

Little Faith by Nickolas Butler Discussion Questions

Little Faith is a novel that confronts complex issues such as faith, spirituality, and the decline of organized religion.

1. You might start a discussion of *Little Faith* by talking about the Hovde family relationships. How do the family dynamics among the four set them up to react the way each does when the crisis unfolds?
2. Years ago Lyle and Peg lost their baby son; as a result Lyle has struggled with his faith. Is Lyle's doubt understandable, or is there a way forward—to reconcile tragedy with belief? (This is a branch of philosophy called theodicy, which is often expressed more colloquially as "why do bad things happen to good people?") Did the novel cause you to examine your own relationship with faith and religion?
3. Other than religious, what other kinds of faith exist in this book? What about faith in the bonds of family and community, or faith in what seems to be right? Does/should religious faith take precedence over other faiths?
4. *Little Faith* is a novel in which a grandparent is placed in the unenviable position of protecting a grandchild from the grandchild's parent. How would you have reacted if you were placed in Lyle's position? If you are a grandparent, what is the nature of your relationship to your adult child(ren)? To your grandchildren? Do you find yourself feeling critical of your child(ren)'s life choices? How they raise their children?
5. What are your thoughts about Steven, especially his influence over Shiloh? How do you see Shiloh as a parent?
6. Where do your sympathies lie in this novel? Whom do you find fault with most?
7. Dreams play a somewhat crucial role in this novel. In your life, how do you perceive your dreams? Are they guideposts or omens for what is to come? Or something closer to nonsense?
8. Throughout the novel, the author sprinkles certain references to songs or lyrics... In various interviews, Butler has discussed the importance of engaging a reader's senses. In what ways could you hear the narrative? See it? Taste it? Touch it? Smell it?

9. The end of the novel offers no easy answers or resolutions. Do you find the ending satisfying, or would you have preferred a more definitive conclusion? Perhaps the author intended to leave it up to the reader to supply the novel's ending. If so, how would you write it?

10. What do you think happened to Hoot? To Isaac? To Shiloh? To Lyle and Peg?

11. *Little Faith* is a novel inspired by actual events. Did the novel cause you to research the Kara Neumann case? Were you aware of other prayer-healing/faith-healing cases? Why did the author chose to inform the reader that the novel was inspired by actual events?

12. What are your favorite works of fiction that embrace notions of faith, spirituality, and religion? What writers are known to explore these themes?

(Questions by LitLovers / Reading Group Choices)