

Living with Fred: a novel

By Brad Whittington



Discussion Questions

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. As a kid, did you have the sense that adults just knew things? If you're an adult, do you feel you've achieved that enlightened state, or are you still wondering when it will arrive?
2. Mark is reluctant to tell anyone of his life-changing experiences from the vacation. Why? Do you identify with his feelings? Why?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 2

1. Do you agree with Squeaky that God ought to be fair?
2. Do you think Jesus responded to the rich young ruler in order to “take him down a few pegs” as Scooter says?
3. How does the observation that “Jesus beholding him loved him” relate to his response to the young man’s questions?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 3

1. Should Mark be spending time with someone who is drinking heavily? What are the reasons for your answer?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 4

1. *In His Steps* was published in the 1890s. Why is the question "What would Jesus do?" so enduring?
2. If you participate in a church, compare/contrast the answers to the two questions "What would Jesus do?" and "What would the members of my church find acceptable?"

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 5

1. Why are there twirlers?
2. Mark has been “just friends” with Jolene for four years. Should he be beyond entertaining questions of romantic involvement by now?
3. If you live in a racially diverse area, do you find that people self-segregate by race? What does your answer tell you about the culture in which you live?
4. Would Jesus play football?
5. Why do people have such radically different ideas about what Jesus would do in a given situation?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 6

1. Did you know there are actually people named Nimrod today?
It's true; I know one!
2. How much would you adjust your likes/dislikes and hobbies in order to fit in with your peers? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
3. What are they doing in those bushes, anyway?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 7

1. Should Mark have told the gang about Jake?
2. Should Mark have declined the beer? Why?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 8

1. Not much to say after all that, is there?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 9

1. What do you think of Vernon's advice for the lovelorn?
2. What's with that Gina?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 10

1. Matt was upset when he heard that Parker was drunk, but cheered up some when he found out the reason. Why?
2. Should Matt confront Deacon Fry rather than maintain an uneasy peace? Why?
3. Should Mark be responsible for his dad's job security?
4. Has a decision to follow Jesus cost you anything?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 11

1. Has your answer to the first question for Chapter 2 changed?
(Which was: Do you agree with Squeaky that God ought to be fair?)
2. What do you think of Sonia's reasons for leaving Parker?
3. Do you think Parker will come back?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 12

1. Is Matt too pushy in talking to Parker like he does?
2. Who is right, Parker and his comment about putting his hand to the plow and turning back or Matt and his comment about second chances? Why?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 13

1. In light of the issues with Deacon Fry, should Mark continue his relationship with Vernon?
2. Is Mark really devoid of soul?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 14

1. Is there a moral difference between murder and killing the enemy during a war? Why?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 15

1. Was Vernon's desertion wrong? Was it a sin? Should he have attempted to return to his unit rather than deciding to settle down in Italy and start a family?
2. How did Vernon lose those fingers, anyway?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 16

1. Matt and Fry take different positions on Vernon's church attendance. Which do you favor and why?
2. Would you endure practical jokes from your date?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 17

1. Well, it had to happen eventually, didn't it?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 18

1. Why is Mark keeping his meeting with Jake a secret?
2. Is Jake related to Vernon?
3. Who shot Gina?
4. Why were there two glasses of grappa?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 19

1. Is Vernon telling the truth?
2. Should Mark and Darnell go to the police with their story?
3. Should regular church-attenders who are openly sinning be confronted?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 20

1. Can you point out the North Star? Why not?
2. Sonia and Parker appear to be incompatible. Should they go forward with the divorce?
3. Did Parker do the right thing? Is he asking too much?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 21

1. What about the death penalty?
2. Who shot Gina?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 22

1. Did Vernon do the right thing in taking the blame for the murder?
2. What's Fry doing in that picture?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 23

1. Have you ever been to a swimming hole in a creek?
2. Have you ever done something that was likely to get you in as much trouble as Mark is going to be when Matt sees the car?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 24

1. Should Mark tell Matt about the picture and Deacon Fry?
2. Should Mark confront Jake?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 25

1. If somebody wrecked your car, would you take it calmly?
2. Who slashed Gina's neck?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 26

1. Is love a weakness?
2. Which story of Jake's father is true, Vernon's or Jake's?
3. Was Vernon a coward?
4. Did Jake do the right thing when he found Gina?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 27

1. Should Mark have told someone about Jake?
2. Is Mark to blame for the situation between Matt and Fry?
Should he have acted differently once Matt told him about the problem?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 28

1. What do you think of Deacon Fry's use of scripture as he starts the meeting?
2. Is Matt guilty of advocating cheap grace as Bonhoeffer defined it, forgiveness without repentance?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 29

1. Is Mark out of line by talking to Fry the way he does?
2. Is Deacon Fry correct in stating that Vernon should stay away from church when he is in rebellion, just as Fry himself did?
3. Are Matt and the deacons wrong in holding Fry accountable for an affair he turned away from 20 years ago?
4. Is it a good thing or bad thing that the whole community would know about Fry's affair before the week was out?

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 30

1. Do you think Mark will become a preacher anyway?
2. Do you think God wants Mark to become a preacher?

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Discussion Questions

General Questions about Living with Fred

1. What would you say is the primary theme of “Living with Fred”?
2. Can you think of other themes?
3. How has this book affected your understanding of the pressures on pastors and their families?
4. Do you think there is a conflict between the church being open to outsiders and being holy? If so, how can it be resolved?