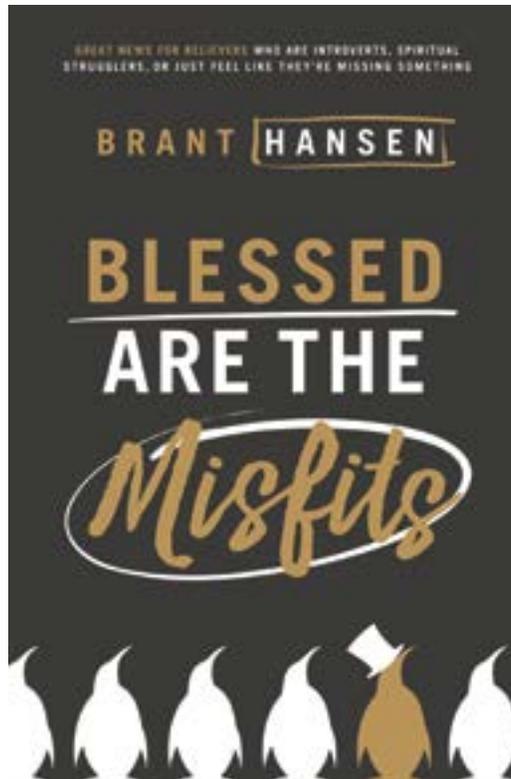


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BLESSED ARE THE MISFITS

**GREAT NEWS FOR BELIEVERS WHO ARE INTROVERTS, SPIRITUAL STRUGGLERS,
OR JUST FEEL LIKE THEY ARE MISSING SOMETHING**

THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Chapter One It's Not Just You

React to all or some of the following statements out of chapter 1 and describe how you might relate or not (maybe choose one that rings the truest to you):

1. "You know that feeling when God is right there, this close, and you can just feel His loving arms around you, and you can literally hear His voice whispering in your ear, telling you how much He loves you? I don't. I never have."
2. "Clearly something was spiritually wrong with me...(during) emotional worship services...I sang, and felt little...I'd join prayer groups, dutifully waiting, trying to rein in my wandering mind, asking God to help me feel His presence. But I couldn't feel anything."
3. "Maybe God gave up on me? Maybe I'd sinned too much? Maybe He wasn't there?"
4. "...I couldn't feel God at all. I wanted God, honestly, I did. Did God, presuming He exists, still want me?"
5. "God, I don't feel You. I don't get it. I don't understand church people."

Oxford Dictionary defines "misfit" as: A person whose behavior or attitude sets them apart from others in an uncomfortably conspicuous way.

Describe your misfit tendencies.

What is it about you that you find amazing God uses?

What do you find yourself being skeptical about concerning the Christian faith and/or church culture?

How has this skepticism affected you and your relationship with Jesus?

Read this quote out loud: "I hope when you're done with this book, you'll see God still loves people like you and me, people who sometimes genuinely don't understand what people are doing or feeling or thinking when it comes to religious stuff. We have reason to be relieved. Happy, even. Blessed."

Chapter Two Together Yet Apart

Brant boldly states that feelings have nothing to do with whether or not God loves us or is still involved in our lives, and claims that Scripture never states that we will have good feelings due to God's being still involved with us. Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Explain your answer.

How can our aching dissatisfaction, even frustration, be evidence of a right relationship with God?

Define "apartness".

What takeaways do you have from Jesus' "proposal" during the Last Supper? What parallels make you think?

"Yet there's Jesus, telling His followers to keep gathering, keep drinking the wine, keep sharing the bread. Keep reminding ourselves we were bought with a price and we accepted the proposal." (p. 17)

Try to put into the words the encouragement you receive from faithfully meeting with other believers while we wait for the wedding feast.

Read [Revelation 19:6-9](#) together. What do you yearn for the most when it comes to the great feast? (e.g. no more pain)

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Chapter Three

Blessed Are My Fellow People on the Autism Spectrum (and Those Who Can Relate to Us)

There are wonderful things we can find in being a Jesus follower, even if we seem to hold great skepticism.

Brant lists 7 attractive things about Jesus to those who struggle as he does:

1. In the Bible Christians are described as “aliens and strangers.”
2. Jesus has little patience for human hierarchies.
3. Jesus values the underdog.
4. Jesus is blunt and gets to the point.
5. Jesus acknowledges something few else will: moralistic religion doesn't actually work.
6. He doesn't coerce anyone. Ever.
7. He says if you've seen Him, you've seen God.

Pick the point above that attracts you the most to Jesus and describe why. Take some time with this discussion...elaborate the best you can.

