

## The Story People

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\*Spoiler Alert\*



1. Ben starts the book feeling stuck, hemmed in by his bookstore and New Holden in general. Objectively, though, his life was pretty good. Do you sometimes feel restless, but when you try to explain why, you can't come up with a storable reason?
  - Pastor Andrews sheds light on this feeling in Chapter 16. "Peace is never to be found in circumstances and always to be found in Christ" (p 188) and "even in faithfulness, peace can elude us if we're not fully trusting God." (p 187)
2. Rosemary's "What next?" question also applies to non-artists. What do you do when a project you have poured yourself into is complete or self-sufficient?
3. Rosemary says some great things about books and stories. What do you think about this quote from Chapter 23? "I think reading lets us know that we're not alone, that our experiences have been others' experiences. Sometimes we think our situation is so unique, but reading puts us back into context. We don't have to feel isolated or alone after all. Stories connect us as humans." (p 278)
4. While discussing biographies in Chapter 3, Rosemary says, "Everyone, famous or not, is telling a story with their lives." Do you live like this is true?
  - If you do, do you live your story for Christ? Give these topical songs a listen: "Lifesong" and "Only Jesus" by Casting Crowns and "Let Them See You" by Colton Dixon.
5. Ben wonders in Chapter 19, "How did the extraordinary grace of God become ordinary in his life?" (p 217) Does this ever happen to you? The grace God gives us is astonishing, but do you know His truth so well that you lose sight of the wonder of it?
  - If this ever happens to you, do you find as Ben did that "It was too easy to treat Sunday mornings like any other morning, to mark church off as just one more item on a never-ending to-do list"? (p 217)
6. Is there a difference between risky behavior and taking a risk? Two relationships in *The Story People* required risks be taken. Imagine how long Mark Jenson and Matilda Gardner may have danced around their emotions had he not attempted to woo her with gifts.
  - What do you think of Pastor Andrews's warning to Ben about being overly risk-averse? In Chapter 30 he tells Ben to be honest with Rosemary about his feelings and ask about Liam, to which Ben replies, "I don't want to strain things." Pastor Andrews corrects him, "You don't want to ask the question because you don't want to know the answer." (p 350)
7. Do you think the older women, especially Mrs. Gardner, projected their own loneliness upon Ben and tried to solve it for him with the wife-finding scheme?
  - Do you ever find yourself overstepping boundaries to keep people near? Have you ever accidentally taken "the ends justify the means" as a truism, like the women in Ch. 12?
  - Do people become more important in your life than you first realize? Look at how the older women's concern changed from losing Palermo's to losing Ben.

8. Do you ever find yourself categorizing people before you know them? For instance, everyone calls Mark Jenson “Professor,” despite him not being an instructor at all.
  - Might an assumption about someone cause you to overlook them as a potential friend, such as assuming your neighbor to be overly eccentric?
9. Misunderstandings and miscommunications are prominent in *The Story People*. Look at the missteps in both romances. Do you think this reflects real life, at least to an extent?
10. Mrs. Gardner, Mrs. Frank, and Mrs. Baumgartner have been friends for decades. Despite their varied personalities—and occasional disputes—they stick together. Do you think that the way they balance each other out is a good model of friendship?
11. After some zany antics Mrs. Gardner, Mrs. Frank, and Mrs. Baumgartner have the opportunity to give Ben advice on romancing Rosemary. Their experiences inform their opinions, plus they have the advantage of understanding a woman’s mind. Do you have knowledge that would benefit those younger or less informed than yourself? When might you be able to pass on your know-how?
12. If the Story People ate a book about your life, what flavors might they taste?