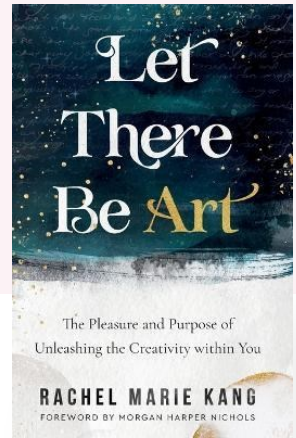




LEADER'S GUIDE

LET THERE BE ART BY RACHEL MARIE KANG



"Jesus created. Jesus also repaired. The act of creating does more than create things. It restores things. It calms things. It heals things. It saves things. It lets light into our lives, and it pushes back darkness. This Jesus, this light of the world, cannot be taken lightly, and neither can our call to be like Him."

RACHEL MARIE KANG

THEMES

Beauty

Art

Creation

Hope

Purpose

Patient Endurance

Suffering

HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Trauma

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

Chronic Illness

BOOK SUMMARY

Rachel's book starts and ends with our creative God creating. Displaying His goodness and marvellous works, bringing light into existence and pushing the darkness back. Essentially, the essence of this book is answering the questions surrounding 'Why do we create?' And is it okay to create when the world seems to be in utter chaos? Can the works of our hands even be called art if we're not a professional? And ultimately, Do others even need our art?

Rachel answers our questions through storytelling, testimony, poetry, scripture, song and prayer, declaring that we *must* make our art. She permits us to savour and relish every sweet, precious, sun-drenched, good, lovely and perfectly extraordinary, ordinary moment. To feel these moments deeply, even when they're dark ones, and from those moments, which are both imperfectly perfect and dreadful, allow our busy and distracted hearts to pause long enough to create something truly beautiful. As we imitate our creator by creating, through rhythms of work, rest, and play, we share our inmost being through our art, and in the process, we heal, find joy, connect with others, and give glory to the Lord.

Each chapter follows the same rhythm; A quote, storytelling, prayer, prompts, practices and pieces, and the book ends with praise for God – the Light of the world.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. Share your favourite chapter from "Let There Be Art". Discuss why it was memorable or how it has changed your perspective.

TALKING POINTS

Rachel's invitation for us to embrace our creative nature and make art is Christ-centered and lovely amid the heavy darkness we all endure. She says, "For the sake of irresistible pleasure and irrevocable purpose, *create* with me and *come* with me to heed the call to *let there be art*" (p18).

2

Q. Can you relate to Rachel's ponderings regarding whether or not it's okay to create in a world that often feels so dark? How can art bring light to the world?

TALKING POINTS

"You will question, just like I have, if it is okay to say that you are makers, or a writer, or an artist, or the ever-elusive creative... You will question whether the work of your hands has worth, whether you can call the things you make *art*, and whether you really can claim that all of it is meaningful and irrevocably needed by others." (p14).

Art is meaningful and needed because;

- We are made in God's image and created to create.
- Any goodness found in art comes from God.
- Creating brings light into dark situations, helps us heal and helps us grow.
- Art connects us through community, fellowship and worship.

3

Q. "You are not too broken to make beautiful things." How does this quote resonate with you? Have you ever endured a season that left you feeling so broken that you struggled to see beauty in the world? Or your ability to create seemed lost?

TALKING POINTS

Many circumstances may leave us feeling broken;

- Abuse in all its cruel forms; Physical, Sexual and Emotional.
- Marriage and relationship breakdowns.
- Mental illness.
- Chronic, Terminal or other Physical health crisis.
- Job loss.
- Failure and Rejection.

In the chapter, 'Let There Be Silence', Rachel offers insight into how silence and rest can help us recharge, preparing our hearts to create once more:

"You might not always summon your slow, silent seasons. You might not always wish for the pause or unproductivity. You might not ever ask for the change, or the crippling illness, or the lingering loss. You might not ever wish these seasons upon yourself. Still, they are here" (p146).

We can ask ourselves:

"Where is the burnout, striving, overextension or exhaustion? Once these questions are answered, we can nourish ourselves in these areas (p148).

4

Q. How might fear and rejection hold you back from creating? How can we move past these emotions?

TALKING POINTS

"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen" – Brene Brown:

- We all have a heavy 'place' where our hurts, trauma and grief are stashed away. Often this place is hidden from others, and we struggle to let people in to encounter this part of ourselves for fear of rejection.
- Sometimes without even realising it, we hide parts of ourselves away, believing that if people truly knew and saw us, they'd never be capable of loving us.
- "We are fragile because we can love and lose" (p53), so many things are simply out of our control, and this can give way to fear.
- "You can *hope* through pain. You can *heal* through pain" (p54).
- "Conceptual constraint bids us to settle, comfortably, into what we know. What we experience becomes what we expect over and over and over again. The trouble with this is it, in turn, inhibits our creativity... instead of trying new things, we will resort to doing the same things... Repetition is easier for the brain than reimagining" (p57).
- It is comfortable to sit in this space, but it takes courage to imagine and create, despite our fear.
- "...we can come to find that we need not be afraid, that we need not know everything in order to know peace and calm and healing. We need only know God and know his goodness. In that, our awe and wonder will always lead to courageous curiosity" (p60).
- By surrendering our hopes, dreams, fears, and fear of man to God, we can be free to create the way he designed us and has called us to.

