

## **Discussion Topics for *Antonia's Choice***

Do you remember back in high school when you'd read an assigned book for English class that was actually pretty decent, and then the teacher would ruin it by giving you a list of questions to answer? (It was even worse when the teacher made you write the questions out. It didn't take a genius to figure out that was designed to keep the class quiet for an extra fifteen minutes! Did those teachers think we came in on a turnip truck or what?)

As the author of *Antonia's Choice*, I would rather consume an entire jar of pickled eggs than think the list of topics below is going to remind you of Mrs. Magilicutt's sophomore English class. The questions you'll find here are designed only to allow you to further enter the fictional world I've created in hopes that you'll find even deeper meaning for yourself there. If the thought of doing that makes you want to construct spitballs, skip this part completely. In any case, there are no have-tos or right-or-wrong answers here. My hope is that you will simply enjoy journeying further with Antonia and her family and friends, moving closer to yourself and to our God. It's your choice.

- Some readers have said that it takes Toni an inordinately long time to figure out what has happened to Ben, especially in light of the evidence that is right under her nose. Why do you think an otherwise very intelligent woman would be so clueless? Do you ever fall into that way of dealing (or not dealing) with things? Is it total denial, or is God's hand in there somehow?
- Take a look at your adult past and see if you can remember any Hobson's choices you've had to make. Did you "take it" or did you "leave it"? (Don't beat yourself up too much if you counted the cost and found it to be too high)
- Do you agree with Toni that the Hobson's choices are sometimes easier to make than the ones that go beyond "take it or leave it"?
- What was the final, ultimate sacrifice Toni had to make before she and Ben and Chris could begin to heal? Is that a tough one for you? It is for me.
- Have you, like Toni, ever benefitted from the sacrifices you've had to make? Can you see how you might be changed for the better in the face of something you're having to ponder giving up right now?
- Toni's true commitment to Christ is made quietly and without fanfare. She simply understands in a moment of clarity what it means to be born again. Would you rather have seen a more dramatic conversion scene? What was your own moment of clarity like, if you've had one? What murkiness are you still looking through?
- Dominica lays things out for Toni in an almost brusque way in their first meeting. Did that put you off? How about their later discussions? Do you agree with Dominica's theology?

- In fact, the book is filled with things I believe to be true about God. Care to discuss any of these?
  - “If God is in this, it isn’t because I thought about asking him.”
  - “Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have thought I’d be in a position where my problems were bigger than I was.”
  - “This rage is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.”
  - “You believe, and you’ve surrounded yourself with people who know Him personally. He’ll take that for a start.”
  - “Evil is like spiritual earplugs. It shuts out everything else.”
  - “I’m not going to kill myself. But it’s only because of God. Jesus wouldn’t take what doesn’t really belong to Him, and neither can I take a life that doesn’t really belong to me. It belongs to God.”
  - “If I don’t deal with this, it will deal with me.”
  - The conversation about forgiveness on pp. 236-237.
  - “We all get the grace. Some of us just don’t see it. You have, and that’s made all the difference.”
- I tried to present the very real problem of child molestation in a way that was realistic and clear, without being unnecessarily graphic. Did I succeed? How did you respond on an emotional level to what happened to Ben and Wyndham and the other children?
- How can you help? Can you work socially, through a local organization for abused children? Would you rather approach it on a personal level, encouraging someone you know to seek help? If nothing else, are you simply unwilling to allow any incident of molestation, no matter how small it may seem to you, to go undealt with? And will you pray? After all, we must protect our young ones, one child at a time.