

Discussion Guide for  
*The Hats We Wear: Reflections on Life as a Woman of Faith*  
by Elizabeth Trotter

The Practical Theologian Hat

1. What are some of the hats you wear/roles you fill? Tell a story of a time when they overlapped or stretched you uncomfortably.
  
2. How or when did you first start to understand and accept God's deep, unconditional love for you? When it's hard for you to believe in God's love, what scriptures, truths, or songs help?
  
3. What Bible stories do you continually return to for comfort or guidance? What do they tell you about the character of God?
  
4. What does trusting in God look like in your life? Are there certain areas where it's harder for you to trust God? What practices, scriptures, or songs do you return to when you need to trust again?
  
5. What has your relationship with God or the Bible been regarding women? In what ways have the words of Paul or Peter given you trouble? What are some particularly thorny—or helpful—passages for you regarding women?
  
6. How have you leaned on your uniquely feminine strengths in life or in ministry?
  
7. What is your “even if” in the statement, “Will you still love Me, even if \_\_\_\_\_?” What feels harder, learning to accept God's love for you or continuing to love God even when He seems distant or uncaring?
  
8. Is it a battle for you to pause work and rest? What practices have helped you to stop all your busy rushing and quiet down? What does it mean to you that the rest of God is the dwelling of God or the reign of God?

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The Emotional Human Hat

1. Has an emotional wound ever hurt so badly that it felt like you were going to die? How did God show up for you?
  
2. Most of us have been in some sort of toxic or unhealthy relationship at some point. How did you realize you were in one, and how did you separate yourself emotionally from that person, even if you still had to be in relationship with them?
  
3. What do you do with the “if onlys” and “never should have beens”? How do you deal with your own past regrets?
  
4. What mental health modalities have you tried (e.g., counseling, coaching, spiritual direction)? What kinds of situations did each of them help? If you feel stuck in one of them right now, which one(s) might you like to try?
  
5. Sometimes we can be so busy working and caring for other people that we forget to have fun. Have you learned any strategies for switching out of work mode or caregiver mode? If you struggle with obsessive thoughts or ruminations, what practices have helped you break those thought loops?
  
6. It seems like the world has been on fire for a long time. What lifts your gaze from the chaos and destruction of this fallen world to the glory of God? How do you remind yourself that God is God and you are not?
  
7. Whether it's anxiety, depression, OCD, an eating disorder, or some other issue, many of us have lifelong struggles. Relapse is a common experience, but thankfully it's not the end of the story. How have you dealt with relapse?

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The Embodied Woman Hat

1. If you grew up in a faith tradition that valued the intellectual above the physical, how does the idea that “matter matters” impact you? What has your experience of the sacraments been, especially communion? How have you met Jesus in the bread and the cup?
  
2. What part of creation speaks most strongly to you of God’s glory? In what ways do you experience God in nature?
  
3. If you learned your belovedness in your family of origin, what did that look like? If you needed the body of Christ to teach you your belovedness and belonging, what did that look like?
  
4. What is your deepest or most memorable experience of awe and wonder? Did it leave you unsatisfied, wanting more? What do you do with that kind of longing?
  
5. Have you ever found yourself in a deep, dark well? Perhaps you faced cognitive distortions, and changing your thinking was helpful. Or maybe you needed some embodied practices to pull you out of the darkness. What cognitions or physical practices helped?
  
6. How have PMS and/or other hormonal shifts affected your life and relationships? What mitigation strategies (nutrition, supplements, movement, medications) have you tried, and how have they helped (or not)?
  
7. What are the signs and signals that you’re in or near burnout? Conversely, what are the things that make you feel more human? How can you make more space in your life for those things and thus avoid burnout?

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The Wife Hat

1. If you're married, how have you and your spouse been able to carve out time to spend together, and what has been the value of that in your relationship? What has headship/hierarchy or mutuality looked like in your marriage over the years? How has pursuing emotional wholeness for either or both of you impacted your relationship?
  
2. If you're single, what has been the impact of both time and emotional healing on your interpersonal relationships? What are your thoughts on headship and hierarchy in marriage and in the church?
  
3. If you're married or have been married, which type of vow did you choose—traditional or personalized—and why? What do those vows mean to you? Would you make the same choice today, and why? If you're single, what type of vow would you choose, and why?
  
4. Whether you're single or married, what beliefs about sexuality were you taught, and how have they evolved (or not) over the years? If you're married, how did those beliefs play out in your marriage? Temptation comes to both married and single people. How do you deal with it?
  
5. Whether or not you're married, have you ever faced a health challenge and/or mental health challenge that shook your life? If you're married, how have those challenges (whether mental or physical) affected your marriage?
  
6. Christian community played a big role in supporting Elizabeth's marriage and ministry. How has Christian community supported you in marriage, ministry, or other ways? When you look back over your life, what periods of "death" followed by periods of birth or new life do you see?

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The Mom Hat

1. Sometimes God asks us to give up something we want so He can give us something else, something we may not be able to perceive yet. Has God ever spoken to you so clearly that you couldn't ignore it, and what did obedience look like for you? What kind of joy was on the other end of that obedience?
  
2. We all have days like that Monday in Cambodia, where it feels like all we can do is put out one fire after another. How do you handle these times of chaos, and what do you do to calm down and relax when they're over? How have you used humor to mitigate the stress of everyday life?
  
3. It's easy to look around and think that everyone else is getting it all done, but the truth is that we all have things that fall through the cracks. How do you choose which things to drop, and are you satisfied with your current prioritizations? How can you release some of the things that don't matter as much?
  
4. How have you balanced protecting your children's privacy online with the desire to share your life with others? Who are your trusted people, the ones who can hold both the good and the hard stories as you raise (and sometimes worry about) your kids? How do you deal with the grief of watching when your children suffer?
  
5. In your life, what have been the benefits of both children's church and including children in the main service? How can we bring children into the life of the local church and disciple them, Deuteronomy 6 style?
  
6. Why do we so often feel like everything depends on us, especially in our family roles? How can you give that burden to God? What else do you think God might be wanting to purify from your life right now?
  
7. There's a lot of variation in work experiences among women today. (But let's be clear, all moms work!) How can we support each other in the different choices we make and in the different seasons we're living?

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The Homeschool Teacher Hat

1. If you're still in the little years, what do you dream for your children as they grow? If your kids are older, how have your dreams been realized—or changed? When you look back on the past year, what kinds of progress have your children made, and how can you celebrate them?
  
2. Which of these six principles for homeschooling the early years do you most resonate with, and why? A theme of freedom runs through many of the principles. How can you give yourself more freedom today?
  
3. What are you doing to take care of yourself? If you're married, what are you doing to take care of your marriage? If you feel like either of these areas is in need of more care, what practical steps can you take over the next few weeks and months to care for yourself and your marriage?
  
4. Can you testify to the power of any of the practices that transformed Elizabeth's homeschool? An overarching theme to many of these practices is that her mind was changed—reminiscent of the renewing of our minds in Romans 12. How have you changed your mind regarding education or children over the years?
  
5. What unrealistic expectations have you made for yourself? How can you release some of them?
  
6. Have you ever metaphorically crashed and had an epic mom fail? How does “failing” our children by getting some time by ourselves help both us and them?
  
7. Have you ever held yourself to such a high standard of motherhood that you snapped and became the mean mommy you didn't want to be? How can you proactively give yourself breaks and avoid snapping?
  
8. As you look back over the past several months or years, what kinds of educational, emotional, spiritual, and/or behavioral growth do you see in your child? What kinds of growth do you see in yourself? What kinds of plans or supports do your children need, moving forward?