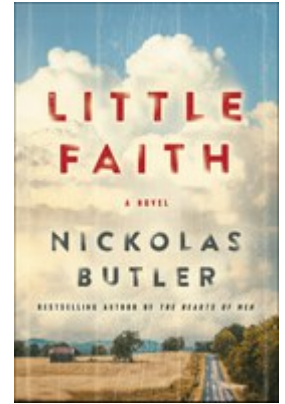


# Discussion Questions for "Little Faith"



1. Why did the author include the Annie Dillard quote at the front of the book?
2. Who should decide when a parent's religious beliefs are harming a child? What if the person potentially being harmed was not a child but an adult?
3. What rights should grandparents have to intervene in decisions about their grandchildren's care? When is it inadvisable to involve grandparents in a child's upbringing? What benefits are there in grandparents and other extended family in helping to raise a child?
4. It is said that losing a child is the worst kind of grief. How does the loss of their son impact Lyle and Peg's ability to parent Shiloh? How does this impact their relationship with their grandson?
5. Lyle says to a young Shiloh, "Part of being a parent is loving your child more than they will ever love you." (Page 280). What is your reaction to this statement?
6. Lyle spends most of the book questioning his faith and the wisdom of other's faith in God. Why then does Lyle attend church? How does his view of faith change over the course of the book?
7. Nature is important in the book. The story is divided by the seasons: Lyle's work in the orchard; Lyle and Peg working in the garden; and the setting along the river. Do any of those passages seem especially poetic to you?
8. What does the orchard symbolize?
9. Is the depiction of small-town life realistic?
10. The author writes, "It is the most obvious blessing and curse of a small town: your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and clergy are forever..." (p. 41). In this story, which was it for Lyle, Charlie or Hoot?
11. Did you find clues that Steven was a con man or did you think that Lyle was convincing himself with wishful thinking?
12. Lyle finds Steven's certainty exhausting. In western culture, we generally think of young people being open to new ideas and becoming more conservative and set in their ways as they age. Do these two men confirm or refute that generalization?
13. After the boy's car hits the apple truck, Lyle thinks about the old doctor who was killed by a stray bullet and wonders if life is just random chance? (Page 232). What do you think?
14. The book deals with death, but manages to be uplifting. How does it strike an uplifting note?
15. What is the meaning of the ending?