

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY



A NavPress resource published in alliance
with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

For more information, visit www.NavPress.com.

Honestly: Getting Real About Jesus and Our Messy Lives
Copyright © 2016 by Daniel Fusco. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

We all have those stories, don't we? Those things in life that just don't make any sense. You just look at your life, you look at your circumstances, you compare your life to others, and you think to yourself, *That's not what life's supposed to be about. That's not what's meant to happen.* The details might be different, but life's equally messy for all of us.

I'm not talking just about the gut-punch stuff, either. As a college kid, I had to deal with my mom dying of cancer. That's an appalling example of life's messiness. But the negative headlines are the only things that make life messy—messiness is everything that keeps us unbalanced. Life is extraordinarily unpredictable. Things happen that we can't fathom—some of which we choose, and some of which are chosen for us. Changing jobs, dating and breaking up, moving, and having kids, all the way down to getting an awkward text from a friend or forgetting we're out of milk (or money).

Messiness is a universal concept, and the church in Ephesus in the mid-first century had its fair share. The apostle Paul had started the church there, and as he traveled and started other congregations, he kept a close eye on the established churches. Because travel took so long in those days, and he couldn't be everywhere at once, he had to write the churches letters to help them keep focused in the midst of life. The letter he wrote to the Ephesians was not precipitated by extraordinary circumstances, either—it was just normal life happening in Ephesus. But they, like us, needed simple encouragement and direction.

Messiness describes the things we find ourselves dealing with on a daily, weekly, monthly, and even lifelong basis. Things happen that don't seem to make much sense, and then they keep right on happening.

Here's the thing. Maybe you've been told that if you're a good Christian, everything will be sunshine and rainbows. Or that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Perhaps a pastor or a parent has let you know, directly or by implication, that your messy life is no one's fault but your own. Maybe you've always lived around people who've told you—or you've

even told yourself—that life *isn't* messy. . .and so anything messy just gets swept under the rug and ignored.

Or maybe, like so many others, you've chosen to flee "organized religion" because the pat answers, clichés, and lack of authenticity didn't jibe with the more mysterious and unpredictable parts of life. Maybe you asked the honest questions, only to be chastised or brushed aside. Told you were sinning, even.

But you've got to know this: The Christian message is *not* that life isn't messy. Honestly, it's the opposite. The Christian message doesn't claim that life is neat or tidy or straightforward. The Christian message says that life is—and always will be—exceedingly, frustratingly messy. You know it, and so do I. So I promise you: Nothing we are going to explore in this study guide will contradict the root truth that life doesn't always make sense.

But there's another part to the message. It's just as true, and even more important. Yes, life is messy. *And* Jesus is real. That's a big deal. That's the gospel. That word *gospel*, which is a churchy word for sure, means *good news*. And the fact that Jesus is real in the midst of life's messiness *is* good news. He's where everything that's healing and good and grace-filled begins and ends.

Because here's the thing: Jesus really *did* feed the hungry and clothe the naked. He fixed what is perpetually broken. He can still do that today! But he does it by standing in the middle of the mess. Life will always be messy. But Jesus will always be our beauty in the middle of the mess. Jesus is our Love Supreme.

When you're listening to a great jazz musician, you don't feel excited and satisfied when the song is over. Like, no one goes, "Yes, I got from the start of the song to the end of the song!" In fact, when the final note fades, you're actually bummed. Because great jazz musicians like John Coltrane – or "Trane" as he was affectionately called—took you on a journey and, in the process, revealed to you amazing, beautiful, and unexpected things. You would never have guessed from the beginning of the song, or even the middle of the song, where you would end up. Why? Because you experienced the process of improvisation.

It's been said that humans love the outcome, while God loves the process. This study guide, like the book it accompanies, *Honestly*, is about experiencing the process. Of living a messy life, and living it alongside Jesus. The book is a lot like a piece of improvised music. All of *Honestly* is based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And like at a jazz gig (but with a lot less sweat), I wanted to improvise on the stunning themes of Paul's letter: the messiness of life, the crazy good news of Jesus, what we do about the mess as we relate to each other, and how we relate to God—and how God's love reigns supreme over and through all of it. I wanted to *explore*, and just like jazz players take their initial cues from a "lead sheet," I wanted Ephesians to be the lead sheet for the book and this study guide.

