

# REFINED

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

- The dictionary says to refine is “to free from impurities,” or “to improve or perfect.” How does the title fit the story?
- Consider the refinement process for each of the four main characters – Doug, Cass, Mark and Julie. How is each character separated and what dearly held people or things are stripped away in the process? Is this separation and loss essential? What impurities are burned away? How is each character improved or perfected?
- Charles Spurgeon said, “The refiner is never very far from the mouth of the furnace when His gold is in the fire.” How was God’s presence manifested in the midst of the Bollings’ hard trials? Were Mark and Julie aware? Is it easier to see God’s hand after a trial or during? Think back to a trial in your own life. Were you aware of God’s presence during that time?
- Discuss the role the children—Matt, Ben and Jane—play in the refinement process for the four main characters, especially in Cass’s and Doug’s eventual conversion. Do the children undergo their own refining?
- Why is Cass so much more receptive to God’s truth than Doug? How do their respective pasts factor in to how they see God?
- At one point, Sandy says to Cass, “I am so glad he found you, because you see him, the real Doug Bolling and you love him. I’m not sure Mark ever has. I think that’s their problem.” Is Sandy right?
- Mark and Julie had each let God’s call (to the mission field for Mark and to motherhood for Julie) become the focus of their lives rather than God Himself. Is it easy to slip into this kind of subtle idolatry? How could they have guarded against it?
- Matt says to his grandfather, “Whether you’re a believer stuck inside a fish or a hardcore unbeliever, God knows where you’re at and He’ll do amazing things to reach you.” Is this true? How had God pursued Doug throughout his life? Why was this so hard for Doug to grasp?

- If you have read the *Covenant of Trust* books, discuss how Chuck's affair continues to have an impact—positive and negative—on him and the people around him.
- Julie's sister, Jenna, doesn't mince words when counseling. How important is it to have someone who will speak the unvarnished truth during hard times? Why was it especially hard for Julie to hear?
- As *Refined* opens, Judy Bolling has been dead for almost twenty years. How does she influence Mark and Doug even now? What role did she play in Doug's conversion?