

Fatal Illusions

Reading Group Guide

1. After Gillian discovered Stacey's love letter to Marc, she quoted a Bible verse to help her through her crisis. What verses do you turn to for comfort when something has turned your life upside down?

2. Did Gillian deal with her grief over the loss of her twins in a biblical way? If you could have counseled Gillian, what would you have told her to help her deal with her grief? (For help, see Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28; and 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

3. We learn that Marc decided to avoid basketball due to losing his temper when he played. But when Marc heard a vandal ransacking his house, he yielded to his anger and stepped into a dangerous situation that almost cost him his life. Have you ever put yourself in a bad situation because you acted out of anger? What should you have done instead?

4. At one point in the story, Gillian confessed that she wasn't sure what she believed in anymore. Have you ever doubted your faith in God? What helped strengthen your faith?

5. Marc kept several secrets from Gillian that strained their marriage. Is it ever right to keep secrets from your spouse? Why or why not?

6. Gillian observed that the family's move to Whistler's Point made little sense in human terms. Has God ever redirected your life in a way that didn't make sense at the time? What did God teach you through the experience? Looking back, were you able to see His plan?

7. Gillian was distressed to see that Marc had stored his pastoral books in the basement of the caretaker's house. When she confronted him, he replied that he needed some time and space to evaluate how God was leading him. Is it ever appropriate to take a break from Christian service?

8. In Florida, Chuck Riley regretted leaving unfinished business and still wanted to catch the Magician Murderer. During the course of the story, God led Riley to finish the job. Do you have any major projects in your life that you have left unfinished? Do you believe God wants you to finish them?

9. After Marc rejected Stacey, she fled to a deserted hunting cabin to regroup. But even then, she couldn't run from God. Has God's Word ever pursued you or stopped you in your tracks when you were dead set on going your own way?

10. God uses the words of other believers to encourage us in the Christian life. After Marc rejected Stacey's declaration of love, she kept remembering his words; in the end,

the truth of his words helped shatter her delusions. Has God ever used the words of another believer to help you come to an understanding of a situation?

11. Before Stacey's death, she decided to stop pursuing Marc Thayer and to warn him about Haydon. Her act of seeking to warn the Thayer family led to her own demise. Have you ever stood at a crossroads between what you wanted and what was more important for the good of others? Did you make the right choice?

12. Gillian was an overprotective parent, almost to the point of driving Crystal away. Are you overprotective of your children? How do you know if you're being overprotective?

13. What problems do we face in our Christian lives when personal ambition becomes an idol, like it did for Haydon?

14. After Haydon tried to kill Crystal, Gillian was so angry that she wanted to kill him. Is violence in this situation justified? Is it ever justified?

15. During one crisis in the story, Gillian was forced to turn to prayer and realized that she hadn't recently prayed in any meaningful way. What is your prayer life like? Do you turn to God only when you face a crisis?

16. Marc and Gillian faced several struggles in their marriage. How does their relationship change by the end of the novel?

17. At the end of the novel, when Gillian left her letters at the graves of her twins, she realized that she had been talking to her dead babies more than she'd been talking to God. Is there anything in your life that you've substituted for intimacy with God?

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