

CONVERSATION GUIDE



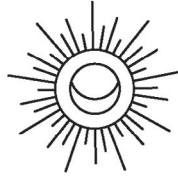
FINISH



LINE



ROBERT WOLGEMUTH



FINISH LINE

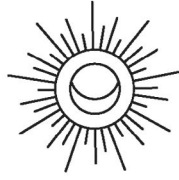
CONVERSATION GUIDE

A good conversation is invaluable. Coffee or a good meal makes it even better. Some conversations are meaningful simply because of the fellowship enjoyed. But others are filled with truth. Mentors that wisely instruct us, deep friends that challenge and encourage us, all call us to a response.

What makes a conversation life changing, though, is when we think deeply about what has been said, weigh the truths spoken, and then make adjustments that change the trajectory of our lives.

That's what this "Conversation Guide" is about. You are having a significant conversation with our friend Robert Wolgemuth. But why not invite a few more buddies in? Read a chapter or two each week together. Think and pray about what Robert has said and then discuss it using the questions provided.

A good athlete who sees the tape ahead doesn't slow down, he kicks in! May this conversation help you accelerate right through the tape!



PREFACE

SEEDS PLANTED

(Please don't miss the foreword by Joni Eareckson Tada. It's pure gold from this wise saint. What one truth can you take away from what she wrote?)

Robert asks a question in the preface that frames this wonderful fireside chat you're having with him, the Lord, and maybe a few friends. Will you pause as we start and think deeply about this?

So I have a question I'm hoping I have your permission to ask: When you die and your "kernel of wheat" falls to the ground and dies, what will your harvest look like? In this book, we're going to talk about that. (p. xvii)

Take the next fifteen minutes or so and prayerfully, deliberately write a paragraph describing what you pray would be said by your closest friends and family at your funeral. Your obituary, if you will. Be specific. It can be three sentences or three pages. Ask the Father to give you a vision for your finish-line moments.

If you're discussing this with others, share this with them in humility, but with a sincere desire to leave a good legacy.

Write your eulogy below:

The following chapters are designed to help you prepare for this moment.

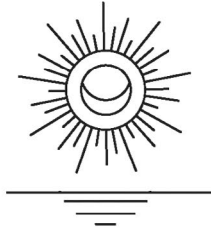


INTRODUCTION

BREAKING THE TAPE

What I'd like to say right here at the beginning of a book about the end of life is that the experience of walking through death's door with my wife all but eliminated my fear of the same. (p. 6)

1. As you read Robert and Bobbie's story, what was it about her finish-line season that changed Robert's view of death?
2. How you face your death will powerfully impact those around you more than you know—for good or ill. What do you think are the ways you can model these final days in a way that will help prepare them for their finish line one day?
3. Tell about someone you know that wasn't prepared for their death. How did it impact you?



ONE

DEAD. NOT DEAD.

For you are dust, and you will return to dust. (Genesis 3:19 CSB)

*Now death was paying a visit to their family. No small thing to be sure.
(p. 12, regarding Abel's death in the first family)*

1. How often do you think about your death? The chances are, if you're reading this book, you have given it some consideration. What experiences have you had with death in your own family or with friends? Which impacted you most significantly?
2. What's your general thought about death? What do you think happens to a believer when they die?



The certainty of our death forces us to look more carefully at our lives. (p. 21)

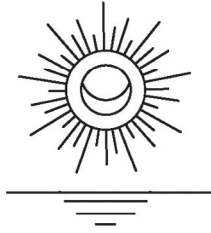
3. What do you think happens to those who don't know Christ as their Savior when they die?

4. What have you done to prepare for the reality of facing God after you die? Be specific.



You are going to die. I am going to die ... But if Jesus is your Savior, if you invite Him to be there at your tomb, your death will last a lot shorter than four days ... Your corpse is going into the ground to await the resurrection. Your soul/spirit is going immediately into the Lord's presence. (p. 25)

5. What do you think about Robert's statement? Do you agree? If you have confidence that you're headed to heaven, share why.



