

THE INHERITANCE

Reading Guide Discussion Questions

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



1. When you first glimpsed the title *The Inheritance*, what's the very first thing you thought of? An earthly inheritance? Or a spiritual one?
2. McKenna Ashford is a woman who's been handed a lot of responsibility early in life. She didn't ask for it, and she hasn't handled it all well. Can you identify with some of her struggles in the story—her anger, her confusion—and the question of “why” God has allowed these to happen in her life?
3. In Chapter Five, McKenna is faced with a situation she hadn't anticipated and one that pushes her to the brink. Have you ever experienced a “domino effect” of stressful events in your life? How did you get through it? How does John 16:33 speak to this?
4. The last three paragraphs of Chapter Five describe a deep friendship that has stood the test of time, and that—even though interrupted for a time—will last throughout eternity. Have you ever experienced a friendship like this? If yes, what made that friendship so special and how did it change your life?
5. In Chapter Eight, McKenna must explain “death” to Emma (five years old). Do you agree with how she chose to explain what happened to Emma's mother? How might you have explained things differently?
6. In Chapter Nine, Wyatt Caradon fulfills a promise he made to Janie Talbot. This event in the book was taken from an actual historical account. If Janie had made this request of you, would you have done it?
7. McKenna's relationship with her brother, Robert, is a dysfunctional one, for many reasons. In Chapter Thirteen we get a glimpse (in their argument) of just how dysfunctional it is. What happens in this chapter with Emma? And what would you say is the biggest underlying issue for Robert and McKenna?

8. McKenna finds an unexpected and unlikely friend in Chin Mei, a Chinese woman she meets (in Chapter Fourteen) for the second time. Have you ever had a “fated” friendship? One that seemed prearranged by God from the very beginning? Someone with whom you felt an instant kinship? Describe what that felt like and how you met that person.

9. Wyatt’s life crosses that of Robert Ashford, and Wyatt sees himself in the young man. In Chapter Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four, he intentionally chooses not to intervene in a situation with Robert. Do you agree with Wyatt’s decision? And have you ever known someone like Robert Ashford who seems to have an unquenchable need to prove him/herself, almost to their destruction? Where do you believe these feelings, these needs stem from? And how would you attempt to help someone like this?

10. Like many of us, McKenna faces significant financial struggles amidst her emotional challenges. Have you ever faced financial struggles similar to this degree where the future seemed so bleak, you didn’t know what to do or where to turn next? What was your greatest source of comfort through this time?

11. As McKenna faces challenges, she’s determined to not “be broken” by them. When she first stated that desire (to remain strong and not be broken), what was your reaction to her determination? Did you cheer for her—or cringe for her? How did her character change as she came to see that brokenness was what God was trying to achieve in her heart all along? How does that lesson change our perspectives in our own lives?

12. McKenna has to learn how to love her brother, Robert, with a “tough love,” something Wyatt Caradon’s father taught him long ago. Have you ever had to love someone with “tough love?” A love that literally hurt you inside as you made choices that you knew were best for that person but that were extremely difficult to make and to carry out. How did you find the strength to make those choices? And what were they?

13. In Chapter Twenty-Six, Wyatt reflects on his own life and on what McKenna has told him about her and Robert’s parents and their background. In a paragraph that begins with, “Knowing about their parents shed some light for him on Robert’s poor choices...” he likens the varying situations that people are born into to a game a poker.

He concludes, “It wasn’t the hand a person was dealt that determined the outcome—it was the person holding the cards that made the difference.” What choice had he made with the life he’d been dealt? What choice have you made?

14. McKenna wants so badly for Robert to succeed that she steps in to shield him from failure, again and again. Casey Trenton, the livery owner, finally calls her hand on this (in Chapter Twenty-Seven) when he says, “I means that’s a tall order...guaranteeing another person’s word. I have a hard enough time keeping my own, much less somebody’s else’s.” This is a turning point in McKenna’s perspective. Have you ever struggled, perhaps with your own children, in wanting to shield them from life? How did you learn this lesson and learn to “let go?”

15. Wyatt recognizes a pride in McKenna, one that he’s seen in himself. In Chapter Twenty-Nine, in the paragraph that begins with, “She had a streak of pride in her, but it wasn’t one of vanity,” he reflects on “good pride” and “bad pride.” Do you agree with his assessment? Is there a “good” kind of pride? And how has pride impacted choices in your life?

16. In Chapter Thirty-Two, Robert inadvertently “confesses” to Wyatt about events that happened in St. Joseph. It’s clear to Wyatt that guilt still weighs Robert down. And rightly so, because Robert hasn’t faced his own issues yet. He’s been denying them, running from them. In light of 2 Corinthians 7:10, what’s the purpose of guilt? And how can guilt be “right” and “wrong?” What’s the outcome of “good guilt” and “bad guilt?”

17. Security—both financial and emotional—is something McKenna is searching for during the course of her journey in *The Inheritance*. Yet in Chapter Thirty-Three, she has this thought, “But as it turned out, security was a fickle mistress. And was, at best, an illusion.” Do you agree with her? Have you ever pursued “security” above all else? What does Matthew 6:33 say about doing this?

18. In a final pivotal moment in McKenna’s journey, she reflects in a paragraph (in Chapter Forty-Five) that begins with, “She’d once thought God would never intentionally hurt her. But looking back over her life, she’d had cause to rethink that.” In reading the remainder of that paragraph, and in dwelling on Job 5:18, do you agree

with McKenna's conclusion about how God works in our lives? Do you see evidence of Job 5:18 in your own life? And if yes, how?

19. In the final pages of *The Inheritance*, we get a glimpse of the lives of the characters some months later. As McKenna watches Robert "coming home," she stays exactly where she is. She doesn't step toward him. But it's so hard to keep her feet planted "when her mother's heart wants to ease his journey home." Have you ever experienced this type of angst for someone you've loved? You wanted them to "come home" so badly and yet you've (finally) realized that we can't take those first steps for each other. We can only take them for ourselves. What are those times in your own life and what did you learn that you could share with someone else who's in this situation?

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