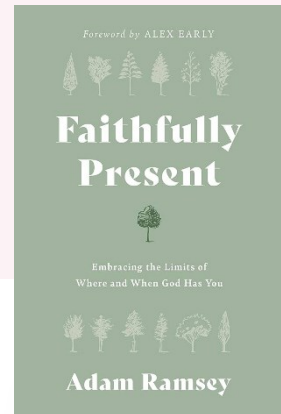




LEADER'S GUIDE

FAITHFULLY PRESENT BY ADAM RAMSEY



"Every one of us wants... to be faithfully present and fully alive to God, right here and right now, with every part of our lives."

ADAM RAMSEY

THEMES

Time

Place

Regrets and Nostalgia

Change

Human Limitations

Contentment

BOOK SUMMARY

"How do we live faithfully when life keeps changing? When life moves slowly? When life is coming at us fast? When life comes to an end?" (p18).

These are just some of the questions Adam endeavours to answer in his new book, "Faithfully Present." By learning to live where we are – the life given to us, not planned by us – we find freedom. As we embrace the declaration, "I am not God", we can think more deeply and biblically about the genuine limitations of time and place which mark us as creatures and not the creator!

Adam directs us to move forward in life while staying faithfully and fully present, right where we are. The book is sectioned into two parts:

Part One: Time

- Time is a precious commodity that is limited to us all.
- There are two types of time: Chronos and Kairos.
- Time flows through seasons of change and stability.
- Time can seem to pause during seasons of waiting, can rush by us in a hurry, or provide rest.
- Time can be in the past (memory), or in the future (our imminent death).

Part Two: Place

- We inhabit earthly places with our human bodies.
- We have relational spaces with others.
- Our hope is in our eternal resting place – Heaven.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS



1

Q. In the Foreword, Alex Early says, “A distracted life is a kind of death before death. A present life is life before Life.” (p9). Before reading this book, would you have described yourself as being fully present to the life you’ve been given? What has changed since reading this book?

TALKING POINTS

Alex Early asks profoundly, “In the final moments of your life, will you be saddened because you missed the point or filled with gratitude because you chose to forgo the petty for the sake of the true, good, meaningful, beautiful and ultimately, eternal?” (p9).

Since reading this book, our eyes may have become opened to areas of our lives where we are not fully present, as well as the reasons behind this absence. For example:

- We may be enduring difficult seasons of change and waiting; where our hearts are sick for the things we desire, or wish would remain the same.
- We may be too busy trying to do “all of the things”, that we miss what is happening right in front of us.
- We may be distracted by our devices, social media, or entertainment.

2

Q. How did Adam’s blunt quote, “you are not that big a deal, and you’re going to die soon” make you feel? Do you find peace in knowing you are not God?

TALKING POINTS

Adam clarifies that even though we’re not a “big deal” and we shall surely die, this does not mean we don’t matter. It simply means that we have a tendency of viewing our lives through the lens of us as the main character in the story, when in fact we’re not. We are characters in God’s great story. God’s story includes us, but it’s not about us, it’s about Him.

- In 100 years, it’s likely we will not be remembered; most of us are not destined for greatness.
- This does not mean our lives aren’t significant, and we are of great importance to our loved ones and God.
- In making peace with this knowledge, we can say alongside the psalmist, “I trust you, O Lord... My times are in your hand.” (Psalm 31:14-15).

If any member of your group has found this topic triggering, remind them that it’s okay to seek professional support during difficult seasons of life. You may like to pray for or with them, and offer practical support (such as childcare, meals and company), but remember your capacity and refer to a health professional when needed.

3

Q. In chapter one, ‘Times: Chronos and Kairos’, Adam shares the quote “The clock made us into time-keepers, and then time savers, and now time-servers” (p33). Do you agree? Discuss our changing relationship with time throughout history. What did you find most interesting?

TALKING POINTS

Chronos can be defined as “clock-time”; seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks months and years.

“Kairos is not really about duration but *timeliness*. Moments in time that are just the right moment at the right time”, those precious moments we grab onto and *carpe diem* – seize the day.

4

Q. Adam says that every stage of life has its “limited-edition gifts.” What stage of life and season are you in right now? Is there a specific joy God has woven into this unique season?