TWO

SPOILER ALERT . . . HEAVEN CAN BE YOURS

Heaven is a place. A specific, someday visible reality. (p. 27)

Robert includes a letter from a friend speaking of being in the room during Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.'s death: "*I told a nurse standing nearby, 'This is the day he has lived for all his life.'*" (p. 28)

1. Is it possible for someone to actually look forward to death? What could make this a glorious reality?
2. Why could Paul say in Philippians 1:21 that "to die is gain"? What are the specific advantages of leaving this world and entering heaven?

4. What steps could you take right now to increase the certainty of where you're headed eternally?



*Wouldn't it make sense that when we have fought the good fight and finished the race
and kept the faith, that we cross a kind of finish line and celebrate like an athlete?*

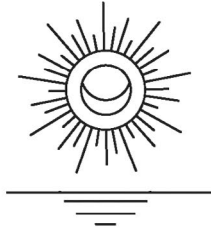
(Tim Challies, quoted on p. 41)

5. What's the greatest sports victory you ever witnessed or experienced personally? How did you react, and how did those around you respond? Shouldn't this be our understanding of the believer's moment as he or she breaks the tape? How can we practically express this to those around us so they'll see and feel the victory of our death? How can we set them up to celebrate the victory of our death?

As I was writing this guide today, Yolanda, our church cleaning lady, came by. I shared what I was doing. She just lost her closest sister this month; her sister was a believer, just as Yolanda is. She said to me, "If you don't know what's beyond, and that heaven's there, you'd lose your mind."

Conversely, as a believer, if you know what's ahead you gain your right mind, your joy, your hope, and everything else that matters.

Thanks, Yolanda.



THREE

FINISH LINE LINES

Robert shares some final lines from famous people. If you had a chance to formulate your final words, what would they be?

1. Spend time writing down a few lines or a paragraph of what you wish these words could be. What would you want those around you to hear as you head into eternity? Take time to carefully craft these words. Discuss this with your group. Why did you choose these words?

My preferred final words:

2. Jesus's last words were "It is finished," which could be translated as "It is paid in full," an accounting term. What did this signify?

3. What does Christ's last statement mean for you when you will face death? How will His "It is finished" affect your final finish?

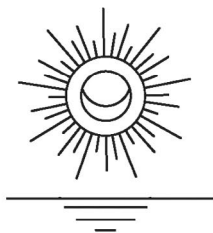


Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1–2 NASB1995)

4. We once stood before God as His enemy. How does the true believer now stand before God?

5. How did we arrive at this new standing? Who gave us this standing and how?

6. What does it mean that we are standing in grace and that we now "exult in hope of the glory of God"?



FOUR

TWO FINISH LINE GUYS IN THE BIBLE

*Scripture tells us that Abram was called. As were David, Esther, and Jesus.
Actually, and here's big news—like them, you and I are also called. Yes, us.
And this calling lasts from now until the end of our final straightaway. (p. 57)*

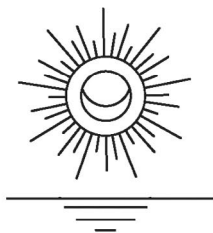
1. By the grace of God, a believer has been called by God into salvation and also the privilege of meaningful service. We each have been given spiritual gifts and a sphere where our life's calling operates. Notice how Paul says this ...

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
(1 Corinthians 12:4–7 NASB)

Describe in a few sentences with the group what you feel you were uniquely put on this earth and called by God to do—your assignment. Speak humbly but honestly.

2. Do you feel that you are fulfilling your calling, the best you can? Is there something more that you can do in your final season to say with Paul, “I have finished the course” (2 Timothy 4:7)?

3. Scripture says that Abraham died “at a good old age, old and contented, and he was gathered to his people” (Genesis 25:7–8 CSB). Do you feel you’ve lived a “good” life as Robert describes it? What are you grateful for?
4. What are some of the most contented, satisfying moments or seasons you’ve experienced in your life?
5. Will you pause right now in your group, in prayer, and give thanks for these moments? Be specific and give Him the thanks He deserves!
6. Robert reminds us that Peter finished well because he obeyed a single, two-word command from Jesus: “Follow Me!” Although you’re closing in on the tape, what is the next right step you need to take before you die as you simply follow Christ?