Chapter Four

Blessed Are Those of Us Who Apparently Landed on the Wrong Planet

Have some fun describing to each other what amazes you about the human race. What are some things you just don't get?

What would you want everyone to truly understand about you that you don't think they really comprehend?

What amazes you about American church culture - what are some things you just don't get?

Describe in what ways Jesus was misunderstood.

“Humans make no sense. Love them anyway.”

Give some examples, to the best of your ability, of how we might love those who misunderstand us and may never care to understand us.

Try to be specific.

Chapter Five

Blessed Are the Unfeeling Faithful

What if you were trapped in an elevator with Jesus? What if you knew it would be a couple of hours before the rescue crew got there?

You could talk about anything. What would you ask Him?

“The silence and emptiness is so great that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear.” - Mother Teresa

Growing up, what was your impression of God? How did you view Him?

Has God ever spoken to you audibly? If so, tell the story. If not, what thoughts have crossed your mind concerning as to why this is?

Brant comments that we are in good company with many “spiritual giants” who have also experienced many years of seeming silence. He states that there is something beautiful about someone serving despite the absence of an emotional reward.

Ask the question Brant poses on page 48: “Let's say you're like Mother Teresa (or me, for that matter) and you don't feel God's presence often, if at all.

What if, somehow, you knew that this would always be the case, for the rest of your life?

What if you knew you'd never get the warm feelings others get, you'd never have your desire for a sense of God's closeness fulfilled, during this lifetime?

What if you knew it would always be this way, until you die?

What would it change?”

Read [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) out loud and stay faithful regardless.

Chapter Six

Blessed Are the Unfeeling Faithful, Part 2: Real “Fruit”

How does Brant answer his own question posed at the beginning of the chapter? “If you can’t rely on your feelings, how can you tell God is there, working in your life?”

What is the fruit of a Jesus follower? ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)) Take some time to describe each one and answer: which one do you think falls out of your tree most often when bumped?

“Repentance is not an emotion...It is not feeling sorry for your sins.
It is a decision.” - Eugene Peterson

When is the last time you were moved emotionally by fruit you experienced or witnessed? In other words, what expression of Christianity draws you the most?

Chapter Seven

Blessed Are the Introverted Evangelical Failures

What was your overall reaction to this chapter?
Relieved? Angry? Confused? Explain.

What have you been taught about evangelism (sharing the good news)?
How do you see yourself as an evangelist? Are you gifted? Seen success?
Intimidated? Feel guilty? Do you generally feel awkward or is it easy for you?

Paul wrote many letters to the early churches comprising most of the New Testament. In these letters he continually gives a list of how Christians should treat each other. The “one-another” commands, as they are called, are numerous in Paul’s writings.

Can you list some of these “one-another” commands? (i.e. love one another)

Read [John 17:20-23](#). Jesus said that this unity among believers will be the light that leads people to him. Describe *why* the unity of Christian believers is such a powerful evangelistic tool.

Chapter Eight

Blessed Are the People Who Can’t Pray Worth a Darn

In what ways do you relate to Brant’s prayer life? Describe your prayer life.

Matthew 6 records the Lord’s Prayer, which is Jesus’ teaching on how to pray. His prayer lasts about 25 seconds. Brant suggests that 10-second prayers are okay. He lists what 10-second prayers can do for you:

1. It forces you into humility.
2. It reminds you that you’re praying to Someone.
3. It’s hard for you to do but to do it is worship.
4. What you say actually matters.
5. You’re part of a larger story.

Which one of these thoughts struck you most?

When you go long times without praying, how does it affect you?

Read [Luke 18:1-8](#). What does God ask us to do when it comes to prayer? What does it tell you about God that He loves being pestered by us?

Chapter Nine

Blessed Are the People Who Just Read That Last Chapter But Still Have Some Questions

“I don’t think there are many ways to fail at praying besides not praying.”

Discuss the life of prayer; use some of Brant’s points as a guide.

1. Pray to see your heart change.
2. Pray to sleep.
3. Pray your thoughts - no matter how random.
4. Pray to reveal your vulnerability, to be real.

How does prayer change your disposition toward others? Do you find it easy or difficult to pray for others? Why or why not?

Brant concluded, “But maybe my biggest problem isn’t that prayer isn’t real enough. Maybe it forces me to be all too real, when I’d rather hide.” React personally to this statement and discuss if it has truth for you. Explain.

Chapter Ten

Blessed Are the Wounded

Note: The questions in this chapter may be tough for your group to answer if you do not have much history together. Show grace while leading.

