

Book Club Discussion Questions for RETURN TO BELLA TERRA by MaryAnn Diorio

NOTE: These questions may be used in a variety of ways, including book club or reading group discussions, in Bible study groups dealing with the topics of fear, control, parent-child relationships, and for personal reflection and meditation.

1. Maria struggled with letting go of Nico. Because of his inauspicious beginnings, she felt she had to assume the role of protector of his life. While a mother must certainly protect her children, she is powerless to protect them from all harm. For this reason, she must learn to entrust them to God's sovereign care. Have you struggled with letting go of your children? If so, how have you dealt with the spirit of control?
2. Maria wanted to submit to God's will, but she had trouble trusting her husband's judgment about remaining in America. Have you ever struggled with trusting the decisions of those in authority over you, be it your husband, your pastor, or your boss? If so, why? How have you applied God's Word to your situation?
3. Forgiveness is a big issues in this book. Why is forgiveness so important not only to one's spiritual health but also to one's physical well-being? Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there someone of whom you need to ask forgiveness?
4. Nico had grown to adulthood and wanted to make his own decisions for his life. As the adult child of your parents, have you faced the challenge of a controlling parent? If so, how have you handled that challenge? How do you obey God's Word to honor your parents while setting healthful boundaries in your relationship with them?
5. Don Franco finds himself in a terrible situation of his own making. Having fathered Nico, Franco now faces a lifetime without a relationship with his son. Yet, Franco has sincerely repented of his sin. Do you think he should be allowed entrance into Nico's life? What does God mean in Psalm 103: 12 when He says that He has removed our transgressions from us "as far as the east is from the west"? Does forgiveness mean we should allow those who have wronged us back into our lives?
6. Despite her major flaws, Teresa ultimately acts in a loving way toward Maria. How do Teresa's actions reveal the attitude of her heart? Why is our heart attitude more important to God than our actions?
7. Maria finally discovers that God's plans for her life are far better than her own plans. Have you ever experienced a discrepancy between your plans and God's plans for your life? When you chose your plans over God's plans for you, what happened? What did you learn from both experiences?