

# Questions for Use by Book Clubs

Based on the novel *Ornamental Graces* by Carolyn Astfalk

1. Emily can't seem to discern God's will in her life. She's so focused on a grand epiphany, that she's missing out on what's right in front of her. She goes all the way to France in search of her destiny only to discover that's not where she's meant to be at all. Have you ever felt like you were floundering around, trying to find your place in the world? How did you know when you were where God wanted you?
2. Grandma cautions Dan not to put Emily on a pedestal. Have you ever considered someone "out of your league" only to discover that they are as human and fallible as you?
3. Emily sees Elizabeth as a surrogate mother, sister, sister-in-law, and best friend. Do you have someone who has weathered all of life's ups and downs with you? If so, how has it made a difference in your life?
4. Robert and Elizabeth reach an impasse on family size. Dan reminds Robert how adorable his kids are and that past generations of big families made do with a lot less. Emily suggests that Elizabeth give Robert more time to get used to the idea of having another child. Do you think the counsel Dan and Emily offered was helpful?
5. Grandma is Dan's steadfast proponent. She's always there to encourage, guide, and pray for him. Have you had a cheerleader like that in your life, someone always nudging you in the right direction and making you a better person?
6. In the beginning of the book, Dan's just emerging from a destructive downward spiral. While he remains focused on the myriad ways he's screwed up, Emily sees his strength of character. Are you harder on yourself than you are on others?
7. Emily and Dan discuss the value of innocence while they're at the museum. Dan says a loss of innocence produces empathy and dependency on God. Emily thinks it's always best that innocence is preserved. What do you think of their opinions?

8. Did Dan fully own up to his mistakes or did he place too much of the blame for his troubles on Kristen?
9. Emily complains about Robert's over-protectiveness. When do efforts to preserve another's innocence become so stifling that the protected person sees it as interference rather than genuine concern?
10. Dan resists professional counseling even when he's lost everything. Do you think there is still a stigma attached to receiving counseling? If so, is it greater for men than for women?
11. Emily has a hard time believing Dan finds her ordinary looks more attractive than Kristen's extraordinary beauty. Dan compares Kristen's beauty to a sarcophagus, "lustrous and alluring on the outside, rotten and putrid on this inside." In comparison, he calls Emily's beauty "soul-deep." Are you quick to judge by appearances? Do you think personality can enhance a person's physical attractiveness?