

Discussion Questions

1. Anna says, “We mustn’t always pine after what we think we’re missing.... Some things are just not ours to be had.” What do you find you “pine after” that you think will never be yours? Why?
2. Cora thinks, “Moments belonged to those who acted. Not those who thought about acting.” Have you ever faced a moment of glory, then overthought it so much that the moment passed? Or pushed through even though you were scared? Discuss.
3. Cora wonders, “How much did we do in life that was the result of what others around us demanded? Rather than what God was calling us to do?” Do you find that people around you drive you more than God? Why or why not?
4. The Grand Tourists encounter history that clearly depicts violence and hatred, much of it as a “holy cause.” Do you think faith is an adequate reason to go to war? Why or why not?
5. Loss visits us all in some way—relationships, property, finances—regardless of whether we’re poor or rich. Discuss how loss hurts but also can help.

6. Cora stubbornly holds on to her past as “who she is” and believes she will return to it. Have you ever left home? How did the move change you? Do you think someone can ever “go home again” and be the same person they were when they left? Why do we hunger for that at times? Discuss.

7. Do parents today still send their children on paths they believe to be right rather than allowing their kids to choose? What has been your experience?

8. Cora observes, “As with so much else that was right and true in life, we got lost in the particulars and lost sight of what was right and true in the first place—we concentrated on the things that divided us rather than the things that unified us. Love. Grace. Peace.” What is an instance in your life where something good was destroyed by concentrating on the “things that divide” instead of the things that unite?

9. Cora wonders if her journey will ultimately lead to confusion rather than clarification: “Would this journey leave me lost rather than found?” How does wandering and exploring, either literally (e.g., a trip) or figuratively (e.g., thinking about things) help or hurt? Discuss good limits and ways to make the most of “journeys.”

10. Have you ever prayed for specific answers and the only answer you received was “wait”? If so, how did you respond to that? If not, how do you think you would respond to that?

11. What do you think about being “equally yoked,” in matters of faith, with a potential spouse?

12. The theme of doing as we are led, not only as our parents dictate, runs through this book for many characters. Did your parents encourage or even force you to pursue anything or anyone in your life? Did that work out well? Why or why not?

13. Cora decides she is to enjoy “what was rather than fearing what might be or resenting what had come before.” Have fears of the future or regrets of the past ever kept you from enjoying the present? Discuss.

Chat with the Author

Q: Have you been to all of the places described in *Grave Consequences*?

A: I wish! I spent some time in the south of France, so I had a decent feel for that part of the country, even though our Grand Tourists traveled much farther than I. But I've never been to Lyon, Nîmes, Geneva, the Alps, or Vienna. They're definitely all on my Someday List. For my research I relied on the Internet and guidebooks until I returned to my more familiar territory of Venice.

Q: You've stayed pretty close to home of late, compared to your travels of recent years. What's up with that?

A: I really wanted to see all these places in person before I wrote about them, and as a travel blogger, it would've had dual impact. But God encouraged me pretty clearly to simplify my life. I was feeling strung out, trying to cover too many bases, and travel, especially without my family, was a luxury of both time and money that could most readily be dropped for a while. So we put our travel blog on hiatus. I'm sure there are some fantastic trips in the future. But for now, God is directing me to focus on my family and friends. To stick close to home, as you said. When He's that clear, I've learned to obey. Wait and trust, as Cora heard. I'm doing the same.

Q: Speaking of that, are you good at waiting and trusting?

A: Ha! I wish. I'm an action-oriented person, a catalyst. I write novels because I like to control my fictional worlds and characters. But in this last year, as I've pressed into my identity as God's daughter, I've become hungry to find how He is working in my world and how I might join Him in it, rather than always trying to do my own thing and inviting *Him* into that. It's an ongoing effort to submit more and more to His will and His ways and find life more abundant. And you know what? I'm so excited. Because every day I press toward that goal, to live life more hand in hand with Him, to be an active, willing servant of the Most High, I find that waiting and trusting is met with joy-filled rewards.

Q: What's next for Cora and this group in *Glittering Promises*?

A: This series has an arcing theme of identity. And in this book, Cora's rediscovered her footing as an individual. What needs to happen next is for her to find out who she is as a daughter of the Father who will never, ever leave her. I think in that, she'll find her greatest security, allowing her to make critical decisions about her future, including her vocation and Will McCabe. But there will be some serious obstacles.... You'll have to wait to find out more!

Historical Notes

As with all my novels, I aspire to remain true to historical fact but reserve the right to craft the best tale possible, even if I have to bend the truth a tad. They do have bullfights in the old Roman arena in Nîmes, but I'm not certain if they did that routinely in 1913, or if bulls ever succeeded in jumping the barrier and attacking those in the stands.

There was a narrow-gauge railroad that went from Geneva up into the Alps and stopped in a tiny town near a glacier in 1913. I'm uncertain as to whether anyone would've trekked across it with a bunch of tourists at the risk of falling into a crevasse, but I'm continually surprised by what I find in my research, in both pictures and words. People have always been brave—and stupid—regardless of the era.

Life magazine was published in 1913, but I haven't seen anything like the photographic journal articles depicted in Art Stapleton's stories. At the time, tourists were just experimenting with the new Kodak and often sent home postcards made out of the prints from those cameras, which got me thinking about such a possibility. It wasn't based on journalistic standards of the time...it just became a lovely vehicle for complicating Cora's search for her truest identity by making her appear to be something she isn't. We fictioneers utilize what we can.

By and large, Grand Tours tended to be centered on meeting important people and seeing famous works of art and monuments.

To keep this series from becoming a monotonous travelogue, I've added an experimental factor (painting like the Impressionists, baking with a French chef, trekking across a glacier, etc.) that is entirely a figment of my imagination. I have no idea if the bears of the Tour would've favored such a thing, but if I were to take my kids today, I'd surely incorporate such things as painting, baking, and trekking to help them remember these fantastic, luscious places all the better. Wouldn't it be fun? Now I just need \$50,000 to take my family away for a whole summer....

-L.T.B.