“Nobody escapes being wounded.” - Henri Nouwen

Each one of us has a story. We all have things in our past that shape us...good and bad. If you are willing, can you share about a wound you suffered in the past and how it has affected your view of life or God?

(i.e. Brant shared about how he stopped wanting to feel anything anymore.)

“When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers.” - Henri Nouwen

Are you a wounded healer today or still wounded?

If a wounded healer...how has God turned your past into something beautiful today?

If you believe you're still wounded...here is the big question...answer honestly...do you want to be healed?

How might we help each other to heal? How should the prayers of others for you sound?

Chapter Eleven

Blessed are Those Who Don't Have Amazing Spiritual Stories

“In church culture a lot of half stories get told.”

What is meant by this statement, according to the context?

An unresolved person is one who is unsure about what to think or do.

How might embracing the unresolved in our life actually bring us closer to God?

Elijah is a good example of someone who was living in a victory moment and in a flash, found himself depressed and alone.

What might it truly mean to have victory in life?

Brant gave several illustrations of the half-stories in his life and claimed that if we live only in the land of Half Stories we won't get a sense of how good God actually is. What stories of “victory” have you told that seem like Half Stories? How is God using the situation now?

Chapter Twelve

Blessed Are the Imposters

Do you ever feel like an imposter before God? What does that mean for you?

How important is “having control” to you?

Why do you think you answered the way you did?

Do you think the people around you *really know you* or do you show them just what *you want* to show them? Explain why you answered the way you did.

Read [Hebrews 4:14-16](#). The Hebrew writer assumes in this passage that we struggle with being imposters before God. What does he tell us to do anyway?

How might we, as a group, help to remind each other about the grace of God?

(Try reminding each other about the thief on the cross: nothing to offer, yet he is given grace. Why not you?)

Chapter Thirteen

Blessed Are the Introverts Who Keep Trying

Tell some stories concerning people who challenge you just in everyday life.

Read [Matthew 22:36-39](#) together. Jesus takes our self-love for granted, but not love we should have for others.

Are you an introvert? If you are, explain to the others in the group how you feel around people in general.

God knows our interactions with people challenge us, change our hearts, and teach us to trust Him. If you are around people all the time, what has God shown you to change? How has He challenged you?

If you are not around people very much, how might you increase your interaction with others intentionally in order to show the love God requires in Matthew 22?

Do you believe God finds you lovable? Explain your answer.

How might we show others that God finds them lovable?

Chapter Fourteen

Blessed Are the Perpetual Strugglers

When you think of the word “struggle”, what comes to mind right away?
Do we think of it positively or negatively most of the time?
Why do you think that is?

A life seeking to honor God will always be struggle, but we have to struggle.
The struggle means God is still working in you.

What examples did Brant give of choosing substitutes over the real thing in order to avoid struggle?

What might be a struggle worth fighting for an introvert?

How did he define the word “decide”?
What is the significance of decision in one’s life when it comes to struggle?

“...there are so many things we deeply yearn for but cannot be free to experience without surrendering our freedom in the first place. If we never commit - be it to a people, or to God, or to a beautiful cause - we will miss so much that is profound.”
- pg. 137

Compare a life of struggle with a life of avoidance.
What does it look like in the end?

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Chapter Fifteen

Blessed Are the People Who Do Church Anyway

Even though we may be tempted to avoid humans at church for so many reasons, we cannot as Jesus followers. Brant lists 7 reasons.

Pick a reason that strikes you and discuss. Refer to the book, pages 139-151, for explanations.

1. My ability to justify myself is a force of nature.
2. Wisdom spares me from suffering.
3. Other people show me different aspects of God.
4. I need to confess to people.
5. I cannot do any of the scriptural “one-anothers” myself.
6. Other people need me.
7. I need people to break up with.

“Yes, Jesus-followers are an odd group. Some are hard to take. Some are annoying. Some would say the same of me. But there’s something wonderful, mysterious, even shocking, about people who stay together anyway.” - pg. 151

Chapter Sixteen

Blessed Are the Melancholy and the Depressed

Brant described his inner monologue of “being a failure” that often renders him depressed.

How would you describe your inner monologue struggle that can leave you depressed? Failure? Never good enough? Always concerned about everyone’s view of you? Self-doubt? God can’t possibly love me? Others?

Read [Philippians 4:8](#) together.

We are told to return to what is true.

So what is true in regard to your inner monologue? Can you trust it?
In what ways do you feel your inner monologue deceives you in light of the truth of Scripture?

Spend some time searching the Scriptures and encourage each other by discussing the truth in concern to your inner monologue.