Each chapter of the book has its own special truth bomb, waiting to explode in someone's heart and mind. The chapter that hits *you* will probably be different from the chapter that hits your friend. I'll be much happier if you *experience* this group study rather than if you *finish* it. I would be overjoyed if, in some way, this study helps you see the beauty of Jesus in the midst of your messy life. And my joy would overflow if you experience Jesus in fresh ways on your life's journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 1

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

- ❑ Read Sections 1.1 through 1.4 of the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- ❑ Watch Video 1 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

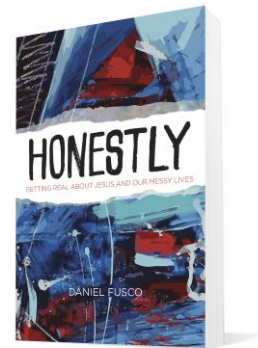
1.1 ACKNOWLEDGE THE MESS

I, Paul, am under God's plan as an apostle, a special agent of Christ Jesus, writing to you faithful believers. Ephesians 1:1

When Mom took her last breath—when Dad lay down beside her on the rented hospital bed and just shook like a leaf—I remember thinking . . . nothing. Absolutely nothing. Because it didn't compute. There was no category for this. If life was a well-lit room, then Mom dying was a power outage. Everything in my life went dark, and there was nothing to do but wait for the electricity to come back on.

Even though I knew the light wouldn't come back on, I waited anyway. Because what else could a boy do?

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES XI-XII IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE MESS

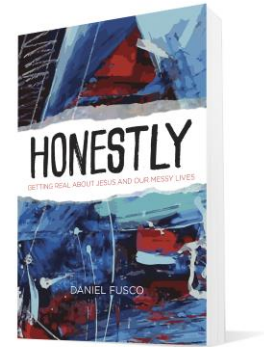
1. How did you feel when you read the account of the author's mother's death?
2. Have you ever had someone you were really close to die? Share the story with the group.
3. What mess are you in right now?
4. Why do you think that people tend to hide their messes from one another?
5. Knowing that sometimes there is nothing others can do about your situation, why would you still want people around you in a time of need?
6. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

1.2 PERCEPTIONS AND PRESENCE

Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross. Ephesians 1:7

There's no better teacher than Jesus when it comes to dealing with the messiness of life. He's lived the messiness, and he's come out the other side. And the life of Jesus testifies to a key truth: God loves to bring blessings out of perceived cursings.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 5-7 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON PERCEPTION AND PRESENCE

1. What does it mean for your life that Jesus dealt with the same kind of messiness as every human?
2. Be honest: How does the idea of blessings out of perceived cursings make you feel?
3. Share some ideas of how something can appear to be a curse, but actually be a blessing.
4. Have you ever experienced something in life that felt so cursed while you were going through it, but over time turned out to be a blessing in disguise?
5. What are some of the unsuccessful ways that you have dealt with the messes in your life?
6. What are some of the successful ways that you have dealt with the messes in your life?
7. Is it more difficult for you to handle messes that were caused by others or caused by your own decisions?
8. Take some time to journal your thoughts on this section.

1.3 THE DIFFICULTY OF JESUS

It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ. Ephesians 2:11-12

» READ LUKE 11:1-44 IN YOUR FAVORITE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

RIFFING ON DIFFICULTY

1. What are your immediate thoughts and feelings about this story?
2. Where in your life is Jesus not showing up when you think he should?
3. Why do you think Jesus is working that way, as opposed to neatly and easily?
4. In your own life, do you learn more from encouragement or discipline? From pleasure or pain? From instruction or trial-and-error?
5. What can you gain from allowing Jesus to work in your life in his way and his timing?
6. Take a moment to journal your thoughts on this section.

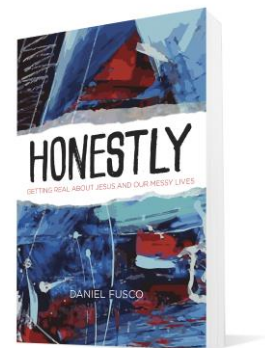
1.4 ROCKIN' A LIMP

When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. Ephesians 3:8

After I started following Jesus, and as I was learning how to live in the mess, do you know what Jesus did? He gave me a limp. He used [my] negative view of the church I had, and he invited me to walk into that mess even further. To become a pastor! Because that was the negative soil from which real healing would grow. Not only for myself, but for others in the church.

Life is messy, and sometimes it feels like Jesus is the one doing the messing. Maybe that's because he is.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 18-20 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE LIMP

1. What were some of the feelings you had towards the priest in this story?
2. Have you ever had someone representing the church do something that made you resent God?
3. What limp has Jesus given you?
4. Can you think of any ways God might be using that limp in your life? In other people's lives?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 2

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

- Read Sections 1.5 through 1.10 and Coda in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- Watch Video 2 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

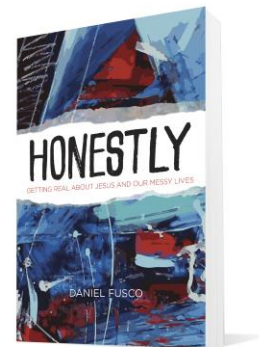
1.5 BECOMING UNBROKEN

He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth. Ephesians 1:8-10

I'm willing to admit, at least when I'm being honest, that I might not fully understand the extent of God's love and wisdom. That maybe God can see the mess better than I can. And not just see it, but deal with it. Transform and redeem it.

