

Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel around others?

Do you ever feel uncomfortable around some people? It seems neurotic but I don't believe it is. Some people make us feel uncomfortable. I suppose at times it's just us feeling less than inferior. I call it feeling dirty. There are those who say something that is derogatory towards us. At times, we back down or agree with them. Are they really our friends? Friendships can be dirty business.

"When I go out for coffee with a friend I barely survive. There is something within me that dies every time. Why is that? A person comes up to a friend and that friend averts their eyes to somewhere else. Did you see that? They looked away. Did you see that? Their smile is strained. No, it's just you. There is nothing wrong, yet lurking in the shadows of friendship there is truly something wrong. Do I smell? Is their spinach in my teeth? Can't be that I had chicken. Maybe it's my teeth, that's it. Maybe that's not it at all. For some reason people are just people. Their motives for friendship and conversation are hidden behind the mask. Hard to tell when friendship is in the middle."
Chapter 1, p, 1

2. How do you treat your friendships?

I know I look like a terrible friend. I did not go to my friend in need. I am like many others. Being around people in tragedy brings up emotions. It puts us in a terrible spot. I know some people avoid those who have bad karma. Misery loves company so they say. I have learned the hard way. I lost plenty of friends over the years. I made bad choices. Yet, I am a great friend now. I want to be better. Sometimes you learn about friendships through trial and error.

"It's what we do as friends. We seek those who make us look good. The ones that pump up our ego. Who wants Eye-ore from Winnie the Pooh in your life. All they do is bring you down. Friendship 101, smile, laugh, avoid, and repeat. That is what friendships usually are. I have heard so many people tell their tragedy. Time and time again they are quoted as saying I lost family and friends because if it. Sometimes in special moments one person is there for them. That is a rare person indeed. I thought I was a good friend until my friend became dirty. The stink and grime of divorce was on him. I ain't touching that. That was mud and I wasn't willing to roll it." Chapter 1, p, 3

3. What do you think about being rejected?

Dirty Chapter 1 (Dirty)

I have asked a person a question and they answered me. That was nice of them. What was not nice was their eyes and attention moving away from me. I knew they were moving on. I have had a person tell me they hate who I am. I have had a parent say that the boy down the street is more talented. I am not crazy. I know what rejection looks like. I have a friend who had his wife leave him. It's been over a month and he still is wondering why he was not good enough. We can feel dirty if someone rejects us. The real question is: is it them or is it us to blame?

Realizing you are shunned by society is a cruel thing. I think most people want to be loved. There are a select few in our community who tend to live lives in recluse. We call them loners or lepers. Are they really loners? Weren't they loved as children at one time? Didn't they play with other kids. I find it fascinating that there is always one kid who ends up playing alone. Why? I'm no doctor or trained psychologist. I think it does not take a rocket scientist to know the answer. I write books that skidder along the intellectual. I don't have their piece of paper but I have lived in their clinical world as a patient. I understand why one kid retreats to the corner. People can be cruel. I get why some retreat into the shadows. We feel dirty in the presence of others." Chapter 1, p, 5

4. What kind of life have you been given?

I believe God gave us a good life to live. I am sure a homeless person might disagree. I read that we need to do the best with what were given. It's a tough pill but I agree with that. I have had it tough at times. It's seemed unfair. Yet, here I am making the most of it. It's my job to take my hard times and encourage you towards good times. To me, that is worth something. How is your circumstances holding you back or moving you forward?

"If being different is weird then I'm it. If that's why I am considered dirty, then I'm it. I guess it comes down to this. I wanted a normal life. I got a weird one. If I wanted to be a number like everyone else, too bad. God chose to make me weird. It was not my choice. It's like Babe Ruth being dang good at baseball. It's like Geordie Howe being dang good at hockey. If you're that good they call you Mr. Baseball or Mr. Hockey. I am not great at anything. Yes, that includes writing. However, I do have the gift of weird. You can call me Mr. Weird if you want." Chapter 1, p, 9

5. How do you view your name in public?

I was not popular, yet I was in the crowd. I was not invisible. I am not the star player yet I play a good game. I am not the best at anything, yet I'm good at many things. How do you see yourself in the public realm? Are you considered a star, good person, or

Dirty Chapter 1 (Dirty)

invisible? Maybe people think your cool. Maybe you think your not. It's very interesting how were viewed by others and by ourselves.

“The word dirty is a funny thing. I laughed and felt haunted as I read about this word. This is a simple one syllable word, right? There has to be an easy description in Webster’s dictionary. It means unclean, tainted, corrupt, and a host of other adjectives. I like it when the descriptions go just a little further. Highly regrettable or likely to cause trouble. A whore is one thing but a dirty whore is another. A word is easy but a dirty word is complicated. If you use a dirty word towards another it becomes highly regrettable or likely to cause trouble. Dirty is a cool word. It’s also a word you never want attached to your name.” Chapter 1, p, 10

6. Isn't it better to build up than tear down?

The word dirty can be taken many ways. We can feel dirty in the presence of others. People can feel dirty by how we treated them. I have the ability to build someone up or crush them. I have seen many paths in my lifetime. Many of those might have made me a terrible friend. The path I am on has challenged me to be better towards others. I never want anyone to feel less than stellar around me. I refuse to let people treat me poorly either. In a way the word dirty has been cleaned from my life.

“That said, some of us feel dirty in the presence of others. It might come down to how we are treated. Being treated poorly might make one feel dirty. There are ways to be nice to others. Building people up is far better than tearing them down. A person might feel dirty around you because you make them feel that way. Is it a mental problem? Yes, it might very well be. Some people are self-conscious about themselves. A few nasty people bash others because they are self-conscious about themselves. We have the power to build up and tear down. It might get dirty in friendships.” Chapter 1, p, 15