

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## *The Passionate Jesus: What We Can Learn from Jesus about Love, Fear, Grief, Joy and Living Authentically*

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### **Chapter 1**

How would you describe yourself as an emotional being? What bothers you about the way you describe yourself? What encourages you?

What would you say are your passions in life? What passions do you hope to develop? What is hindering you from pursuing those passions?

When you think of Jesus, what image comes to your mind? How accurate do you think your image is? What misconceptions about Jesus do you think you're holding on to? Why do you think it is helpful to see Jesus as an emotional human being?

### **Chapter 2**

Have you ever felt unloved? What was the cause? Do you recall how lonesome, perhaps desperate, you felt?

Can you identify individuals in your community, your workplace, your religious community who are unloved? What would it mean for you to love those individuals as Jesus loves us?

Can you recall a time when you failed in love? Has a lover ever failed you? How did you learn to love again?

Have you ever fallen out of love with God? What was the cause? Have you found your way back to God's full embrace? How did that happen, or how do you think it might happen?

When was the last time you embraced lovingly an enemy or an unlovely and unloving person? What would enable you to embrace that person?

### **Chapter 3**

When was the last time you were so angry with a friend, a family member, or a partner that you mistreated that person out of your rage toward him or her? Recall the steps you took to allay your anger and heal that rift.

Can you recall a time when you acted out of righteous anger in an attempt to overcome an unjust situation?

A suggested practice is to repeat "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" ten times every morning as preparation for a day when you know you will have to ask others' forgiveness because you have personally attacked them with your words or actions. How do you think that might help?

### **Chapter 4**

Picture a time when you worried about things over which you had no control—such as the sudden loss of a job, the disruption of the natural world, the collapse of the economy, the end of the world. Think about the steps you took to overcome that anxiety. How effective were these steps?

Many times we awake in the middle of the night with irrational, though sometimes quite real, fears. Can you think of ways that God helps us overcome those fears?

What are the three most frightening situations in your life today? How many of them are truly important to you? How can you separate authentic fears from those that paralyze and limit us even though they are simply the minor worries of our days?

### **Chapter 5**

Remember a time when your life was shattered by the death of a loved one. How did you respond? Was your grief redemptive? Did you discover a way to embrace your grief in order to learn to trust in a loving God?

We spend much of our waking life grieving the loss of one aspect or another of our lives: our health, our relationships, our communities when we move from one place to another, our loved ones through separation or death, and sometimes our religion. What are some ways that you can productively live with these moments of loss so that they define your life in a positive rather than a negative way?

Recall a time when you sat with a grieving friend. Were you able to help that individual embrace the sorrow of the moment, and help him or her embrace the deep and lasting love of God? What might you have done differently?

### **Chapter 6**

Do you make time for joy in your life? Do you make it a part of your daily schedule? If not, how can you make it more of a priority in your life?

Do you think God laughs at our mistakes and our shortcomings? Can you laugh at yourself and allow yourself to approach God with a childlike joy of heart?

When was the last time you laughed uncontrollably until you cried, danced with abandon in the brilliant sunshine, sang with gusto in the middle of a crowded city street? When was the last time you embraced the deep joy life brings? Why has it been so long, and what is stopping you now?

### **Conclusion:**

Buddhism teaches us that *smṛti* is the energy of mindfulness that helps us touch life deeply. What practices enable you to increase in *smṛti*?

How honestly do you think you have lived your life with those in your closest circles? Was there a time in your life when you lived in deceit? How did that feel? How will you seek to live a more authentic life in the days ahead?

Jesus is the utterly human being, and he invites us all to live as fully realized persons as well. Do you think that is truly possible? How will you live in light of this aspiration?

Now what?