

FROM A DISTANCE

Reading Guide Discussion Questions

Spoiler Alert: Questions contain key plot points to the story.



1. Have someone in the group read the opening paragraph of Ch 1 aloud. Then consider these questions... Have you ever had a dream you've wanted so badly you could taste it? A dream you would gladly sacrifice much in order to obtain? A dream you're certain God would be glorified in if only He would give it to you? Can you identify with Elizabeth's feelings in this passage? If yes, what was/is it? And what's hindering you from pursuing it?
2. At the end of Ch 2, something slips from Elizabeth's grasp—both figuratively and literally. What is it? How does Elizabeth react in the following chapter? What stayed with you most about Elizabeth and Daniel's initial meeting?
3. Elizabeth considers why God gives gifts to certain people (those innate talents given to individuals that can be honed, most certainly, but that are "there" inherently). What is one of her father's talents? What is his reasoning behind why he has that ability? What's Elizabeth's opinion on his reasoning? What does the Bible say about how God distributes gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11)?
4. In Ch 18, Josiah says, "We got to tell him, I know that. It's the right thing to do, but it bein' the right thing don't mean I got to like doin' it." Josiah is an honorable man. And despite the hardships and injustice he's endured, he still holds fast to doing the right thing. Discuss Josiah's character. What do you think "made" him this way? How often have you done "the right thing" while not wanting to? What came of that decision in your own life, and what drove you to remain true to that kind of commitment?
5. Sheriff McPherson tells Elizabeth that she's brought the future to Timber Ridge (in bringing her camera, taking photographs, thus enabling others to see things second hand that they would have never seen otherwise). Discuss the implications of Elizabeth introducing photography to the mountain town of Timber Ridge, and also in that particular page of history (1875). Further, what are the inherent warnings for us today (in the information on the media and internet)?

7. In Ch 20, Elizabeth is contemplating Josiah's statement, "But knowin' He's already sifted through it and that Jesus knows what's comin' before it gets to me...well, I reckon that ought to be enough." Discuss where Elizabeth is in her spiritual journey right now, in her faith. What does she do right after this moment? Have you ever prayed something you wished you could recall (once you realized the possible cost)?

8. In Ch 23, Elizabeth thinks, "All her life she'd wanted to do something special." Share your personal insights on moments in your own life when (regardless of whether you realized it at the time) God was redirecting your dreams? How did it feel at the time? What did that redirection cost you?

9. Daniel carried a weight of regret around inside him. Discuss what carrying this weight had done to Daniel—in his emotional life, in his faith. Do you have a weight of regret inside you that you need to surrender to Christ? What did God do in Daniel's life to finally bring him to the point of surrender?

10. Do you ever tell "little lies?" In Ch 30 there's a scene about telling a "little lie." Have someone in the group summarize the setting for this scene. What's the danger in what Elizabeth is doing here? Are you ever guilty of "giving the truth scope?" What does the Bible say about lying (John 8:44)? Does God's Word distinguish between small deceptions and large ones? Do we?

11. Elizabeth has an addiction in *From a Distance*. What was she addicted to? How did she become addicted? How did the addiction hamper her lung disease (asthma)? Have you ever had an addiction to something that—though it might have provided temporary relief—was really hurting you in the long run?

12. It's amazing how God weaves lives together. Daniel and Elizabeth's lives were intertwined one fateful moment years before they actually met. What was that moment? Do you believe God purposefully intertwines lives like that? Can you give an example of that happening in your own life?

13. In Ch 37, Elizabeth reflects on the "eternal whisper" she heard inside her. Have you ever experienced that "still small voice" inside you? How can we be sure the voice we hear inside is the voice of God? Read 1 John 4:1. How can we "test" the spirits? The Bible is clear on this: The Spirit of God would never instruct a child of God to do

something in opposition to the Word of God. So then, understanding this, when we're seeking God's will on something, how can we be sure we're hearing the voice of God and not the voice of a demon?

14. In Ch 41, Elizabeth faces what she believes to be the last few moments of her life. Have you ever faced what you honestly believed would be the last moments of your life? What do you think will matter most to you in that moment? What did Elizabeth conclude?

15. God took away Elizabeth's original dream and gave her a different one. In Ch 41, as *From a Distance* is closing, Elizabeth reflects on her personal journey. Has God ever "stripped" layers from you, from your life, in order for you to see with more eternal eyes? Please share your thoughts with the group. Elizabeth reflects on one of the lessons she's learned. What is it? And have you ever experienced God doing that in your own life? Again, please share that experience with the group.

16. Share your favorite scene in *From a Distance* and also your favorite passage.

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