FIVE

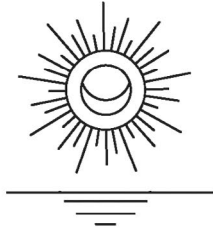
TEMPLE CARE

Robert reminds us in this chapter of the important practical things we must do down the last stretch. He reminds us that we have our physical house, but also that we are a temple that houses the Spirit of God.

*Okay, how's my house? Well, it's like yours. Wrinkles and aches are plentiful.
And how are our temples? Our very own places of worship? And do we
have someone at the top of our contacts who can help? (p. 79)*

1. Discuss for a few minutes how you're doing physically. (Don't get carried away though! We can talk all day about this!) Share your real concerns with your friends. This is a part of life that we must manage well ... and it helps us to have friends who can help carry the load.
2. What fears are you facing about your physical well-being? Be honest.
3. What biblical promises and spiritual truths can you embrace that will help you face those fears? What is God saying to you in the midst of these difficulties and fears? Write down the Scriptures that have most helped you.

5. Is there someone you know and love who is facing the finish line? How could you come alongside them and be a more meaningful friend, a greater helper to them?



SIX

NUTS AND BOLTS

Robert takes us down to the real practical issues we must face. To be unprepared is a plan, just not a good one. Talk with your group about the following.

1. Do you have a good team to help you medically? If not, how could you remedy that? What's the next step? If you have a doctor that you're not confident in, why not find another? Perhaps your friends in your group have some suggestions.
2. Do you see and treat your doctor as a friend? Are you investing in their life in ways that could be a blessing to them? You are entrusting one of the most important seasons of life into their hands.
3. Do you have a good lawyer? Have you made a will? If not, is there some underlying reason that this has not happened? (Maybe an unwillingness to face the reality of the finish line?)

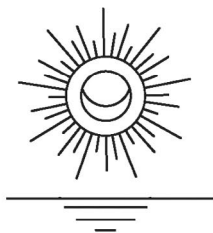


Our lawyer has helped Nancy and me create an estate plan. Just the mention of these two words—“estate plan”—may throw you off. (p. 94)

4. What do these words mean to you in your understanding? Why do you think this could be valuable, and what would be your next steps to establishing this important piece of finish line equipment?

5. Do you have a living will? If so, why did you want to develop that, and how did you accomplish that step? If not, talk with your group about how to get that accomplished. It's a *very important* piece for the last journey.

6. And ... finances! If you died suddenly today, do you have someone who completely understands your finances and can advise your mate in the coming days? What steps do you need to take?



SEVEN

SAYING GRACE

The truth about blessing is hardly mentioned and often misunderstood. But it is powerfully important! Let's chat about it with our friends!

1. What did you learn in this chapter about our ability to bless others? What does that mean and how is it accomplished?
2. Who are the people in your life right now that you need to intentionally bless? Pause and write a list of those names. Share them with your group and share why.
3. What are the simple, daily things you could do to bless those around you? A genuine, spiritual blessing?

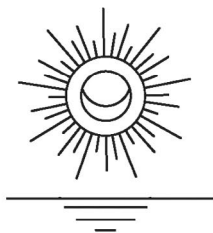
4. There are certain moments in our lives that can be dramatic and profoundly spiritual. Are there people—particularly your family—that you could confer a blessing on in a deliberate way?



“The Scriptures teach us that aging people have a mission in life with respect to future generations—to keep challenging and encouraging the generations behind us to continue following our example of trusting the power of God in our lives.”

(Dr. Hal Habecker, quoted on p. 131)

5. The way you run this last leg and cross the finish line may provide the greatest spiritual blessing. You have taught your loved ones how to live, as best you could. How can you now teach them how to die? How could you show them that this moment is the most glorious adventure, the greatest transition of our lives, attended to by none other than Christ Himself? (*He is my shepherd ... even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will not fear, for He is with me.* [Psalm 23])



EIGHT

WHO WILL BE YOUR PALLBEARERS?

