

JourneyForth Discussion Questions

These discussion questions are designed to help you think analytically about the content of the book. The questions that follow are open-ended, allowing you to discuss various topics and issues addressed in the novel.

Careful Enough?

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1. How would you feel if your parents suddenly wanted to move to a foreign mission field before your senior year of high school? What things would change in your life? Would you view the experience as an adventure or a nightmare? What do you think you would gain from such a change?
2. Chinese foods are mentioned throughout the book. What would you especially like to try? What would you like to avoid? Are you more of an adventure person or an oatmeal person?
3. In chapter two Jason shares this Chinese proverb: *Water can float a boat or sink a boat*. Can you think of a difficult experience in your life that made you stronger? Can you think of one that defeated you? What choices did you make that contributed to either result? How do those experiences affect your life today?
4. In chapter three Daniel's dad tells him: *Your mother and I have been watching you for seventeen years. We've seen you weigh decisions and make choices. We've caught a glimpse of your heart and what you want out of life*. On that basis they trusted Daniel to go on his own and use his best judgment. What do you think your parents see in you from observing the same things? If they let you go on your own in a foreign country with no restrictions except trust, what would you do? What inspires your best behavior, rules with consequences for breaking them or trust?
5. In chapter five Jason shares this Chinese proverb: *Where there is much distance to cover, you will know how good your horse is*. What is currently happening in your life that God could be using to test you in this way?
6. In chapter five Daniel tries to teach Jason respect for the Communist Chinese government. Does a government have to earn our respect before we are obligated to show respect to it? How can we show respect for a government we disagree with? How does this apply to other authority figures in our lives?

7. In chapter nine Daniel accuses William of cheating because he downloads essays off the internet and turns them in as his own. Daniel would never do this because he feels it is morally wrong to cheat. William has not grown up with moral absolutes like this. Discuss how William's concern for family outweighs his concerns about cheating. How could Americans learn from the Chinese concept of family? How do differences in culture affect what Daniel and William see as most important? Where do you think America gets the general idea that cheating is wrong? Do you make most of your decisions based on what you think, what you feel, or what people will think of you? Can you find passages in Scripture that would give you guidance for a situation like this?

8. In chapter ten the book uses the term "incognito" to refer to Christ, the bicycle, and their ministry in China. Discuss how that term applies in each situation. What can we learn about the incognito way Christ lived on earth that applies to our lives today?

9. In chapter twelve Daniel encounters the cultural difference of group mentality vs. individual mentality. How does Western society show it values individuality? Consider who we view as our heroes and what they achieve. When a group of friends goes out together, who pays? Who decides what the group will do? How is that different from the Chinese culture in this book? Which way do you think is better? Does either way demonstrate a specific pattern given in the Bible?

10. In chapter fourteen William lied to Brandon to "save face." Whose "face" was William protecting when he told the lie? Why do you think saving face is more important than honesty in Chinese culture? Describe some situations in which you could make someone feel better by lying. Which do you think is more important, saving face or being honest? Which would you rather be known for, being nice or being honest?

11. In chapter seventeen Daniel accuses William of using Brandon's friendship to get help from Brandon's mom in getting his visa. Western culture sees "using people" as a negative thing. Why? Chinese build relationships with people as essential to doing business. Friends help friends. What do you think is the difference between friends *helping* friends and friends *using* friends? Have you ever felt used? If so, how do you think that experience would look in Chinese culture?

12. In chapter eighteen Daniel hears about Jason's experience in school, and by chapter nineteen he wants to leave China. Why do you think that experience was the one that affected Daniel most strongly?

13. It is normal for a person who moves to another culture to go through these phases: *The honeymoon phase* is when you first encounter the culture. Everything is new and exciting, and it is easy to see positive aspects. Then comes *the rejection phase* when the differences become annoying and the negative aspects make you wonder if you ever should have come to the new culture. In time, however, most people enter *the adjustment phase* and begin to accept more of the new culture and reject less of it. Finally they hit *the adaptation phase* when they adapt to their new culture, take the good with the bad, and feel culture shock when they re-enter their original culture.

What phases do you think Daniel has gone through by chapter nineteen when he wants to leave? What does that say about his decision to leave China “early”?

14. In chapter one Daniel makes a bargain with God. On page 178 Daniel talks about that bargain. Have you ever made a bargain with God, promised Him you’d do something for Him if He did something for you? Do you think it’s right to make a bargain with God? Why or why not?
15. Have you ever encountered a culture that is greatly different from your own? Describe it. How did you feel about that culture compared to your original culture? Were you able to see positive aspects in both cultures? How do you feel that encounter changed you?