

# *True Measure of a Man* *Discussion Guide*

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## **Part I: What Will They Think of Me?**

### Chapter 1: *The Persona*

1. Have you ever felt pressure to hide certain parts about yourself or your life to preserve your image?
2. Why do you think that denying or hiding internal struggles hinders, rather than encourages, real success?
3. On page three, Simmons makes the claim that by creating these façades to please others, we are actually weakening the foundations of our lives. Think about why this is the case (if you need to, re-read the parable of “The Wreck of *The Persona*”).
4. The challenge made at the end of Chapter 1 is to examine the way you measure your life and your success. Think back to the framed quote at the beginning of the chapter, then take a moment to analyze your own thoughts on this. What is the ultimate object of your pursuit (in other words, what is your highest goal)? Who are you striving to impress? When do you feel successful? When do you feel like you have failed?

### Chapter 2: Life Is, After All, Difficult

1. “So many people live silently with broken dreams and broken lives.” You aren’t the only one trying to keep a mask of perfection from slipping off your life. Does this knowledge remove some of the pressure to be perfect? Or does it make you want to cling even tighter to the image you are projecting to the world? Why or why not?
2. Life is hard: this point is made over and over in this chapter, reinforced by Scripture, journalist, and psychotherapist alike. While people love to hear stories of others overcoming these hardships and defeating these obstacles, they don’t like to hear about the struggles while they are actually happening. Do you think this is why it is difficult to admit it when you are going through difficult times? Why or why not?
3. We strive to keep our masks in place to please the world even though living for the approval of others give them control over our lives? How does this happen?
4. Could it be a good thing for our false fronts to fall away? What might happen if they did? What about if they never did?

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### **Part II: Free to Choose**

#### Chapter 3: A Man's Identity

1. How do you define yourself? Take a piece of paper and write down, in order, the top five aspects of your life that define who you are (e.g., Christian, businessman, husband, wealthy, athletic, etc.). How do you feel about this order? Are there some priorities you'd like to change?
2. What do you think should define manhood?
3. Society encourages men to value image over quality, often times separating success from real substance. How might equating your worth as a man with your individual performance put your self-constructed identity at risk?
4. In a culture that is hyper-connected by media and technology, our audience is bigger than ever, exercising even more control over our lives by their approval and disapproval. Go back and re-read page 35. What would happen if you cut the puppet strings of their control over you, and let the one person who determines your worth be God? How would it change your view of yourself? How would it change how you view others, both those "more successful" and those "less successful" than you?

#### Chapter 4: A Man's Courage

1. Dreaming and planning for the future is a good thing... to a certain extent. But are there ways in which thinking about what might come can cripple us?
2. What is the motivation driving you in life? Is it fear? Are you comfortable with this, or would you rather be motivated by something more positive?
3. "Fear of failure and our inability to deal with that fear create shallow personal relationships" (46). This leaves us empty, missing out on the deep, intimate relationships that really matter. Does your fear of failing ever cause you to "play it safe" with your relationships? What about in other aspects of your life? Could "playing it safe" actually cause you to miss out on what is really important?

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4. The framed quote on pg. 52 reads, “In the midst of the storms of life, we will either allow what we are experiencing to influence our view of God, or we will allow our view of God to influence what we are experiencing.” Which view do you usually take? Take a moment to examine the personal storms you have faced in the past. How has God used them to enrich your life with the things that really matter? Can you see glimpses of this in your present struggles as well?

## Chapter 5: A Man’s Truth

1. What are some of the consequences of building your life on false ideas? Is it sometimes hard to recognize falsehoods for what they really are?
2. Simmons writes on page 64 that “God never intended for pleasure to be able to satisfy our hearts.” He also reminds us on the following page of Paul’s declaration that God works, in all things, for the good of those who love Him. We want the “good life”, and too often we interpret *good* to mean *pleasurable*. But pleasure isn’t enough *enough*. How should you interpret the word “good”?
3. What three things does Simmons suggest that Christ is instructing men to do to in order to life a good, truly successful life according to God? What are some ways you can make these become realities in your life?

## Part III: A Life Well Lived

### Chapter 6: Life’s Greatest Paradox

1. If true strength is found in humility, then true weakness is found in pride, or self-conceit. Do you agree with Simmons that pride is often the source of our need to compare ourselves to others, and to seek their approval? Is it also the reason we try to hide our failures, our struggles, and our fears? How so?
2. Is pride an “anti-God” state of mind? Why?
3. Our strength comes from God’s grace, which He gives to the humble. Take a moment and examine your own life, and the successes you have achieved. What are the ways in which you can see God’s grace enabling you to succeed?
4. Re-read the framed quote at the top of page 98. Freed from the opinions of the people around us, we can live more fully, take more chances, and experience all that life has to

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offer. Who wouldn't want that? And yet, people do reject God, and in so doing, they reject this life. Why do you think this is?

## Chapter 7: A Life of Contentment

1. We want to be happy, but often, it is our fear that circumstances will prevent us from being happy which limits our joy and inhibits us from living a truly good life. How can you discipline your mind to stop straying into the future so that you can live the good life God is offering you in the present?
2. Read through the short story/quiz on pages 108-110 and really think about your answers. Does this clarify the ways in which comparison with others causes discontent?
3. "If there is no meaning nor purpose behind difficult outside circumstances, the life will always be bleak and disappointing, especially when we go through trying times." How can a humble trust in God's plan help you to live a truly good and successful life, regardless of circumstances?
4. Our worry about how others see us is a constant burden. But Jesus calls us to Him, where we will find not simply an uneasy, temporary contentment, but deep joy and fulfilling peace. Does your false front seem to be a burden? How can you give that burden up to Christ?

## Chapter 8: A Tangible Hope

1. Do you have a vision for your life? If so, what is it? How has it changed/is it changing you?
2. Has there ever been a time when you lost your life's vision? Did you feel like your life lacked purpose? How did you handle it then? Would you deal with it any differently now?
3. Simmons says that too often, men live reactively instead of proactively: in other words, they live in the circumstances instead of being guided by a vision or mission for their lives. Do you think living with your final destination in mind will help structure your mission and guide your life? Does it give you the criteria with which you can measure your priorities, choices, and time?
4. How does knowing that the reason for life is God reshape your vision for your life?

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### **Afterword: It All Adds Up in the End**

1. In the comparison between *Castaway* and *Robinson Crusoe*, Simmons makes a crucial distinction between survival and salvation. One is desperate, bewildered, and meaningless, while the other is joyful, fulfilling, and *good*. He also says that too often, the clamor of the world (our self-appointed audience) crowds out our innate longing for God and the life he wants us to live, and we are like Nolan in *Castaway*: alone and bereft. In this deserted wilderness, when all that we used to rely upon is gone, Simmons says that we are finally able to discern what is real and true, and that is when we can move from mere survival to salvation.
  - a. Take a moment and reflect on this. Who do you identify with more right now: Nolan or Robinson Crusoe?
  - b. When you look at your life, can you see God working in the wilderness of your struggles, urging you to a more real, true life?
  - c. Does this change your idea of what success really is? Is “success” really even worth pursuing so highly? Or would it be better to pursue salvation, and God’s plan for your life?