5

Q. Discuss Chapter 7, "Let There Be Fairytales" (p90) and share a story or book which has profoundly impacted your life. Why do you think stories are so powerful?

TALKING POINTS

"Fictional stories, in all their forms-from novels to movies to musicals to story-driven video games – tell us tales that tell us truth (p92):

- Fairytales remind us that although the situation may seem bleak, good always triumphs over evil.
- Fiction can make it easy to sense and see God; it is a faithful way of learning and loving.
- "Fiction enchants us to believe in better endings. Fiction compels us to fight for a better world. On earth, as it is in heaven" (p99).
- Reading fiction allows us to be fascinated and find ourselves awe-struck with wonder.

In Sarah Clarkson's book, 'Book Girl', she says, "A book girl is story formed, shaped in her very concept of self by the characters she has encountered on the written page, by the narratives that teach her what it means to be a woman." (p66). She also unpacks other reasons stories are so important:

- As we wrestle with important questions such as, Who am I? Who should I be? What does it mean to live and love? What does it mean to be a woman? We can find encouraging and truthful answers in the lives of the noble, honest, and pure characters we read about in our cherished books.

- "Good books take hold of us, filling us with the capacity to learn, dream, think, and shape our world around us (p69)" and reveal what it looks like to be good, evil, brave, cowardly, happy, or tragic.

6

Q. "So many of us ride on the prayers of those that came before us. We ride on their faithfulness; we ride on the foundations they forged. And by ride, I mean soar" (p180). Share a time when someone else's words have been a balm to your soul.

TALKING POINTS

"We grow deep and wide into the people we've always been destined to become mostly because of the souls that made sacrifices to shape and shift the world to turn its kind and gracious face towards us" (p180).

- Life on earth is brief, but our legacies live on – through our art (prayers, poems, words etc.)
- God comforts us, so we can, in turn, comfort others.
- Our shared experience of grief and loss connects us all.
- As we rejoice and mourn together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we feel more tangibly the love of Christ.
- C. S. Lewis said, "Friendship ... is born at the moment when one man says to another "What! You too? I thought that no one but myself."

7

Q. After each chapter, Rachel provides "Prompts and Practises". Did you partake in these suggestions? If so, share your experience.

TALKING POINTS

Some of the prompts and practices include:

- Journaling, reading old entries and writing new ones (p31).
- Cooking and Hospitality (p38).
- Clay work (p49).
- Observe a selfie of yourself; what do you see? Create a self-portrait (p64).
- Write a poem about 'Home' (p76).
- Ponder what play was for yourself as a child compared to now. Join a playful practice (p87).
- Create a character (p100).
- Curate a music playlist (p113).
- Listen to the song, 'A Model of the Universe' (p124).
- Move your body, dance if you can (p136).
- Read books and rest from producing (p149).
- Listen to instrumental music (p159).
- Hold a firepit fellowship session with fellow creatives or join a creative community (p170).
- Reflect on someone you have lost (p183).
- Try writing a short story (p194).
- Try to understand a different perspective than your own (p205).
- Play a (harmless) prank and laugh (p215).
- Watch the sunrise (p225).

8

Q. Throughout the book, Rachel shares many beautiful poems, quotes and prayers. Do you have a favourite? If so, share with the group why you loved it.

TALKING POINTS

If no one remembers any particular quotes or poems, discuss Katie Drobina's poem from page p215:

She springs up like the dandelions in spring,
and if you're not careful,
you may mistake her for ordinary.

She nourishes your soul in deepest despair,
Shields you from becoming too hard, too stagnant, too forlorn,
brings you back to a place of peace in your body, your soul, your mind,
offers you a moment to lay down your burdens and bask in goodness,
soothes the tender places of your spirit aching to be gathered up, to be seen, to be held.

She is the smile on your child's face,
the warm mug that touches your lips,
the laughter shared among friends,
the leaves tickling your face as they fall,
the moon lighting the way, and
the sun drenching your face in radiance.
And, maybe (just maybe)
it's time we remember:
Joy, too, comes in the mourning.

9

Q. Since reading 'Let There be Art', how have you cultivated space in your life for creativity? What creative things do you feel the Lord called you to?

TALKING POINTS

"We are also a part of a bigger purpose to reflect God's heart for the world. Beyond creating for ourselves, we are joining God in *his* proclamation of Jesus, the light of the world." (p224)

Our creativity is not limited to, but may be one of the following:

- Music
- Writing
- Hospitality
- Photography
- Design
- Comedy
- Dance
- Art
- Business Endeavours
- ANY kind of artistic expression

If someone in the group doesn't know how God has called them to create, pray with them. Brainstorm ideas, and help one another uncover the creativity hidden or masked by doubt, fear, or past rejection.

10

Q. Read Rachel's poem on pages 218-219. What is your favourite part of the poem? How does the phrase, "Hallelujah, light has come", fill you with hope?

TALKING POINTS

"The creation story is about more than just creativity. It is about God's power and goodness and justice on display. Light is not just bright; it is a boundary. It is a push against the dark." (p219).

Eternity echoes
before Eden.

Divinity dances with darkness,
commands and calls,
light *to come*
and *to be*.

With light, he creates. But,
with light, he *controls*.

Orders chaos.
Orders cosmos.

With his being.
With his breath.

Burns darkness
with boundary.

Makes goodness
our right.
Hallelujah,
light has come.

Though darkness
lingers,

Son lives
on.



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