

WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Finding Courage and Compassion When Cruelty Is Trending

BY JOHN PAVLOVITZ

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The effort to sustain our courage and compassion when cruelty and injustice seem to be winning the day is one best undertaken in community. This discussion guide can help your group wrestle with challenges together, make plans for action together, and support one another along the way.

If your group is able to meet weekly or monthly (or multiple times a day over the course of a retreat), devoting an hour or more to each section of *Worth Fighting For*, the questions in this guide will help prompt your discussions. If your group is planning to discuss the whole book in a single session, as in a book club setting, this guide will provide more than enough fodder for discussion using just the questions that appeal most to you and seem to have most traction with your group.

Worth Fighting For draws on the life and example of Jesus, but offers inspiration for all who seek the common good, regardless of religious affiliation. Similarly, some questions in this guide focus on experiences with the church and interpretations of Scripture. Feel free to dive more deeply into these aspects of the discussion or skip over them as feels appropriate for your group.



Group Discussion Guide for *Worth Fighting For*, by John Pavlovitz

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PART 1: WARNING LIGHTS

1. What “warning lights” sparked your concern about the moral state of our country? When did you first notice them?
2. How do your concerns about injustice and human suffering affect your mental health? Do you feel fatigue, anxiety, fear, or despair?
3. How “hopeful” of a person would you say you are? Do you tend to catastrophize or jump to the worst-case scenario? What are some tangible ways you can get out of your head and onto your feet?
4. How do you feel about the notion of “self-care”? Is it easy for you to see the connection between your own well-being and your work toward the well-being of others, or do you find that challenging?
5. How can we keep our grief and anger over the state of the world from being performative? Do you ever find the ways you communicate your concerns to be counterproductive?



PART 2: HOW WE GET BETTER

1. Does the idea of “choosing” joy over despair or faith over fear sound empowering to you, or overly simplistic? How much control do you feel you have over your attitude?
2. Pavlovitz says, “Yes, something’s wrong here—but we’re here too” (p. 33). Have you ever thought of yourself as a sign of hope in the world?
3. With whom do you feel accepted, loved, and empowered to be your best self? How can your group support one another in this way?
4. Pavlovitz describes his friend Genesis Be responding calmly and bravely to someone who could have threatened her life. She says, “I’ve met people like this my whole life, and so I wasn’t scared. I know they’re frightened” (p. 44). What makes you afraid? Can empathy for others’ fears transform your own?
5. Galatians 6:9 says “Do not grow weary in doing what is right.” What helps you stay energized for the work of justice? How can you maximize those elements in your life?



PART 3: FRACTURES AND FAULT LINES

1. How have your relationships with family and friends been impacted by recent years of social and political division? What opinions, issues, and perspectives create the greatest conflict for you?
2. Caricatures are quick, easy—and inaccurate. Where and when do you find yourself dismissing or minimizing a person or group of people you disagree with? How can you practice curiosity and learn how someone’s story has shaped them?
3. Pavlovitz says, “My Christian tradition calls me to love the least and to love my neighbor and to love myself, and there are times and circumstances when incarnating these aspirations simultaneously are a virtual impossibility” (p. 49). How do you balance your beliefs and relationships with people who seem to live counter to those beliefs?
4. What positive experiences have you had discussing a sensitive topic across differences? What lessons can be drawn from those experiences?
5. When is it worth staying in relationship in spite of differences, and when does it become necessary to distance yourself?



PART 4: PRODIGALS AND REFUGEES

1. What is your history with church? Have you ever felt belittled or judged for your religious beliefs or lack thereof? Have you ever left a church due to differences in values?
2. There are Christians who disagree about fundamental issues of human worth and dignity. Do you ever find yourself saying that certain people are not “real Christians”? How does division between those who claim to follow Jesus affect your faith or your relationship to Christian community?
3. If you’re a person of faith, do you find church to be a place where you can collectively embody courage and compassion? How essential is Jesus to your search for like-minded community?
4. Ego is nonpartisan and universal. Where do you notice you are in danger of drifting into self-righteousness or arrogance? How can you practice greater humility, especially when it comes to religion?
5. Do you agree with Pavlovitz that “Diversity will always threaten someone” (p. 83)? Where do you see, hear, or experience resistance to a wider, more expansive, more diverse community? Where do you see diverse community thriving?



PART 5: WHAT'S AT STAKE

1. How do you think faith should influence politics? Do you ever experience people criticizing you for being “too political?” How can you better connect legislation and policy to their human impact?
2. Pavlovitz says, “Anything we are losing or fear we are in danger of losing is because someone had to fight for it to begin with” (p. 106). How much impact do you think we have on the future of the country and the world?
3. What specific ways do you see racial, religious, or LGBTQ+ discrimination manifesting in your community, on social media, or in your circle of influence? How can you demonstrate empathy, kindness, and understanding as an oppositional presence to that cruelty?
4. Where do you see inconsistencies in the “pro-life” ethic of people who are theologically or politically opposite from you? What values do you think are really at play in the debate over abortion?
5. Why do you think sexism and misogyny are still so prevalent in conservative politics and religion? How can challenging traditional gender roles impact other types of inequality?



PART 6: THE FUTURE WE WANT

1. Describe the kind of world, nation, or church you dream of. What will it take for those dreams to become a reality? What is the smallest incremental change you can think of that will move things in that direction?
2. History shows that the march toward justice is not a direct, upward-trending line, but goes up and down as progress is made and sometimes lost. What evidence of progress have you witnessed in the last five years? How can those victories keep us going when regression looms?
3. How does the idea of making America “great” impede its potential for goodness?
4. Do you agree that “love wins”? How does your “yes” or “no” impact the way you approach the fight for a more compassionate world?
5. What personal challenges, blind spots, or places of inspiration have you encountered in your reading and discussion of *Worth Fighting For*?

