

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Robin is no humanitarian—she’s just in the Congo to earn her “fair market price” to pay for her niece’s surgery. Does the fact that she needs the money for an altruistic purpose make it any less grievous that she’s taking part in a mission that exploits the Congolese?
2. Michael Stewart has compassion on the border guards demanding bribes before the Ares Solutions team can enter the Congo, since he knows their own government isn’t providing a decent living for them. Do they deserve this compassion? Has there been a time when you’ve needed to exercise exceptional negotiating skills?
3. Robin would’ve given anything to be initiated into her family’s male sphere of gun ranges and exercise grounds. Is there any role that you long for? How should you respond when you find yourself in a dissatisfying role?
4. Colonel Duncan, Robin’s father, had very unrealistic expectations about the right of a parent to dictate career choices for his children. Do you have any unfair expectations of the people in your life? What steps could you take to surrender them?

5. Robin has learned to survive among suffering people by keeping her focus on her own job, heart, survival, and family. She believes the Congolese do the same. Is there another option for any of them? Do you see any of the characters in *Congo Dawn* living by a different set of priorities?
6. In chapter 8, Carl attempts to help the mother and her “blind” child at the airport fence by giving them money. Does offering a temporary fix to people in difficult circumstances help them in the long term? Why or why not? Name other options.
7. In chapter 12, Trevor Mulrone states, “But if there’s one thing those early multinationals knew, it’s that sometimes you’ve got to make war to make peace.” Is that ever true? If so, when?
8. Michael says to Robin in chapter 14, “How can you even be certain who are the good guys and the bad? And believe me, the line between the two around here isn’t as clear cut as you want to think.” In a complicated world like ours, how do you determine who is good and who is bad? Why do you think this is so challenging sometimes?
9. What situations in *Congo Dawn* require forgiveness? How does the lack of forgiveness damage countries, people groups, and relationships? What can end a perpetual cycle of revenge? Give examples of revenge in the story and examples of characters who choose to seek alternatives to revenge.
10. Ephraim tells Robin of a Congolese saying in chapter 17: “Our Christianity is as wide as the Congo River at flood season, but also as shallow as a puddle under a hot sun in dry season.” What does he mean? Describe how this problem can also be seen in the Western church. What steps can the church take to promote a faith that is both wide and deep?

11. Ephraim also says that he doesn't pray for an end to the fighting, hunger, and death besetting the Congo, but that "God would use these evils to purify us as a people. To purify us as a church." How can this prayer also apply to the United States? Do you think it is a difficult prayer to pray? Why or why not?
12. In chapter 21, Michael recalls injustices in Europe's history (aristocrats mistreating peasants, torture at the Tower of London) that changed only when Christians began practicing Christ's teachings "to the point where their societies were turned upside down." What practices could Christians follow today to impact our culture and turn society upside down? What practices could you implement in your own life?
13. At first, Robin believes that the Ares Solutions operation will impact the Ituri Rainforest for the better. She tells Michael in chapter 21, "Once we can secure stability and open transportation, Earth Resources will be able to bring in some heavy-duty mining gear. Make this place a model for mining here in the Congo. Offer a chance for a real life to the locals." Michael responds, "They have a real life." Do we sometimes think technological advancements automatically lead to better lives? Can you think of an example where technology has done more harm than good?
14. According to Miriam in chapter 26, human suffering is "God's equivalent of tough love." What does she mean by that? Have you ever bailed someone out of trouble, even though they needed to feel the consequences of their sin?
15. Later in the chapter, Miriam says, "Darkness, suffering, [and] injustice are the very things that show the measure of a person's true character as peace and comfort never can." Has this been true in your own spiritual walk? Give an example.

16. As the story begins, Robin, Joseph, Wamba, and Mulroney all use the darkness around them as an excuse to turn from the light. In the end, how are Robin and Joseph different from Wamba and Mulroney?
17. When you discover Joseph's motives for carrying out violent acts (blowing up the mine, etc.), can you overlook his methods?
18. Robin collects "hazard pay" to accept the contract work in the Congo. What type of hazard pay would you require to do a dangerous job? What would that job be?