

EXCERPT



What Does Your Soul Love? Eight Questions That Reveal God's Work in You

September 17, 2019 | \$22, 220 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4659-7

"The honest questions and vulnerable answers tucked into the pages of What Does Your Soul Love? by Gem and Alan Fadling makes this not only a timely but also a timeless testament to hope. These fresh and accessible confessions are invitations for all of us to move into a more practice-based spirituality—a credible and rooted spirituality that will only foster a more faithful and faith-filled life."

Christopher L. Heuertz, author of *The Sacred Enneagram*

It's About the Heart

It will be very difficult to embark (and remain) on a journey of transformation if we do not have confidence that we are already loved as we currently are. We don't change so that we'll be loved more by God. We are measurelessly loved by God, so we are free and enabled to change in all the ways we long for.

When it comes to Jesus' strategy for changing the world, he began with a simple focus on the human heart. He did not set out primarily to change the way people behaved. He knew that without a change in the heart producing those behaviors, any outward change would be short-lived. Instead, he sought to help people see and embrace a vision of the kingdom of God on display in his life, his manner, his way. This was the model for the change to which he invited people.

This was his message from the beginning: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 3:2). *Repent* may not feel like a word of good news. To some ears, it sounds like "Stop everything you enjoy and become religious (and boring)." But Jesus was saying that change is good news, and that change is possible. You can go in a different direction—in the direction of the kingdom of heaven. Change is good news when it is change in the direction of alignment with the good, beautiful, and true purposes of God and his kingdom. Change is good news when it moves in the direction of fruitfulness that fulfills our deepest aspirations and blesses a world that needs it.

Jesus' message sounded so different from other Jewish preachers of his day. The Jewish leaders were far more interested and engaged in addressing behavior and even appearances. They wanted to be sure things looked right and that people behaved right (at least right as they defined it). They believed that they were doing the work of God, but they were remodeling the exteriors of an unchanged interior. Without a change of heart, outward change never lasts. Jesus was pursuing a strategy for transformation that would grow and last over decades, centuries, even millennia.

Though their own Scriptures said that God looks on the heart while humans focus on appearances, they still opted, maybe unconsciously, for an appearance-focused strategy. They polished the outside of the cup, as Jesus put it. They worked very hard to be seen by others as religiously impressive, and sought to hide anything in themselves that looked less than right.

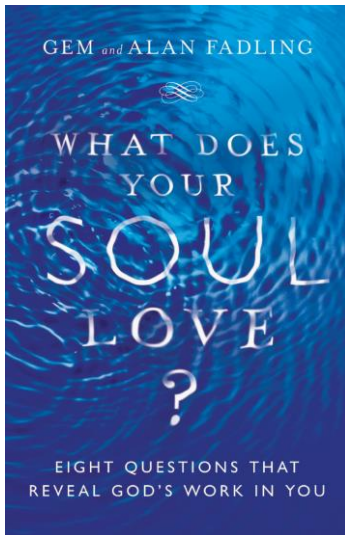
A kingdom transformation approach brings what is ugly out into the open where it can be forgiven, cleansed, healed, transformed. Rather than avoiding fear, we lean into it and discover courage in the midst. Rather than numbing anxiety, we acknowledge its existence in God's presence. Facing reality is always better than avoiding it. An appearance management approach hides what is wrong, dirty, or broken so others won't see it. In this way, such realities grow more wrong, more broken. It takes layers of paint to whitewash those inner realities with an acceptable appearance.



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"In an age of frenetic activity and endless surface distractions, Gem and Alan provide just what we need: significant and incisive questions to slow us down enough to reflect and ponder. Their questions, along with their matchless wisdom, engaging stories, practical exercises, and creative spiritual practices, seek to soothe the soul and point us to Jesus."

J.R. Briggs, founder of Kairos Partnerships, author of *Fail: Finding Hope in the Midst of Ministry Failure*

Sometimes we opt for outward change as a substitute for the inward change to which God has been inviting us. In doing so we escape a change in soul by choosing a change of venue. But usually the change needed is in our soul, not our setting. We may be tempted to change churches, change jobs, or even change spouses because something doesn't feel right. Yet when we stop to discern, we may discover we are seeking a change "out there" to avoid a change "in here" that God may be leading us to welcome.

Transformation is also different from perfectionism. Perfectionism generally promotes pretending. Since none of us are perfect, we have to put on an appearance of perfection. But we are not writing this book from a place of having achieved perfection. We are still journeying in the valleys of transformation. We are all people in process who are sometimes more and sometimes less faithful to the journey.

We've noticed, however, that sometimes we are tempted to avoid necessary change because the pain of what's unwell seems easier to endure than the unknown pain we imagine in the path of change. We must learn to cultivate awareness around our resistance to change as a surface reaction to a deeper and better invitation.

It can help to remember that we are not the prime movers in this transformation. The language of transformation in the New Testament, for example, is in the passive voice. Rather than being initiators of the action, we are responders to the action of another. We are being transformed rather than transforming ourselves.