But dang. Sometimes trusting him to do that feels impossibly hard, doesn't it?

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 21-22 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON TRUST

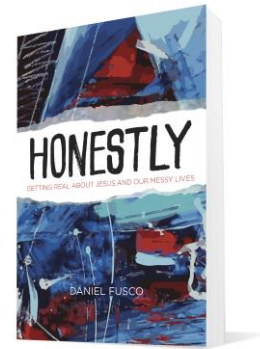
- Complete that sentence: "God, I *struggle* with the fact that you _____."
- Is it hard for you to trust that God can transform and redeem your mess? Why or why not?
- Have you ever had a time in your life—maybe even now—when you've felt bitter about something?
- What are some ways that you have found to get rid of bitterness or prevent it altogether? Share your thoughts with the group.
- Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

1.6 CAN I GET A REMEDY?

I greet you with the grace and peace poured into our lives by God our Father and our Master, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:2

Peace is far more than the absence of conflict. The best way to understand biblical peace is with the Hebrew word shalom, which means both “peace” and “to join.” The implication is that when something is separated, or broken, it needs to be fixed. A relationship is separated, but then joined back together. A bone is broken, but then joined back together.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 24-27 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE REMEDY

1. Describe grace and peace in your own words.
2. Share your thoughts on why grace is necessary for peace to prevail.
3. Have you ever tried to fix a broken situation without God’s grace? What happened?
4. Where in your life do you need some peace?
5. How do you feel about getting grace and peace *in* the mess rather than *for* the mess?
6. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

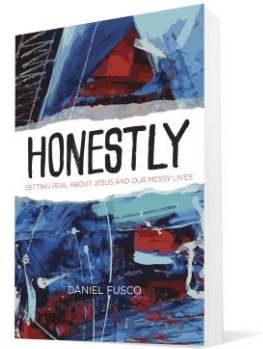
1.7 REFLECTIONS ON A MESSY GOD

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He’s the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Ephesians 1:3

We live in an information age, and all the information in the world is immediately at our fingertips. Yet how many of those details truly help us understand our own lives or how we should live? Honestly, a great deal of the information we are surrounded with seems important but is ultimately insignificant.

And all the while, the information we really want—like who God is and what God's ultimate purposes are in the midst of the mess—remains elusive.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 29-30 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON NOT KNOWING

1. How important is it for you to know all the details and information about something before being able to make a decision regarding it?
2. How familiar are you with the Bible?
3. What about God is hard for you to understand?
4. What about God do you understand?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

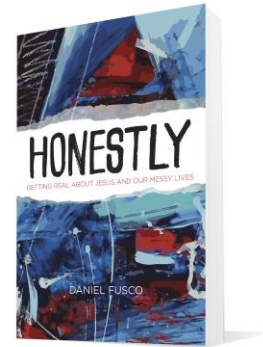
1.8 BAD NEWS FIRST

It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ. Ephesians 2:11

Imagine waking up, stumbling into the bathroom, taking a bleary-eyed look in the mirror, and saying your morning mantra, all froggy-voiced, "You're a rebel and a total failure."

That's not usually the way I start my day! But that's exactly what I am. I rebel against God by nature, and I fail at living up to the standard God has created me for. So yeah, I am a rebel and a failure. I'm worse than I realize.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 32-33 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE BAD NEWS

1. How do you feel, hearing that you're worse than you realize?
2. How do you relate to the bad news? Do you see yourself "guilty as charged," or do you struggle with considering yourself a rebel?
3. What are some ways you've increased someone else's mess?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

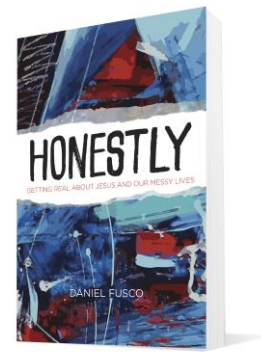
1.9 CULTURAL CANCER

The Messiah has made things up between us so that we're now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody. Ephesians 2:14-15

Just as Jesus allows us to see our own blindness, so Jesus is the only vantage point by which we can see past or outside our own culture. It's as if following Jesus gives us an oxygen mask, and when we put it on and breathe deeply, for the first time we aren't breathing in and out our pure host culture. We're breathing God's Spirit instead.