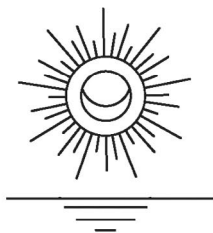
There are some things about death we don't want to talk about. But settling these details is very, very important—particularly for your loved ones who will be responsible after you're gone.

1. Do you have a desire to be cremated? Why or why not? Do you think it's okay to choose this route? Have you discussed this and made plans with those who will be in charge after you die?
2. Where will you be buried? Do you already have your burial plot? Do you have any specific desires for your tombstone?

3. And ... your memorial service. Take a moment to think through and carefully write down your answers to each of these questions.

- o If you had a choice, who would you love to have to speak?
- o Do you want music? If so, what songs and who would sing them or lead them?
- o Are there specific Scriptures you'd love to have read?
- o Are there friends you'd like to speak?
- o Is there a funny story that you'd love for someone to share that, in some way, epitomizes your life?
- o Do you want the gospel shared?
- o Is there a picture that you'd love to have on a program?
- o Who would you love to have as pallbearers?
- o What funeral home would you like to use?
- o What venue would you prefer for your service? Funeral home? A church? Graveside only?

Share your answers with your group and explain why. Then share this with your mate or family members for the future.



NINE

NO MORE SECRETS

This is a powerful and important chapter.

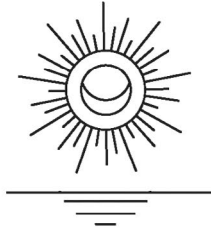
1. Are there things in your life that would be embarrassing for someone to discover after your death? If so, how could you take steps to go ahead and bring these to light? If you don't feel able to share these with the whole group, make an appointment with someone you can trust and tell them the *whole* story. Let it breathe and then find cleansing and forgiveness before the One who matters most.
2. Is there someone with whom you need to clear your conscience? Make things right? You'll never have another chance after death. This can bring great relief to you, but it could release others in ways you cannot imagine.

3. Is there a spiritual step, a surrender, an idol that you need to take care of right now? Why would you not give the Lord full control of everything as you're headed to the tape? What better way to meet Jesus as you cross the finish line than fully surrendered and running all out! Take a moment and list these areas. Share them with your friends. Let them come around you and pray for you as a group that these spiritual steps could be taken.

Before I die, I need to ... (make a list)

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4. Look at Robert's five-step process on page 160. Reveal, admit, confess, forgive, release. Talk about each of these in your group. Where do you need to apply these steps?
5. What if your *last* steps were some of your *greatest* steps? Most meaningful, most profound? Most surrendered? Write one sentence to describe how you'd like to make this last run. Think through it carefully and share with your group.



T E N

DYING

This is the last chapter and perhaps the most important.

1. Read aloud together Robert and his children's "Resolutions" on pages 169–170. Spend deliberate time writing out your own set of resolutions. Talk with your family about this. When finished, share it with the group.

Our resolutions ...

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2. Read the "stages of death" summary by Robert on page 171. Do you think they're accurate? Where are *you* in those stages? Answer honestly.

3. Where does faith enter into each of these stages? How does God's word inform us about each of these? Take a stab at filling out the chart below and discussing after you read each point in Robert's book on pages 173–79.

STAGES OF DEATH	WHAT THE WORLD SAYS	WHAT GOD SAYS THAT HELPS ME
DENIAL		
ANGER		
BARGAINING		
DEPRESSION		
ACCEPTANCE		

4. What do you think about the powerful and important thoughts on dying and euthanasia that Robert presents?



EPILOGUE

READY

1. Share a story about when you were not well prepared ... in school, work, marriage, or raising kids. How did it feel?
2. When you stand before God, and He asks you, “Why should I let you enter My heaven?” ... what will you say?
3. What is the one necessary step we must take to be most ready for heaven? Share with the group when that issue was settled in your life. Or, if it has not been settled, let them help you take the final step to give your life fully to Christ.
4. Finally ... take a moment to write below a final paragraph you would love to express to those closest to you. You may not be able to say it in the end, but leave it here, so they will know what’s in your heart!