Chapter Seventeen

Blessed Are Those Who Don't Take Themselves So Seriously

React and discuss this Peterson quote: "Feelings are great liars...We think if we don't feel something there can be no authenticity in doing it. But the wisdom of God says something different: that we can act ourselves into a new way of feeling much quicker than we can feel ourselves into a new way of acting."

Brant lists 6 things he has to do to avoid depression - acting into a new way of feeling....

Discuss anything you gained from Brant's explanation of these 6 things. Which one of these, do you think, would most help you avoid depression in your life?

1. Remind myself of what's true.
2. Proactively love people.
3. Remember I'm not the center of the universe.
4. Be enormously grateful.
5. Be attentive to how God uses weakness.
6. See the silliness in everything and embrace it.

Chapter Eighteen

Blessed Are the Skeptics and Those Who Don't Know Where Else to Go

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" ([John 6:68](#)). Exactly.

What gets under your skin the most concerning American church culture?

Have you ever thought about leaving your faith?

If so, can you describe what transpired at the time to challenge you in this way?

What characteristics/words/actions of Jesus attract you the most to Him and why?

[Exodus 15:25](#): "I am the Lord, who heals you." Where else do I go?

What reasons do you have for staying true to your faith in Jesus?

Chapter Nineteen

Blessed Are the Unnoticed

Read together:

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so no human being might boast in the presence of God." - I Corinthians 1:26-29

The Bible is full of stories of God using those in low position to do incredible things for the kingdom. What is one of your favorite stories in the Bible of God using the lowly?

React to Kumar's story (p. 191-196).

What do you find remarkable about his story?

What do you find sad about his story?

What do you find encouraging about his story?

God uses misfits, the unnoticed...take some time to notice for a second. Describe how God is using the misfits around you. In what ways is He using them?

Chapter Twenty

Blessed Are the Lonely

Brant states that loneliness is of epidemic proportions in our day and time. Do you agree with this claim? Why or why not?

Do you struggle with loneliness? Can you describe it?

Read the following scriptures together:

[Joshua 1:9](#), [Isaiah 41:10](#), [Deuteronomy 31:6](#), [Zephaniah 3:17](#), [Matthew 28:20](#), [Hebrews 13:5](#), and [Romans 8:38-39](#). Discuss the theme of these passages and what encouragement you receive from them.

"So you're yearning, and so are we all, but it's building up to something. Something really, really good. You're engaged, and the wedding is going to be one amazing party, and knowing God, finally, and truly, is going to be worth it. There's nothing wrong with yearning for it." (p. 211)

Concerning that amazing party that is coming, what do you yearn for the most?

Chapter Twenty-One Blessed Are the Misfit Royalty

Read [1 Samuel 2:8](#), [Proverbs 14:31](#), [Psalm 12:5](#), [Psalm 9:18](#), [Psalm 72:4](#), [Psalm 82:3-4](#), and [Matthew 25:31-46](#).

Try to use the words in these passages to describe God's attitude toward the poor and down and out.

Respond to the stories of "Night to Shine" and Emmanuel (p .214-217).
What strikes you in these stories?

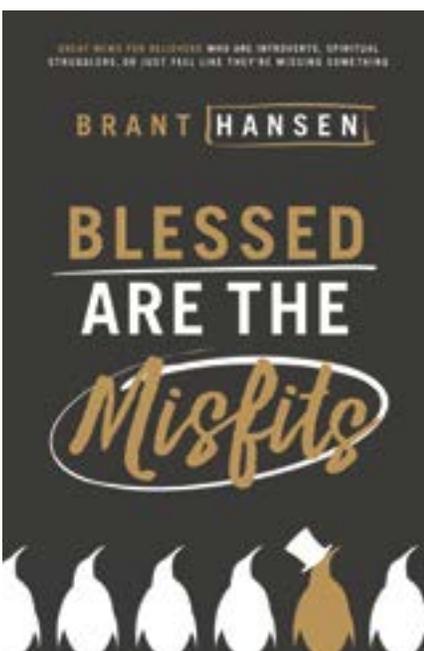
Describe, if you can, what these actions must do for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Jesus is leading your group or church...how would he have you bless the misfit royalty?

Make a plan. Carry it out.

Blessed Are the Misfits: The Discussion Guide

Thank you for reading. May all of God's misfits realized they are blessed.



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written for the book
Blessed Are the Misfits by Brant Hansen
www.branthansen.com

2017 by [Darin Hansen](#), [twitter @watchdoctorwho](#)
special thanks to Lindsay Sterchi for editing

