

**SMALL
GROUP
GUIDES**
from HarperOne

The Power of Ritual

TURNING EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES
INTO SOULFUL PRACTICES

Casper ter Kuile

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INTRODUCTION

1. Casper ter Kuile describes the changing landscape of American religion. Are there differences in your community or in your own family that fit into this pattern? Are there any nonreligious local communities that are thriving?
2. He writes, “What I propose is this: by composting old rituals to meet our real-world needs, we can regrow deeper relationships and speak to our hunger for meaning and depth” (p. 15). What do you think he means by reimagining old rituals? Which old rituals need “composting” and why? Which don’t?

CHAPTER 1: CONNECTING WITH SELF

1. “The first layer of connection is the experience of being authentically connected to ourselves” (p. 31). What does authentic connection mean to you? Can you reflect on a time when you felt that connection particularly strongly?
2. Ter Kuile advocates the practice of sacred reading—in particular, *Lectio Divina*. Following his instructions on pages 51–52, choose a passage from a favorite novel or a verse from the Bible and try the practice as a group. What new meaning do you discover in this familiar text?

CHAPTER 2: CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

1. Think of a friend or family member who is outside the church world, but who has found a meaningful community like CrossFit or The Dinner Party where they've built important relationships. Why are these groups so effective? What did you learn from this chapter about how humans connect with one another?
2. "We want to belong and then fear the little sacrifices that this belonging will demand of us as we make space for others around us. . . . But in the moments of loneliness, we know that the cost of staying afraid and disconnected is too great" (p. 112). How do you navigate this tension between the joys and challenges of connecting with others?

CHAPTER 3: CONNECTING WITH NATURE

1. "Surrounded by nature is where we remember what really matters" (p. 113). Have you ever had this experience in nature? If so, describe how it felt. If not, describe where or how you remember what really matters.
2. Ter Kuile describes the practice of pilgrimages in this chapter. If you could take a pilgrimage to anywhere, where would you go? Why? Who would you go with, if anyone? What would you hope to experience along the way and once you arrive?

CHAPTER 4: CONNECTING WITH TRANSCENDENCE

1. Ter Kuile defines prayer as “being conscious of—and telling the truth about—how we really feel and think” and “listening to what our hearts know to be true” (p. 154). What do you make of this definition? How does prayer figure into your life, if at all?
2. What does transcendence mean to you, and how do you connect to the transcendent? What role does prayer play in helping you with that connection?

CHAPTER 5: ALREADY CONNECTED

1. “At their best, Rules of Life give us a way to join together the values and intentions we hold and the practices that help us live those intentions out” (p. 188). Have you ever attempted to write and follow a Rule of Life? If so, how did it go? How might this group be a community of encouragement and support for a personal Rule of Life?
2. If you were to write and follow a Rule of Life, what values/intentions and practices would you include? Why?

FINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the most meaningful rituals in your life? Why are they so important to you? How are you being

- shaped by them? Having read this book, what new rituals might you try to integrate into your life?
2. How has reading this book impacted your understanding of what it means to be spiritual? What in your life do you now see as spiritual? What other elements of spirituality do you now want to incorporate into your life?