended up being an opportunity for you to recognize your need for God and depend on Him in a more intimate way. Explain.

3.4 Has there been a time in your life when you blamed God and distanced yourself from Him? If so, have you resolved that pain, resentment or lack of trust? Explain.

3.5 What are practical ways you can begin to see inconveniences, setbacks, or failures as opportunities to depend more on God and recognize your need for Him?

Chapter 4: You

For Understanding

4.1 Why does the author state you are amazing and remarkable? (p. 23-24)

4.2 What is the materialist view of the human person? What is the natural conclusion of this kind of thinking? (p. 26-27)

For Reflection

4.3 When we are moved by beauty, like a sunset or when we experience the joy of true friendship, do you think that this adequately proves that we are not just a bunch of cells run by the laws of chemistry and physics? Explain.

4.4 When you recognize the unique, unrepeatable gift and splendor of each person, does this change the way you want to treat everyone you encounter? If so, how?

Chapter 5: The Soul

For Understanding

5.1 What is some of the physical/medical evidence for a soul? (p. 30-31)

5.2 Why do people from cultures all over the world have altars at the center of their religious buildings? (p. 34)

For Reflection

5.3 What evidence from your life is there for the human soul?

5.4 “We humans aren’t just vaguely spiritual; we’re profoundly religious” (p. 34). Do you think this is true for you? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: God

For Understanding

6.1 What are some examples of “an understanding of God” that Christians don’t believe in? (p. 38)

6.2 Has science disproved God? (p. 40-42)

6.3 Why is unlimited science unable to explain all human experience? (p. 44)

For Reflection

6.4 Is it possible to be a modern scientific thinker and a person of faith? Explain.

6.5 Have you experienced God’s presence? How do you know?

Chapter 7: Knowing Is Half the Battle

For Understanding

7.1 What is “faith”? (p. 50)

7.2 Why does the author say faith is reasonable? (p. 51)

For Reflection

7.3 “Faith in God is a choice.” When have you made the choice to have faith in God? Was this choice a one-time event or ongoing (or both)? Explain.

Chapter 8: A Story

For Understanding

8.1 What is a story? (p. 57)

8.2 Who are you in the story of your life? What role do you have in other people’s stories? (p. 57-58)

For Reflection

8.3 Why is it helpful to step back and look at your life as a story?

8.4 If someone had written your life as a story, what is the main theme or purpose so far?

Chapter 9: Flashback

For Understanding

9.1 In a character study of God, how does the author ultimately describe God? (p. 62-63)

9.2 How is God limited? (p. 64-65)

9.3 Why did God create humans? (p. 66)

For Reflection

9.4 How can God be All-powerful, All-knowing, All-good, and yet still allow for suffering in the world?

9.5 It seems we often misunderstand God when we say, “God is Love.” Why?

Chapter 10: What Does God Want?

For Understanding

10.1 Why did God create man and woman? (p. 68)

10.2 What was so bad about eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge? Why was this a sin? (p. 69)

10.3 Who is Satan? What role did he play in this story? (p. 71-72)

For Reflection

10.4 In Adam and Eve's story, they hide after they sin. Why did they do that? Do you do that when you sin? Explain.

10.5 If the first sin (and all sin, in a way), is humans' desire to be God, how is Jesus the antidote? (Hint: Philippians 2:6-11)

Chapter 11: Broken

For Understanding

11.1 In a general sense, how do we break something? (p. 79)

11.2 What is the Bible? (p.86)

11.3 What is the main theme of the Bible? (p. 87)

For Reflection

11.4 This chapter features the story of Augustine's conversion. How does reading his or others' conversions help your faith?

11.5 What role does Scripture play in your faith journey?

11.6 Why would God choose to have his story shared with you through a collection of books (the Bible)?

Chapter 12: Making an Entrance

For Understanding

12.1 Why do virtually all credible historians believe Jesus existed? (p. 92) Why are the Gospels considered a credible account of Jesus' life? (p. 96)

12.2 How do people misunderstand who Jesus was? Why are these misunderstandings irrational? (p. 100)

For Reflection

12.3 Who is Jesus for you? Why do you say that?

Chapter 13: The Ultimate Sacrifice

For Understanding

13.1 What was so terrible about dying by crucifixion? (p. 107)

13.2 Why is what happens in the Garden of Gethsemane so pivotal to Jesus' story? (p. 108)

13.3 What are you worth to God? Explain. (p. 110)

For Reflection

13.4 How does Jesus' death on a cross bridge the gap between God and humanity? Why did Jesus have to suffer?

13.5 The author states that Jesus' death on the cross is a great act of love. How is sacrifice related to love? Can one love without sacrifice? How do you sacrifice for love?

Chapter 14: Putting the Pieces Together

For Understanding

14.1 Why does the author call God's story a "Love Story"? (p. 115)

14.2 Why is the case for the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection a strong one? What evidence do we have that Jesus really did die and rise? (p.119)

For Reflection

14.3 On pages 124-5 the author describes a decision for love; a decision for Jesus. Have you ever intentionally given your life to Jesus? If so, when? What was it like? If not, are you open to saying the prayer on page 125?