

This study guide is intended for the use in personal or small group study of VELVET ELVIS: REPAINTING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH by Rob Bell. In no way has it been authorized by Mr. Bell or Zondervan books. Feel free to use it, but do not charge any funds for its use.

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1. Bell comments that “the Bible is a difficult book.” (041) When you read the Bible, what kinds of things seem ‘difficult’ to you? What questions do these ‘difficulties’ raise for you? Who had you talked to about these?

2. Bell writes that “sometimes when I hear people quote the Bible, I just want to throw up.” (042) He also notes that a lot of people have used the Bible to justify a number of things that are not justified. What do you think he’s saying here? How do we keep from making the Bible say what we want it to say?

3. What is the concept of a ‘yoke’? Why is such a thing important to understand? What was Jesus’ yoke, and how would you go about using it?

4. What is 'binding and loosing'? How is it related to a rabbi's yoke? Where, in scripture, might you find examples of 'binding' and 'loosing'? Who do you think, in your local church, has the authority to 'bind' and to 'loose'? What would you base this on? What would be the important things to consider in this practice?

5. Why do you think Bell disagrees with the assumption that the Bible can't be read without individual perspectives or 'agendas'? Do you agree with him? Why or why not? What are the implications of this – particularly as it pertains to 'binding' and 'loosing'?

6. In demonstrating the importance of understanding the Bible in context, Bell discusses the meaning and context of the words *gehenna* and *hell*. In this example, what might you understand or miss, depending on what word is used in your Bible translation?

7. As the writer of Hebrews said, the scripture is alive and active. What do you think this means? Why is it important to see it as being about 'real people in real places at real times', and not just a collection of sayings? Why shouldn't we just look at the Bible as 'data' – or as an 'owner's manual'?

8. Bell notes that when we read the Bible today, we are actually accepting the 'binding and loosing' of people 1700 years ago (or more recently, if you're Catholic). How does this help you to see that the Bible is 'living and active'?