So the bad news is worse than we realize. It's exceedingly bad news, matter of fact. We're individual rebels and failures, we're corporate rebels and failures, and without Jesus we can't even see a way out, let alone actually escape.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 34-37 AND 40 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON CULTURE

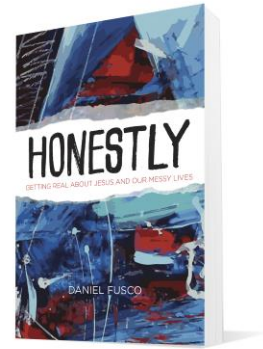
1. In what ways are our cultural values and ideas different from those expressed in God's Word?
2. How are you breathing in and out the spirit of your culture?
3. What are some ways in which your thoughts about yourself and the world have changed since you started your journey of faith?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

1.10 CHOOSE HOPE

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father. Ephesians 2:16-18

Each one of us stands at a crossroads, every single moment of our lives. Bitter or better. It's not a "choose once and forget about it" deal. Life might be going great for you right now, but something's going to force you to choose, tomorrow, next week, next year. Bitter or better. Part of being created in God's image means having the ability—sometimes it feels more like a terrible privilege—to choose. God doesn't force us to do anything.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 42 AND 44 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON HOPE

1. Where are you bitter in your life right now?
2. Have you had a time of bitterness from which you were able to emerge? Share the story.
3. Why do you think that people choose to hold on to things that make them bitter?
4. What areas of your life need hope infused into them?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

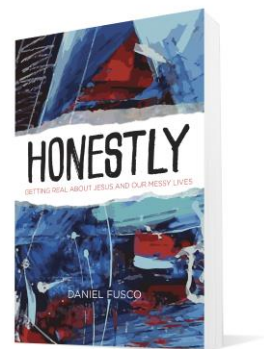
CODA

Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. Hebrews 12:15 NLT

Instead of using a magic wand to wave away all our external trouble, God's after something deeper. It's something we're all deeply familiar with: a journey. Journeys have ups and downs, highs and lows, but we take them for a reason: to get somewhere we want to be.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly

» REFLECT ON PAGES 45-46 IN *HONESTLY*.



RIFFING ON CODA

1. In light of the messiness of life, how do grace and peace allow us to ward off bitterness?
2. What are your thoughts on the idea that God is not as concerned about fixing our external messes as he is with fixing the mess inside of us?
3. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 3

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

- Read Sections 2.1 through 2.4 in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- Watch Video 3 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

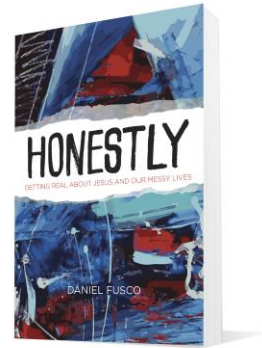
2.1 RESURRECTION

God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. Ephesians 1:20-23

» REFLECT ON PAGES 49-50 IN *HONESTLY*.

The cross gives way to a tomb, and here's the good news, the hope for us in this messy life: The tomb always gives way to an empty tomb.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



RIFFING ON RESURRECTION

1. What are your thoughts about the difference between Jesus being on the cross and Jesus being off the cross?
2. Consider an area of your life where you struggle with bitterness. How does it make a difference to know that Jesus rose from the dead?
3. Where in your life does God want to do a work of resurrection?
4. Take a minute and journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

2.2 JESUS, CENTER STAGE

Immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. Ephesians 2:4-5

The good news is not that Jesus makes bad people good.

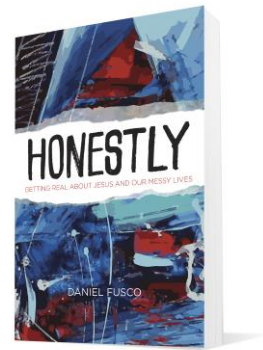
The good news is not that Jesus makes decent, moral people even better.

The good news is not that Jesus takes rebels and failures and does an extreme makeover on them.

None of that.

The good news is that Jesus makes dead people alive.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 52-56 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE SWITCH

1. What are your thoughts about the difference between being a good person or an “alive” person when it comes to God?
2. What is your honest response to this statement: “*God does not love you because you’re good; God loves you because God is loving*”?
3. If you’re following Jesus, do you sense that you have been changed from dead to alive? Why or why not?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

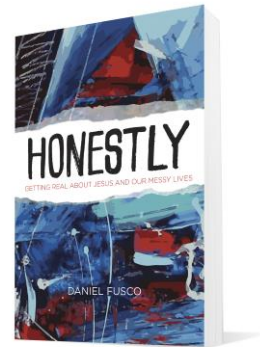
2.3 SAVED

It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:14

Throughout the Bible, the message of Jesus, the coming of Jesus, the reality of how life can now be lived because of Jesus—all that is called “good news.” And it’s good news for all people, all nations, all societies, and not just for the awe- some individuals who are “worth” saving.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly

» REFLECT ON PAGES 57-59 IN *HONESTLY*.



