Questions for Essentialism
Chapter 2

This is a list of discussion questions to help work through the content of the book “Essentialism” By Greg McKeown.

Major principals:

The non essentialist believes 3 false Ideas: “I have to do it… All of it is important… I can do both.”

The essentialist replaces them with 3 key truths: “I choose to… Only a few things matter, I can do anything but not everything.”

1. Which things are crowding you the most? Make a list of tasks/responsibilities that seem to be crowding you right now.

2. Choose the most troublesome item from #1, and reflect on it through these questions based on those three truths:
   a. Do you feel compelled (by outside pressures) or are you making a deliberate choice that something is important?
   b. Is this item truly important for you to make the highest possible contribution? Why? Why not?
   c. Can you seriously give yourself to this task as well as other things you believe are important? If you had to confidently give something up, what would have to happen for you to realize this? If you have come to this conclusion in the past, what helped you see this?
3. What are the areas in your life/work where you are performing at a mediocre (or worse) level because of your aptitude? How did you come to this conclusion? Why are you still doing these things?

4. Have there been times when you were “fed up” and realized you couldn’t do it all? What events or feelings brought you to that point? What did you do when you got there?

5. Look in your closet or garage (or your bookshelf). What items do you see that you believe are not really important to you? Think especially of ones that you purchased. Which of them did you feel were important when you bought them? What has changed for you to view this differently now?

6. On p. 33 McKeown says he felt that even though he was working really hard, he was not failing, but not really succeeding either. Which areas of your work do you feel that you are not either succeeding or failing at? How much time are you giving to these activities?

7. If you could only do one thing with your life right now, what would it be? What are you doing right now that doesn’t fit into that?
8. “Keep your options open” sounds like a good plan. But it can lead us to attempt too many things. Are there relationships, projects, to do lists, etc. that you are holding onto just to keep your options open? What are they?

9. McKeown says, "Choice is not a thing, it is an action." What actions do you need to take to move forward with determining and doing what is truly important?

10. Where do you feel stuck because you feel you do not have a choice? Are there areas of your responsibility/work activities that you would change or abandon if you could?

11. The author discusses the concept of learned helplessness that leads to us surrendering our prerogative to choose. Are there areas of your life and work where you believe that your work or choices don’t matter? Are there areas where you have given up?

12. Where is hyperactivity a sign of loss of choice in your life? Where do you believe you have to have it all or do it all?

13. Are there areas where you have had to say “no” that feel like a loss? Are there feelings or fears of loss that are driving your decisions?

14. Which opportunities have you passed up that you most regret? Which opportunities have you passed up that you look back on with satisfaction? Is there any difference for you?