



by Darlene N. Bocek

Book Club Questions

These questions are intended for adult book clubbers to consider together after reading sections of the book. Each set of questions is best answered just after reading that chapter.

My hope is that after your studying this book you will be stimulated to love your Bible more, to walk closer with the Lord, and to treasure Christ more dearly. –Darlene

Cover

- What does the cover suggest the novel may be about? What about the cover makes you interested in the novel?
- What do the different elements of the cover suggest about the story and its theme and story? What questions do you have?

The Lost Trunk: Prologue (see questions at end)

TOME the FIRST

GOTHLAND THE DREADFUL

Bearded Men

- What kinds of sensations does this first chapter elicit? So far, what can you tell about who Marcellus is, who Justin is, and what their problem is?
- What are the parallels between Marcellus's growing awareness and the sensations and thoughts a newborn may experience?
- Have you ever been mentally confused like Marcellus? What was the cause?

Abandoning the Scrolls

- What in your world would you risk your life to save? Is there any non-living thing you would die to save? Why is Marcellus willing to risk his life to retrieve the Scrolls?
- What are the most important things to Marcellus?
- What does he mean "we had not listened to the crows' warning"? Do we always get a warning (from God) before bad things happen? Should God always warn us?

Night and Light

- What can you tell of the character of Marcellus from this scene?
- Have you ever learned something unknown about someone from how they responded in times of stress?

Sixteen Days

- Why is Marcellus afraid of Mari? Have you ever had a premonition about someone being trouble? Did it turn out to be true?
- Why does the king smile as he tells them of their enslavement? Why do you think he has not sent them home?

- If only..." What "if only's" do you have in your life? What Bible verses do you know that address that wish? What keeps you from trusting God even with this regret?

ANTIOCH THE GLORIOUS

The Ascension Day Banquet

- Can betrothal ever be a good thing for a young girl? How has our culture deified "love" and is this helpful or hurtful? Is love what keeps marriage together, or is it something else?
- Just from this scene, what do you notice about the character of Gaius Justus, Justin, Marcellus, Belisarius, Byziana, and Indulf.

Pouch of Herbs

- Why did Marcellus follow the Goth down the dark hall?
- Does he have sufficient reason to suspect a problem with the pouch, or is his young mind making up stories?
- Have you ever seen something happen and debated whether to expose it or not?

Image of the Invisible God

- Byziana is forced to take sides on the topic of Chalcedon. Is she right to choose the view she chooses? What are her reasons?
- Is Sophia making the right decision in how she leads her daughter?
- "The Pater makes the decisions and we trust the Pater." What do you think of this idea? What feelings does the directive stir in you? Why? Is it biblical?

Civil War

- Should Sophia bend on the topic of Chalcedon in order to keep peace in the home?
- Does Gaius Justus lead his family well? What hints do you have of this?

The Secret of the Colonnades

- "Proving manhood." What "rites of passage" have you gone through in your own life, and how did they help you become more adult, or more responsible?
- What is there in our culture that keeps young men from knowing they have become a man? What about girls?
- Something happens to Marcellus at the Street of Colonnades. What could it be, and why do you guess it happened?
- Is Marcellus justified in swearing himself to silence?

What Reason Demands

- What do you think Sophia means when she says reason demands that Christ was human?
- Do you think it matters whether we say Christ was just God, or just human, or God and human, or a strange hybrid?
- Does God care how we identify Christ? Can you be a Christian if you do not hold to the dual-nature of Christ and the triune being of God?
- What do you know about how important this topic was to the early church?
(study suggestion: <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/mystery-of-the-trinity/>)

Our Hike on the Hills

- Why is Marcellus suddenly interested in Byziana?
- What kinds of thoughts is Marcellus struggling with, and why?
- What is the worst disaster you have ever witnessed, and how did you respond?

Stone versus Man

- Have you ever been at war against nature? What kinds of feelings did you struggle with? How does prayer help or not help us in times of natural disaster?
- Think of the different people they meet in their attempt to help rescue victims or escape the fire. How are these people like the people we meet in life? Is there an analogy between personal suffering in this world and the earthquake they face? Do you see any similarities with any of the people you know who struggle with pain or sorrow?

God of the Earthquake

- Have you ever felt that God had abandoned you? If you could...what would you, from your standpoint today, say to yourself back then that would have brought comfort and perspective?
- Can we know if God is the reason for our suffering? Is He ever the reason, is He ever NOT the reason? Compare your answer to Job 1:21 to Romans 8:28 and to Colossians 1:24. How intimately is God the causal agent in the suffering of people?
- Is the God who opened the earth up to swallow dissenters in Exodus, or brought destruction on Sodom, or covered the earth with a flood the same God today? What is different or the same in how he interacts with sinners?
- (for further study: <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/filling-up-what-is-lacking-in-christs-afflictions>)

Death of a Saint

- How do you think the death of Sophia going to impact Byziana?
- What does Sophia want from Marcellus? Is it a fair request? Is Marcellus being honest in his reply?
- If you were Sophia, what would you have said to Byziana on your deathbed?