RIFFING ON SALVATION

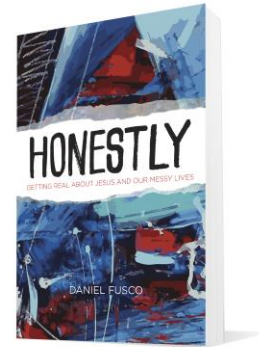
1. How does knowing that God desires to save people change how we view people?
2. What relationships in your life right now could use grace and peace?
3. What fruit is God developing in your life?
4. What is he revealing to you about where you are in process?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

2.4 LIVING GOD-STYLE

The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board. . . . When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. Ephesians 3:5-6, 12

At the end of the day, and at the end of time, it's not about what you've done or left undone—it's about what Jesus has done for you, and whether you've accepted that gift. That's why the finished work of Jesus' cross makes the playing field completely level, because anyone can accept the gift of Jesus.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 60-64 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON ACCESS

1. God has given all of us equal access to himself. How does knowing this:
 - a. Change the way you see the people around you?
 - b. Change the way you see yourself?
2. Have you come to the place where you believe that you have a plan of where you are heading in life? What is it?
3. How does the fact that God has a plan for you bigger than yourself change or modify your ideas of what you will do in life?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 4

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

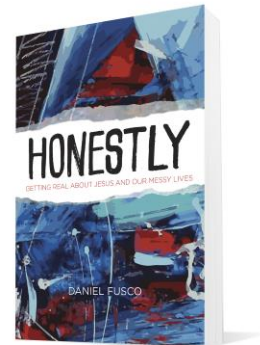
- Read Sections 2.4 through 2.6 and Coda in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- Watch Video 4 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

2.5 SCHOOLING ANGELS

Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels! Ephesians 3:10

We are not called to go to church but to perpetually be the church. We're all called into something bigger and greater—something with Jesus at its head and people from every country and race and gender and economic level and political party and age and personality type surrounding us. I'm a tiny, finite human, and the scale of God's ambition absolutely shocks me!

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 66-69 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON ANGELS

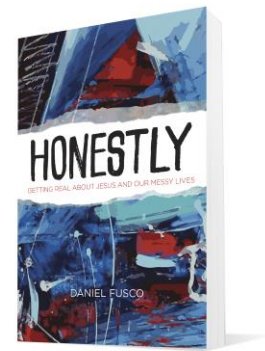
1. What struggles do you have with the church?
2. Do you see yourself as a part of the universal church?
3. What are your thoughts on the church being the textbook and curriculum for angels?
4. How is God calling you to be a part of his *solution*?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

2.6 FAR MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE

I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! Ephesians 3:14-20

It may not be kosher to say stuff like this, but I can’t wait for the day that Jesus absolutely rips evil a new one. Kicks it to the curb and then keeps on kicking, until the face of evil is a bloody mess. I want Jesus to give evil what it’s got coming! To straight destroy it! Because until evil is completely defeated, we cannot be completely free of the real mess, and we cannot be completely healed, whole, and joyful.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 70-72 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON POWER

1. What are you currently struggling to control?
2. How do you feel knowing that Jesus has all the power?
3. How does the reality that Jesus has power to ultimately triumph over the mess change things in the present?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

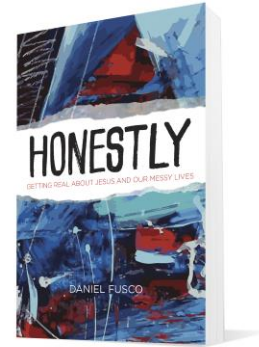
CODA

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God’s original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he’s there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross. Colossians 1:15-20

Honestly, the mess never goes away. It just doesn't. But here's what Jesus means for you. Right now, today, in the midst of your mess. Jesus is a gift for the mess. The presence of Jesus is our present in the mess. Not a golden ticket out of the mess, but a gift within the mess.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 73-74 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON CODA

1. What does it mean for you to have someone to walk with through the mess in your life right now?
2. How does it make you feel to know that the person walking through your mess with you is God himself?
3. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 5

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

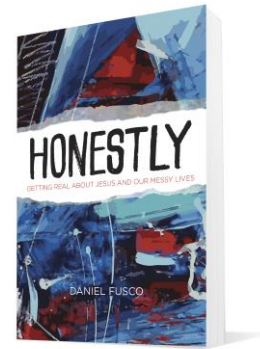
- Read Sections 3.1 through 3.4 in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- Watch Video 5 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

3.1 YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT

In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. Ephesians 4:1-2

We can't go around the mess because the mess is everywhere: relationships, jobs, hobbies, churches, governments, nature, school. If we're human, we live in the mess, and if we're alive, we live through the mess. Because not living in the mess means escaping humanity, and not living through the mess means ending life right now. Living in and through is our only option.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 77-79 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON WALKING

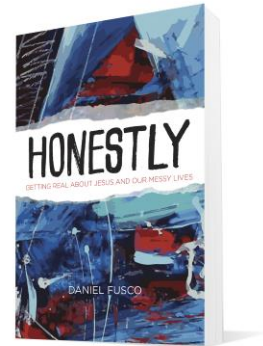
1. Would you say that you are “in the mess,” or walking with Jesus “through the mess”? Why?
2. How can you become more aware of Jesus walking with you through the mess?
3. What are your thoughts on the abundant life God intends for us?
4. What does your flourishing life in Jesus actually look like?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