Think about the familiar language in the book of Romans:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2, emphasis added)

In the light of our growing confidence in the ever-present mercy of God, we seek to offer our whole selves to abide in the holy, joyful, and transforming presence of God. Doing this is a worship-centric way to live and bears the fruit of reorienting us away from the life-draining patterns of this world and transforming us into the pattern of God's good, pleasing, and perfect intentions for us. In this we are positioned to shine in the world in a way that just might recommend the kingdom of God to others living life with us. We learn to see reality through the eyes of Jesus.

Transformation is not something we seek directly. It is the "all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33) that comes in the wake of seeking God first, aligning ourselves with divine reality, and walking in the truth. Transformation is the fruit of cooperating with and responding to divine activity.

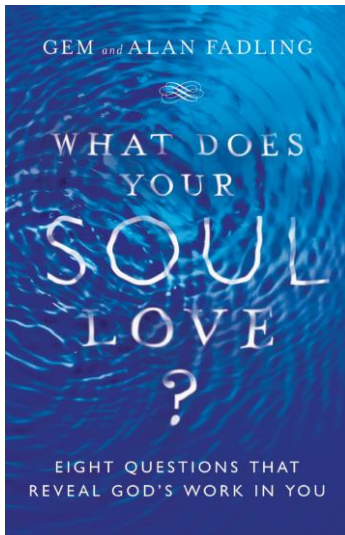
—Adapted from chapter one, "Invitation: Changing from the Center"



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Q & A



What Does Your Soul Love?

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In this practical, personal book Gem and Alan Fadling outline eight key questions that offer deep insight into how we experience soul change and spiritual transformation. These questions help us unpack where we are stuck and also reveal the path to joy and to the heart of God. Spiritual inventories and exercises will guide you, along with stories from Gem and Alan's lives and ministry.

An Invitation to True Change

What inspired the ideas in *What Does Your Soul Love*?

Alan: Gem had been reflecting on her spiritual journey and asked herself, "How have I remained on this path over my lifetime? What postures, what perspectives, what orientations kept me on the path?" Sort of like Ignatius of Loyola's looking back that produced his Exercises. This led to the questions that form the frame of the book.

How do you hope to guide readers into transformation?

Gem and Alan: People are hungry for change, and they want practical guidance on how to cooperate with God in that process. We are giving people an inviting vision, a long view, and the day-to-day engagements of cooperating with God's transforming work and helping readers experience the intersection between practicing God's presence and being transformed by God. The particular need is: How do you continue to lean into God's gracious invitation to change?

What is the message at the heart of *What Does Your Soul Love*?

Gem: God invites us to a journey of transformation. Often, the path to transformation is more about good questions than it is necessarily about fixed answers. This book is sharing our personal journey of transformation. In our work with leaders, it is when we share our lives most personally that we find the greatest resonance and receptivity. Our own decades-long lived experience in these areas is a part of our distinctiveness. This is not a theoretical book. We are sharing from our real successes and struggles.

What do you hope readers take away from your book?

Gem and Alan: Lasting change really is possible. We want the reader to sense the joy of God's great invitation to change. Transformation moves us in the direction of more life and not less. Our eight questions can be revisited and deepened over a lifetime. Practicing presence and cooperating with God are key to the process.

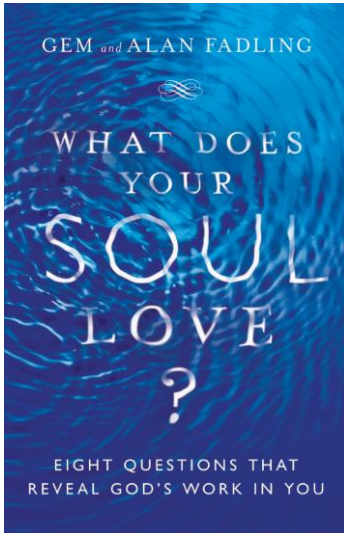


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BIO



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"When it comes to finding kind companions on the road to unhurried transformation, I can't think of two people I trust more than Gem and Alan Fadling. For years they've taught me more about what it means to live life deep in the kingdom of God, and now What Does Your Soul Love? is not only a transformational question it's also a compelling, life-changing book."

Emily P. Freeman, author of *Simply Tuesday* and *The Next Right Thing*

Gem and Alan Fadling, Unhurried Living, Inc.



Gem Fadling is a founding partner of Unhurried Living, Inc., a non-profit that resources and trains Christian leaders to rest deeper, live fuller, and lead better. A trained spiritual director, retreat speaker, and podcaster, Gem enjoys serving as a guide, with the intention of helping people encounter God in their very real lives. Gem lives in Mission Viejo, California, with her husband, Alan.

Follow her on Twitter: @gemfadling.



Alan Fadling (M.Div., Fuller Theological Seminary) is president and founder of Unhurried Living, Inc. in Mission Viejo, California, inspiring people to rest deeper, live fuller, and lead better. He speaks and consults internationally with organizations such as Saddleback Church, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Cru, Halftime Institute, Apprentice Institute, and Open Doors International. He is the award-winning author of *An Unhurried Leader* and *An Unhurried Life*, which was honored with a *Christianity Today* Award of Merit in spirituality. He is also a contributing author to *Eternal Living: Reflections on Dallas Willard's Teaching on Faith and Formation*. Fadling is a certified spiritual director.

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