

The Sacrifice Discussion Questions

1. Robert Schwartz struggles with the memories of his life before committing his life to Christ. How does the Lord sometimes use a sinful past littered with broken relationships for His glory?
2. After Elias's death, Hannah and Robert both have difficulty reconciling teachings of God's sovereignty with the human tragedy of death. Since the fall of Adam, humanity has grappled with what Hannah calls "the horror of death" (105). In what ways does a relationship with God provide comfort in death, and in what ways does such a relationship complicate our feelings about loss?
3. In Mary Ruth's attempt to make sense of Elias's death, she engages in superstitious speculation about what the young man might have done to elicit the wrath of God. Later, Abram and others make similar speculations about Ida's death. How do extrabiblical practices and ways of thinking slow healing and obscure understanding during tragedy?
4. Through Elias's tragic death, the Schwartz family becomes increasingly intertwined with the Ebersols. How do these very different families cause each other to grow and develop spiritually?
5. What can we learn from the Ebersols and the Schwartzes about how the Holy Spirit ministers to families through individual members? Give examples of how a family can experience grace and growth through the decisions or actions of a single member.
6. Because Hannah has no assurance of her salvation (129), she wonders, "How can I or anyone be ready for that day" when a person passes from life to death (112). How is Hannah's insecurity both part of the human dilemma, as we all experience the emotional separation of death, and unique to the religious teaching she has received about eternity?
7. The Sacrifice introduces contention between the members of the Fold regarding the legalism of the Ordnung. At different times, Leah, Lizzie, Mary Ruth, and even Ida express frustration at the cloaking of biblical inquiry and discouragement of personal relationships and communion with Christ. Discuss how cultural interpretations of Christianity and unloving attitudes of Christians can confuse the message of Christ for an unbeliever?
8. One theme in this novel is the devastating effects of secrecy and the power behind the secrets--fear. Bring to mind each character, and discuss the long list of secrets kept and told throughout the book. How were relationships severed

and time wasted as a result of secrecy and confusion?

9. Another organizing metaphor of the novel is death. Elias and Ida both meet untimely deaths, but other characters experience spiritual death: Sadie, Ezra, and to some extent, Abram. Who, through personal communion with and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, experiences spiritual resurrection as well?

10. Much of the novel is set against a backdrop of grief, both communal in the deaths of Ida and Elias, and private in Leah's loneliness, for example. How does the author use this background of grief to flush out various characters' questions about the heart of God toward humanity?

11. At long last, Leah learns the truth about Sadie and Jonas. What questions are answered by this discovery? What questions arise? If Jonas and Leah are to meet again, how will he find her changed?