3.2 WALK THIS WAY

You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.
Ephesians 4:4-6

God is calling us to walk a certain way, through the mess. He's calling us to learn how to play our part in its established role. And for a good reason! God isn't calling us to just "live our lives"—God is calling us to live in a specific way, for the purpose of his glory and our ultimate happiness.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 81-84 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON DESIGN

1. Would you describe your life as in sync with God's rhythm? Why or why not?
2. What good works have you seen God plan out for you so far?
3. How would your life look different if you were walking the way Jesus walks?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

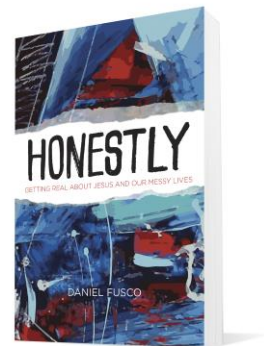
3.3 GETTING INTIMATE

My response is to get down on my knees before the Father. Ephesians 3:14

When we pray, we often want the benefits without the costs. That might sound harsh, but it's true. We want God's provision without the process, or the gift without the lesson that teaches it.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*

» REFLECT ON PAGES 85-87 IN *HONESTLY*.



RIFFING ON INTIMACY

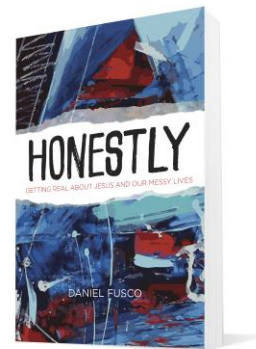
1. How do you respond when God answers one of your prayers with a “no”?
2. How would you rate your prayer life on a scale of 1-10 (10 being great)? Why?
3. Share a story about the cost of an answered prayer you prayed.
4. How can you make prayer more intimate (communication over time)?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this

3.4 EMBRACE THE CRUTCH

Prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Ephesians 6:18

The way some people tell it, God is dead. Or they say God is scientifically impossible. Or Western and white. Or mythology. Or a crutch. But if someone says to you, “Come on, don’t you know prayer is a crutch?”—you know what you say back? “You’re right. It is a crutch.” Because the last time I checked, if you break your leg, you’re pretty glad to have a crutch! And it isn’t wrong to lean on a crutch when you have a broken leg.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 90-91 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE CRUTCH

1. What are your thoughts about God revealing himself to us even if we aren’t sure he exists?
2. How do you think God wants to reveal himself to you and in you?
3. How can you better embrace prayer as the crutch for your broken life?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 6

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

- ❑ Read Sections 3.5 through 3.8 and Coda in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- ❑ Watch Video 6 at <http://honestlybook.com>.

3.5 TRAINING FOR THE RACE

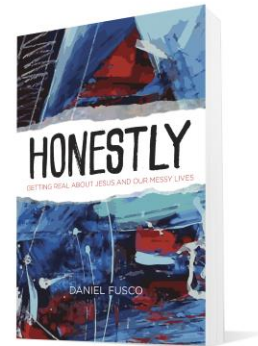
Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out. Ephesians 6:18

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. (Ephesians 1:15-16).

Pray when things are good. Pray when things are normal. Pray when the you-know-what hits the fan. Pray throughout the messiness of life.

All the time, in every circumstance, put your prayer and your praise together.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 92-96 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON TRAINING

1. What are your thoughts about praying when things are good?
2. What is going well, right now, that you should be praying about?
3. What are some ways you can strengthen your prayer muscles?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

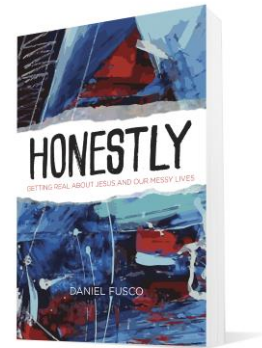
3.6 BOWELS? YES, BUT IT'S COMPLICATED

Pray that I'll know what to say and have the courage to say it at the right time, telling the mystery to one and all, the Message that I, jailbird preacher that I am, am responsible for getting out. Ephesians 6:19-20

Sometimes when we pray, we're asking for faith—or joy or peace or patience—without the life circumstances that will force us to grow in that. We want more love, but only so we can love people who are already lovable. We want more self-control, but only when it comes to habits and behaviors we can already control.