TALKING POINTS

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1):

- Spring, Summer, Winter, and Autumn.
- Growth, Maturity, Decline, and Death.
- Childhood, Adulthood, Middle Age, and Old Age.

5

Q. Discuss the quote, “Prayer is to the waiting person, what air is to the drowning person” (p54). When have you experienced a season of waiting? How did God prove Himself to be the “God of the in-between times.” (p51)?

TALKING POINTS

“Waiting – unlike peaks of bliss or valleys of danger – makes up so much of the rest of our life” (p50);

- “In bliss, we hope it won’t end” (p51).
- “In danger, we hope it will end” (p51).
- “In waiting, we just *hope*” (p51).

“God not only meets us on the mountaintops and sustains us in the valleys; he is the God of the in-between” (p50).

6

Q. In chapter five, “Hurry”, Adam reminds us that “sanctification happens at walking pace” (p62). Do you agree? Have you tried to intentionally slow down and live at a “pace of love” (p63)?

TALKING POINTS

“Authentic Christianity happens more slowly than we think, which means being patient with others – as well as ourselves – and committing to moving at the pace of love” (p63). There are many reasons to slow down and allow ourselves actual margin in our days for unhurried delight:

- To watch the sunrise and sunset and admire God’s creation.
- “To allocate time for cultivating wonder, reading widely, and thinking deeply.”
- To receive others and interruptions without frustration, but to view it as a providential moment sent by God.
- “Jesus doesn’t want your busyness. He wants your fruitfulness” (p63).

7

Q. “Memory is fundamental to our very identity: the link between our past experiences and our present consciousness” (p81). Discuss nostalgia and regret. How are they different? How are they similar?

TALKING POINTS

“How we think about time-past, and how we interact with those thoughts, really matters” (p81);

- “Nostalgia robs our present through comparison” (p81).
- “Regret robs our present through condemnation” (p81).

8

Q. Adam says that God has given us three aspects of place that locate us; geography, our bodies, and our relationships. Discuss the quote by Wendell Berry, "No matter how much one may love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some small part of it" (p111).

TALKING POINTS

Social media has given us the illusion that we are omnipresent, but only God can be everywhere at every moment. We can relearn what it means to "be in the place where our feet are" (p111):

- "Here, among these people, in this place" (113).
- Here, where our feet are firmly planted is where God wants us to be fully present.

9

Q. Turn to page 135, and look at the graph. Would you say it is accurate for your life? How might God be calling you to prioritise your relationships right now?

TALKING POINTS

"The deep and more intimate the friendship, the fewer of those friends we will have" (p136).

In the foreword of 'Closer Than a Sister' by Christina Fox, Jen Wilkin says, "Like all good gifts, Christian friendship is to be sought and stewarded with wisdom and grace" (p14):

- Sought; The seeking of life-giving, sister-friendships is a very intentional activity.
- Stewarded; As good stewards of our gifts, we lavishly pour into our friends' lives, seeking to be more others-focused and entering relationships wanting to bless others. Ultimately thinking more about our sister and less about what we can get out of the friendship.
- Wisdom; God generously pours wisdom into our lives when we ask for it. We need His wisdom to enter into the right relationships and maintain those relationships as we grow and learn together.
- Grace; As imperfect women, we require grace to cover one another's faults, forgive one another, and flourish together (p14).

10

Q. "And home with God is where each and every one of us who loves Jesus is heading" (p152). How can maintaining an eternal perspective, help us live *Faithfully Present* right now?

TALKING POINTS

"God does not promise you tomorrow. But he does promise you, in Christ, an everlasting life in his never-failing love" (p153):

- "faithfully present is what God is to us" (p153).
- "it's God's unchanging, faithful presence that will sustain you when you're here and now feels blown about" (p154).
- "The constant change of time and pressures of place need not haunt you when you know that your future is held secure by 'the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1:17)" (p154).
- Although we may be grieved by present trials, soon we will inhabit our eternal bodies in a resurrected world, with the one who created us.
- "Being convinced of *that* future will empower you to be faithful in your present, here and now, wherever and whenever, to the glory of God" (p154).



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