

## READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# *Drops Like Stars*

by  
Rob Bell

### THE ART OF DISRUPTION

1. What does Rob Bell mean by saying we live in the hallways (p. 3)? When has this been especially true for you?
2. Has the parable of the prodigal son ever struck you as being unresolved? If so, why do you think Jesus ended the story this way? How would you have ended it? What comes to mind first when you think of an unresolved situation in your life?
3. Explain the difference between asking “Why this?” after a tragedy and asking “What now?” (p. 17). What kind of shift is required to go from one perspective to the other?

4. Suffering not only forces us “out of the box”; it smashes the boxes, our old reality. As Bell writes, “We’re forced to imagine a new future because the one we were planning on is gone” (p. 28). When, if ever, has suffering radically changed or threatened to change the orientation of your life?

### THE ART OF HONESTY

1. Bell writes, “If we aren’t careful, our success and security and abundance can lead to a certain sort of boredom, a numbing predictability, a paralyzing indifference that comes from being too comfortable” (p. 44). What does it mean to be “too comfortable”? Have you ever experienced this kind of boredom and predictability? Should we try to guard against becoming “too comfortable”? If so, how? Instead of comfort, should we seek out suffering?
2. “Pain has a way of making us more honest” (p. 48). Has pain ever caused you to say something you might not have said otherwise? If so, what was the result? Why do you think we are less honest when we are not suffering?
3. For Bell, great artists and great people put in words or otherwise express what others are thinking so you know you aren’t alone. When has an artist or writer performed this function for you?

## THE ART OF THE ACHE

1. Bell writes, “So much of the time we’re surrounded by buzz and gloss and hype—we slide down the surface of things” (p. 57). How does the picture on pages 58 and 59 make you feel? How would you feel if you were standing in the middle of it?

## THE ART OF SOLIDARITY

1. Why is suffering such an effective way of forging human connections? When has suffering alongside another person or group of people connected you to others? How has the fact that Jesus suffered on the cross in the same ways that we do, physically and emotionally, connected you to God?

## THE ART OF ELIMINATION

1. Suffering also aids us in stripping away excess, eliminating what is trivial and unnecessary. When has a time of suffering or pain helped you cut through to what was important? What did you find mattered most? What was revealed to you as unnecessary?
2. “You can have all of the things that everybody says you need to be happy and yet actually possess very little. While others, in the process of losing the few things they do have, are, in fact, . . . possessing everything”

(p. 109). What does Bell mean by this statement? What does it mean to possess everything?

## THE ART OF FAILURE

1. Bell gives the example of a ceramics class divided into two groups, one that would be graded on the quantity they produced and the other on the quality of one work. Interestingly, it was the quantity group that produced the better objects. Why do you think this was the case? Have you ever found that the more you produced of something, the better the quality?
2. When Bell talks about mistakes or failures, his counselor holds up a sign that reads, in Hebrew and in English, “The God who wastes nothing” (pp. 113–14). How do you interpret this sign? What in your life do you fear is wasted?
3. Bell recounts how Native Americans leave a blemish in one corner of each rug they weave because they believe the blemish is where the spirit enters. Why might imperfection be the place where the spirit gains entry?
4. “The cross, it turns out, is about the mysterious work of God, which begins not with big plans and carefully laid out timetables but in pain and anguish and death. It’s there, in the agony of those moments, that we get the first glimpse of just what it looks like for God to take all of our trauma and hurt and disappointment, all those fragments lying there on the ground, and turn them into something else, something new, something that we

never would have been able to create on our own” (p. 119). Have you ever thought of your trauma and suffering as something God could use, could create with? Why do you think it has to be this way?

5. We will suffer, and it will shape us for “bitter or better, closed or open, more ignorant or more aware” (p. 121). How have you seen suffering change people in one way or the other? What can we do to help ensure that the suffering we will experience shapes us for the better?
6. Novelist Susan Howatch writes that in the end “nothing is wasted and nothing is without significance and nothing ceases to be precious to me” (p. 126). Do you feel this way about your life experiences? Do you believe God does?