So another way of looking at the cost-benefit issue, in biblical terms, is to say we want the fruit without the growth. But growth doesn't work like that.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 97-100 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON COMPLICATIONS

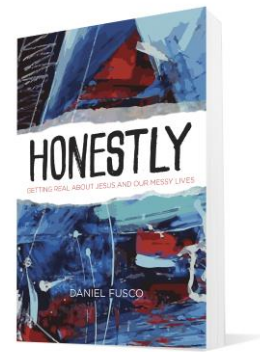
1. How can you better pray from your “bowels,” in accordance with what God wants and is doing?
2. How does the idea of praying “along the lines of what God is doing” change your thoughts on prayer?
3. What fears might be holding you back from joining God?
4. What do you do when the answer to a prayer is not immediately forthcoming?
5. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

3.7 WALK BY FAITH

When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. Ephesians 3:12

Why doesn't God give us what we ask for when we ask for something good, and something he could take care of right away? In some ways, it's almost easier to make sense of the huge prayers that go unanswered than it is to make sense of the smaller ones that go unanswered.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 102-104 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON FAITH

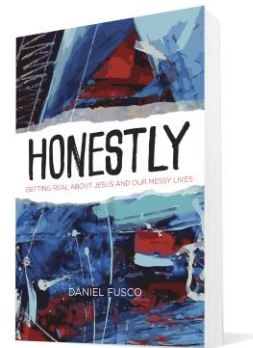
1. Has God ever answered your prayer in an entirely unexpected way and/or with entirely unexpected timing?
2. What are some things you know about God that you fall back on when you don't understand what he is doing?
3. Where in your life is it currently challenging to walk by faith?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

3.8 IMITATE GOD

Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Ephesians 5:1

When we're imitating, we don't have to know up front everything God wants us to do. Instead, we can look at God and what God is doing, and then take one step. One step leads to another, and another after that. It's exactly how small children learn virtually everything—by imitating their parents and siblings one step at a time.

Daniel Fusco, *Honestly*



» REFLECT ON PAGES 104-105, 109-111 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON IMITATION

1. How well do you do with loving the sinner while hating the sin?
2. In what ways can you start imitating God right now?

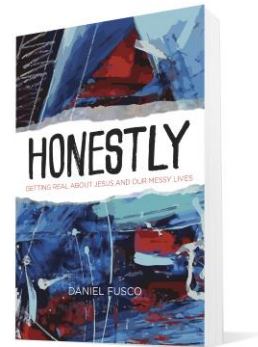
3. Have you ever struggled with feeling that God did not love you? Explain how that impacted your life.
4. What are some ways in which you have seen the love of God in your life?
5. How can you, like Jesus, bring God out into the open?
6. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

CODA

I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. Ephesians 4:1-2

How would your life look if you decided to walk the way Jesus walked? Honestly, there are only two right answers to that. It would be unpredictable, and it would be good.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



REFLECT ON PAGES 112-113 IN HONESTLY.

RIFFING ON CODA

1. Have you ever tried to walk as Jesus walked? Describe what happened.
2. How do you feel about the fact that walking with Jesus is unpredictable and unsafe—but good?
3. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 7

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

- ❑ Read Sections 4.1 through 4.4 in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- ❑ Watch Video 7 at <http://honestlybook.com>

4.1 THE BEGINNING OF THE END

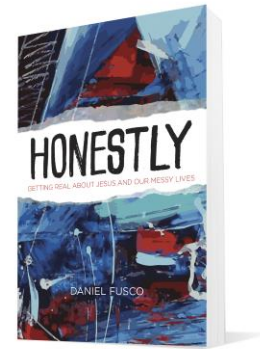
Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Ephesians 1:4

Immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. Ephesians 2:4

Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Ephesians 5:1-2

Even in the midst of our messy lives and the unpredictability and things we don't understand, Jesus is all about love. Jesus loves us in and through it all, to the end, just like his disciples (John 13:1). We can talk all we want about the mess and the good news and how to walk through all of it, but we need to keep love over and under and through all of it.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 117-119 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON LOVE

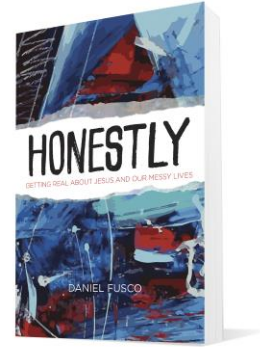
1. How does God's love fit into the idea of a messy life?
2. How do you see God's love reflected into your life presently?
3. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

4.2 A MESS OF LOVE AND LIFE

Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. Ephesians 5:1-2

Love is meant to be experienced. *Love Supreme is not just an idea or a concept. It's real, it's lived, it stirs our emotions. It makes us lose our minds sometimes for those we love, because our hearts are so full.*

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 125-128 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON EXTRAVAGANCE

1. When have you seen extravagant love lived out?
2. How do you feel, knowing that God loved you before you even existed?
3. Discuss ways that we can develop a mind-set of Love Supreme.
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

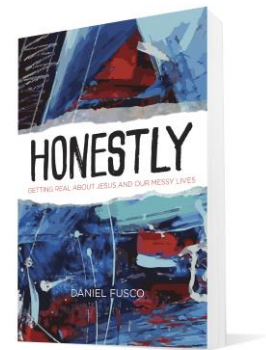
4.3 THE REAL SHAPE OF LOVE

God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

God wants us to love people— to walk in love—in the same way Jesus loves us.

