

## Discussion Guide

### Matters of the Heart

1. How does Katie's anger and frustration help set the story's action into motion? How was Katie practicing the "true religion" of the Bible by helping widows and orphans, a stark contrast to the magistrate's reaction to those displaced by the Civil War?
2. Hans returned from the Civil War with what we now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. What "triggers" him to relive his memories from the battlefield? How do his memories affect his physical body as well as his mind?
3. Hans's mother used to say, "Happiness does not come from happiness itself but from the journey towards achieving it." What does this saying mean to you? How does Hans plan to apply it to his life?
4. When Reverend Jenkins is introduced in chapter 8, there are clues that his mind might be slipping, but most of his acquaintances don't notice. Why do you think his symptoms are so easily overlooked by those who know him best?
5. In chapter 13, we learn about Katie's desire to open an orphanage for needy children, but there's no way the town's magistrate will allow it. Why is Katie so keen on this particular ministry? Why is the magistrate so adamantly against it?
6. The Gray sisters tell Katie in chapter 22 that they "support a tenacious female like yourself who will blaze a path through history." They define such women as unconventional, self-confident, feisty, and headstrong. Who are your favorite tenacious females from history? (Yes, biblical women DO count!)
7. Katie uses Proverbs 16:9 (*A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*) to explain why she doesn't believe there are coincidences when one is a believer. Instead, she prefers the term "God incidence." What actions does the verse encourage her to take when helping the widows and orphans of war? How does Hans help her? Who else is helping?
8. What "God incidence" helps Hans escape from Joe's presence in town while helping someone in need?
9. Delphina instructs Katie to live in the "yet," that transitional time where she can grow and learn until God is ready to fulfill His will. What are Katie's dreams for the orphanage (her plans while in the "yet")?
10. How does Hans' time with Reverend Jenkins help heal and change him? What aspect of their relationship do you think has the most impact? What characteristics of a shepherd did the Reverend say Hans had? What shepherds have you met in your life?
11. Essie asks how to know if she's following God from her heart or because of her "training." Does teaching unthinking obedience through fear hurt or help a person's spiritual growth?
12. When Hans gave his testimony at the Shumard Bend Church, how did various people from town act toward him?
13. How could Hans redeem himself in the eyes of his family (especially his sister-in-law) and of himself? How did Hans's new self-confidence help him in his relationship with Katie? What misunderstandings got in the way of their future together?