

The Longing Discussion Questions

The novel's title references the longings of several of the book's key characters. Give some examples.

Despite the ongoing tension between Caleb Yoder and his father, Caleb's family expects him to return to home to assist them following the accident. Do you think a modern family would have similar expectations? What do you think of Caleb's reaction?

When Rosanna King finds she is again with child, she initially withholds the news from Elias, fearing another loss. Were you surprised at this? Are there times when it is okay for spouses to keep secrets from each other?

If you were in Rosanna's situation, would you have been willing to accept Lena's offer of another baby? Can you imagine someone outside the Plain community making a similar offer?

Discuss the Amish community's response to David Yoder's accident. In what ways do the Amish approach calamity differently than the English? What are some benefits? Do you think you would have access to a similar support system?

The scene where the lot falls on Elias King offers a dramatic window into Amish life. What do you think of this way of selecting a preacher? What are some advantages of this custom? disadvantages?

Regardless of David's many rejections, Reuben Fisher is persistent in his prayers and offers to help the stubborn man. Do you think you would have been able to be as patient? Have you ever had a friend who demonstrated the same persistence with you? (Or perhaps you have been that kind of friend.)

Nellie frequently reminds herself that she broke up with Caleb because of her faith; every day, she continues to pray for him and her willingness to "give Caleb" to God. Have you known anyone who has set a relationship aside because God seemed to be calling him or her to do so? What happened?

When tragedy strikes and David Yoder is confronted with his weakness, he finally is able to see himself as someone in need of God's grace. Have you ever experienced a spiritual breakthrough as a result of a difficult time?

Before he passes, David gives Caleb his land with no strings attached, saying, "I love you, Caleb ... whether you forgive me or not." At that moment, Caleb finds

himself unable to respond in kind, something he later regrets. What are some things each one regrets about his relationship with the other? Do you think this is a realistic portrayal of a father-son relationship?

Caleb's first reaction to his father's conversion is doubt, since his father's words fly in the face of everything Caleb knows about him. It isn't until after his father's death that Caleb's own heart embraces the truth. Do you think it can be more difficult to accept the Good News of God's grace from those closest to us? Why or why not?

Talk about some of the obstacles Chris and Nellie would face in forming a marriage relationship. Would one character have been making more of a sacrifice than the other? If you were placed in either's situation, would you have been willing to make the required sacrifice?

Through her efforts, Rhoda manages to obtain the exciting English life she's always yearned for—a beautiful car and driver's license, lovely clothes, and a handsome boyfriend. Yet, in time, she discovers her new life lacks the appeal she dreamed it would have. What do you think of Rhoda's decision to abandon her fancy life and return home? Do you think she will be satisfied in the long run?

Where you surprised by Nellie's ultimate romantic choice? Why or why not?