

Secular Women of the Triangle Book Club Discussion Questions

Good without God by Greg M. Epstein

Discussion Questions

1. *Good without God* serves as an introduction to secular humanism. How familiar were you with humanism before reading this book? Did the book change your views on humanism? Did it inspire you to identify as a humanist or become more active in humanist groups?
2. *Good without God* covers Epstein's view of what secular people believe and how to live a good secular life. Where do you feel *Good without God* hit or missed this mark? Do you feel your experiences as a non-religious woman were reflected in the text?
 - a. *Good without God* covers similar material to our first book club selection *We of Little Faith* by Kate Cohen. If you've read both books, which book do you think did a better job of exploring these topics? Which would you be more likely to recommend to a friend?
3. In the introduction, Epstein talks about the prejudice against atheists. Have you experienced this prejudice in your own life? Has fear of prejudice or bad reactions kept you from revealing your lack of belief?
 - a. In Chapter One: Can We Be Good Without God?, Epstein discusses how to respond to those who hold the belief that you can't be moral without religion. Have you had this discussion with religious people in your life? How did you respond?
4. Epstein contrasts his view of humanism – a diverse, inclusive, inspiring, transformative force built on community – with the “new atheists” who loudly proclaim “God is not great!”, “God is a delusion!”, and “This is the end of faith!”. Which approach resonates more with you or do you try to emulate in your own life?
5. Annie Laurie Gaylor, author of *Women Without Superstition*, said the historic treatment of women by almost every major world religion is reason enough to seek out the good without God today. If you grew up in religion, did you see this dichotomy of how men and women were treated? Did it have any effect on your decision to leave?
6. In Chapter 3: Why Be Good without a God?, Epstein ponders the meaning of life discussing – but ultimately discarding – love, happiness, self-actualization, and self-sacrifice before ultimately settling on dignity. Do you agree with dignity as the meaning of life? How do you find meaning in your life? Has that meaning changed throughout your life?
7. In Chapter 4: Good Without God: A How-To Guide, Epstein lists out the Ten Commandments from the Old Testament along with his Humanist version. The humanist version includes “seek the best in yourself and in others, and believe in your own ability to make a positive difference in the world.” What rules or commandments do you live by in your own life? Where do these rules or values come from?
8. Epstein notes that “even atheists have imitations of sacredness, particularly when in love or in nature. We just don't infer that God caused those feelings.” Have you experienced these moments of sacredness or transcendence? What caused them?
9. Epstein notes that prominent atheists such as Richard Dawkins and Sarah Vowell consider themselves culturally Christian or note that their religious upbringing affected them deeply. If you grew up with religion, do you consider yourself culturally religious at all, or do you eschew all religious trappings?
10. “Good without God” was published in 2009. What, any, changes do you think Epstein would have made if he was writing today?