

## ***If I Gained the World* Discussion Questions**

*If I Gained the World* by Linda Nichols

What is a marriage? Is it a legal definition or a lifestyle definition? Is there a distinction in your mind between a couple married in the church and one wed "outside" the church?

Describe the role of physical appearance in this book. Who is beautiful and who is plain? What do these labels reveal about the characters, and do they change throughout the book?

What do the main characters' jobs (Daniel as actor and Lenore as nurse) reveal about the characters?

The change in these characters upon giving their lives to Christ seems almost instantaneous. How do their experiences compare to yours or to that of others you have witnessed?

Lenore's name means "light" or "light of the sun." Discuss how she lives up to her name.

Both Daniel and Lenore (at different times) are faced with hitting rock bottom. What do you admire about their particular responses, and what, if anything, do you think they should have done differently? Talk about how you made it through some of the darkest times of your life.

Lenore keeps things (her diagnosis, the name of her ex-lover) from Erik Ashland, and later she keeps the discovery of the lump in her breast from Al. Why do you think she holds these secrets? Should she?

Which character do you think benefits most from living in the communal house? Which character sacrifices the most?

"A new normal" is a phrase that gained great significance in the days following 9/11. What are some life events that have forced you to find a new normal in your own life? Is there any trauma or change too great to reestablish normality?

Domesticity (cooking food, keeping house, working on wood projects) has deep meaning for the characters. What do these things represent?

The core theme of the book comes from the verse suggesting the folly and frustration of seeking to "gain the world." Give some examples of what you think

this phrase means. Name a real-life person who you think best exemplifies someone who has gained the world. What meaning does their life have?

Extra: Read Edgar Allen Poe's poem "Lenore" and discuss the narrator's thoughts about his beloved as compared to Daniel's vision of Lenore in the book. (This poem can be found online.)