In other words, loving people irrespective of our feelings for them.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 130-131 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE SHAPE OF LOVE

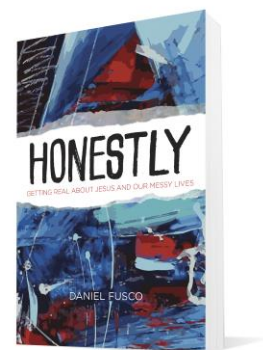
1. What comes up for you when you consider loving someone you don't think deserves your love?
2. Where in your life do you need God to teach you how to love?
3. Which specific relationships in your life need God's preemptive and proactive love?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

4.4 LOVE, NEGATIVELY

I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. Ephesians 4:2-3

Walking God's way is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23). That means if we choose to act in opposition to that, we're not walking in God's love. We can't truly love and be unkind, for example. We can't truly love and be unfaithful. I don't think we even need to get into any of the specific lists of prohibitions we find throughout the Bible, because they simply illustrate all the ways we can be unloving.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 134-136 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE NEGATIVES

1. What are some things that God wants you to stop doing because he loves you?
2. Why do you think that we tend to kick against being told what not to do?
3. How does understanding that love doesn't do certain things change how you view love?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

HONESTLY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 8

IN PREPARATION FOR THE GROUP TIME

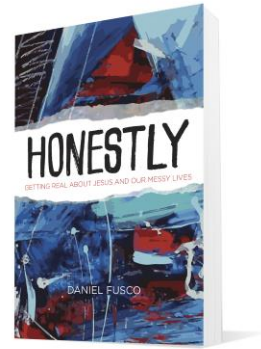
- ❑ Read Sections 4.5 through 4.6 and Coda in the book *Honestly* by Daniel Fusco.
- ❑ Watch Video 8 at <http://honestlybook.com>

4.5 TIME TO REFLECT

You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. . . . It's a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ. Wake up from your sleep, Climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light! Ephesians 5:8-9, 12-14

What we were created to do with light is to reflect it. It's like the sun and the moon. In the book of Genesis, the sun is called the greater light and the moon is called the lesser light. Why? Because the sun generates light and the moon reflects that light. Like the moon, we weren't created to make light like the sun. Or the Son. Instead, you and I were created to reflect God's light, like the moon reflects the sun, out into the darkness, so that others have the light they need to bear fruit and flourish.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly



» REFLECT ON PAGES 139-142 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON REFLECTION

1. What are your thoughts on the difference between nit-picking and exposing darkness?
2. What dark areas of your life need to be lit with God's light?
3. How do you feel knowing that you don't have to create light, but simply reflect it?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

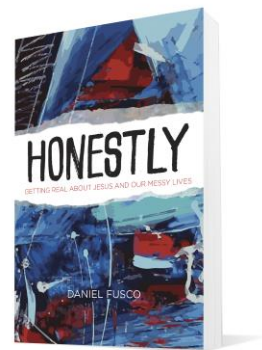
4.6 FILLED TO THE BRIM

Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge draughts of him. Ephesians 5:18

I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights!

Ephesians 3:17-18

Alcohol can cut through our normal filters for behavior and lead us to do things we would never do otherwise. And with the possible exception of busting a move at a wedding or finally confessing your love for your crush, this is bad idea. But we can see exactly why Paul chose an analogy that links wine and God's Spirit. Because in the word picture Paul is creating, we should absolutely be "under the influence," but instead of wine—which can make us into idiots—we should be under the influence of God's Spirit, which leads us to act like God.



Daniel Fusco, Honestly

» REFLECT ON PAGES 143-147 IN *HONESTLY*.

RIFFING ON THE OVERFLOW

1. What are your thoughts about the comparison between being drunk with wine or filled with the Spirit?
2. Did you ever know that you could ask God to fill you with His Spirit? How would that change things for you?
3. What would living under the influence of the Spirit look like in your life?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.

CODA

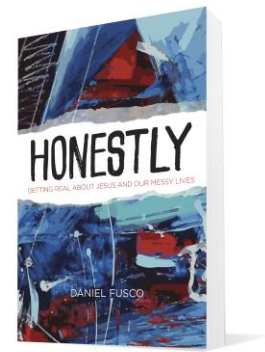
It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. Ephesians 2:5

Always, always Jesus. That's light. All the light we need. The light shines in the darkness—especially in the darkness of our lives—and the darkness cannot overcome it!

That's love. The perfect love of God. A love that cannot be denied or changed. A love that changes everything. Love Supreme.

Daniel Fusco, Honestly

» REFLECT ON PAGES 149-154 IN *HONESTLY*.



RIFFING ON COMING HOME

1. In what ways have you been the prodigal?
2. How does it make you feel to realize that the father in the prodigal story is God?
3. Where can you see Jesus' beauty and love shining in the midst of your mess?
4. Take a minute to journal your thoughts about this section of the journey.