

JOSEPH'S DILEMMA

Return to Northkill, BOOK 2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part I

1. Summer Rain wants to wait for the British to come and rescue them rather than try to escape, even though release may take years. Do you think it is better to wait for deliverance by humans or to trust God to guide you through?
2. Trust of Touching Sky comes slowly to Joseph over the course of the book. What gestures and words of hers help him learn to trust her?
3. Joseph is plagued by memories of his past life and, initially, a desire for revenge for the killing of his family. How do his memories of the past change throughout the course of the book?
4. Could Joseph truly become a part of Touching Sky's family before forgiving Tom Lions and the others in the tribe who killed his family?
5. Joseph stopped saying the Lord's Prayer. In what ways do we stop praying and doing other spiritual practices when not surrounded by positive influences like a church community?
6. Miquon calls the rattlesnake "brother" even though it could kill him, and he tells Joseph to treat it as a friend. In what other ways does Joseph's new family treat the natural world with respect?
7. Joseph is finally presented with an opportunity to escape when he is sent to seek help for Runs Free's injury. What inner and interpersonal consequences might have resulted if he had taken the chance?
8. Miquon and Joseph disagree on whether it is good for Joseph to keep his carving of the wooden cabin back home. "I thought it might be good to remember where I came from," Joseph says. Do you think it is better for us to cling to the past or forget it? Which is your tendency: to hold onto the past or to quickly forget it?

Part II

1. Joseph's adoption ritual reminds him of baptism. How are these two events similar and dissimilar?
2. Touching Sky tells Joseph that Tom Lions is afraid of him. How does fear influence their relationship? How does fear influence our daily relationships?
3. Touching Sky asserts that taking revenge on Tom Lions will be "as sweet to the heart as maple syrup is to the tongue." In what ways is revenge sweet? In what ways is it not?
4. Joseph eventually concludes that the Delaware's Great Spirit is the same as the God the Amish call *Vater*. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Silver Sage talks about thankfulness for gifts from the British, despite her mistrust of them. How else are characters thankful? How could you benefit from employing Silver Sage's spirit of gratitude?
6. Silver Sage and Touching Sky are afraid that Joseph will want to leave, so they remind him of the evil ways of white men. Are they wrong to think of all white people as the same?
7. Tom Lions saves Runs Free from the fire but threatens Joseph. How can Joseph and Touching Sky reconcile these actions with their emotions about Tom Lions?
8. Touching Sky has Joseph read the Lord's Prayer to her. How could the prayer bring them together?
9. Touching Sky decides not to tell Joseph about the shirt that Barbara sent him or about Jacob's forgiveness of the man who scalped Franey. What do you think of her decisions to keep the shirt and this information from Joseph?

Part III

1. With war coming, Joseph feels torn between his two families. When caught between two identities, how can a person discern which identity to hold onto?
2. Joseph compares the Delawares' war ritual to the white settlers' hateful speech when his family sheltered at Fort Northkill. How does this comparison lead to his decision?
3. Joseph decides to join the warriors in order to capture a horse. Is this type of action morally superior to actually joining in the battle?
4. Joseph feels guilty about wishing for Tom Lions' death. Does this show a step toward loving his enemy?
5. During the smallpox outbreak, Tom Lions asks Joseph for help. How can times of struggle bring people together?
6. Joseph finds out that the blanket he gave Runs Free was the cause of the smallpox. Have you ever had to forgive yourself for something you've done? What practices or prayers have you found to be helpful in learning to forgive yourself?
7. Silver Sage suggests that Joseph give the horse, Star, to Tom Lions. What could this accomplish?
8. Joseph hopes to be a bridge between the Native Americans and the whites. How can he accomplish this? Is it pointless to try?