The Dim Torch

- The family has lost almost everything. What all have they lost, what do they still have?
- How does the story of Emilia help the family to have perspective? Why does Marcellus say he doesn't like the story? What is his deeper problem?
- How would you answer Byziana when she asked, "What kind of God just lets people die in an earthquake?" Is anything outside of God's control?

The Return of the Patrikios

- Why does Marcellus care so much about what Gaius Justus thinks? Is this reasonable or unreasonable? Have you ever latched on to someone in a desperate way? In what ways is it healthy? In what ways is it unhealthy?
- Was Gaius Justus right to ask Gallus about the pouch in the way he did? Do you think Gallus is telling the truth, or is Marcellus right in his suspicion.
- Why did Gaius Justus suddenly leave again? What do you know about his priorities and character that explain his reason for leaving?

Off to Athens!

- Why did the words of John Chrysostom bother Marcellus so much? Can things hold the power of God? What does the Bible say?
- How important are sermons in our lives? How much can we trust the words of a preacher? What does the Bible say our measure or watchword is about this?
- What do you think of Marcellus's desire to go to Athens? What does the city offer him that he cannot get at home? What will he lose if he goes to Athens?

'NATOLIA THE TREACHEROUS

Fiery Fears

- Why did God really allow a horrible earthquake in Antioch in both AD 526 and AD 528? Why did he allow the 2005 tsunami in Thailand or the volcano in Pompeii in AD 79? If his goal is the spread of the gospel of Christ, why does he allow/cause natural disasters? How can you explain this?
- Does a horrific natural disaster somewhere mean that God has forsaken the place?
- Is it possible the earthquakes happened because of the big Monophysite debate that was dividing the church?

Tooth of a Saint

- Why are John and Simeon standing on pillars? Get into the mind of a monk from the early Byzantine times. How could living on a pillar make you holy?
- Have you ever seen a relic? What was it? How did you feel about it?
- Do you think relics are holy? What does the word holy mean with regard to relics?

Pilgrim Road

- What is a reliquary? Have you ever been given something (not living) which you treasured so much you set aside a special place to house it or display it? Why are reliquaries important? Are there any examples of a reliquary in Scripture?

What is Mankind?

- Why is the verse "What is mankind that you are mindful of him?" meaningful to Marcellus in this crisis? Do you think the family is right to give up on faith at this point?

Horns of the Bull

- Why is Byziana willing to risk everyone's lives to get through the snowy mountain pass? Is this the right thing to do, given their situation?
- Is Byziana running from or running to something? How do you know?

Facing Death all Day Long

- What would you do if you were snowed in and someone in your party had fallen into a coma? Is it wise to feed an unconscious person? What would you do?
- Do you know anyone who is an old-time believer who brings encouragement and wisdom to you in your faith, though he or she may not be very educated? What is it about their life that spurs you on?
- What makes them open the Trunk? Why have they waited so long?
- What do you think of Widow Arite's reaction to the Scriptures? Is it possible today for anyone to be surprised by the Bible?

The Great Debate

- What makes Byziana fall apart? Is it reasonable for her to not like that verse? What would you say to her at that moment, if you could speak other Scripture into her life?
- Is Marcellus keeping his word to Sophia? Is he persuading them of the truth of Chalcedon?
- Why does he stumble over the words? Can you see what he is missing?

Valley of Death

- Why is Marcellus so affected by Arite mentioning his crying for kittens?
- What are the reasons they are setting up next to strangers? Is this wise? What would you do?

- Does God approve of a talisman? Why isn't Marcellus sure? Are there any talismans you know that Christians use today, little good-luck charms to chase away bad things from happening?

The Merchant's Gift

- Why doesn't Marcellus insist that they return to Antioch? What are his motivations for going with the family?
- What frightens Marcellus as he stands in the valley?

Our Circle of Fire

- Should they leave the Trunk behind to make their journey easier? Why does Marcellus insist on taking it?
- How big is your Scripture Trunk? Do you take it with you wherever you go? Do you keep it shut because it's too hard to get to, or do you open it regularly?
- For what reasons is Marcellus in a hurry?
- Why does Byziana lean like she does against Marcellus, and why does she leave him as she does?

Fickle Hearts

- Why does Byziana behave as she does? What two opposing ideals motivate her? Why are each of them important to her?
- Was Marcellus right in what he said? Where was he mistaken?

Our Separate Ways

- Have you ever been dismissed in as offensive a way as Marcellus? What did you do? Were they justified in what they did? How did you mend the breach?

Approaching the Fire

- Why does Marcellus follow the family? Does this show weakness?
- How is this problem a result of all the other problems they have had along the way?
- Why is the phrase "The wrath of God could be borne by no man" so significant to Marcellus at this point in his life? How is his internal question paralleled in his external situation in the story right now?

Kyrie Eleison!

- Why does Marcellus find it ironic that Byziana calls on God now?
- Is selling the Scrolls the best thing they can do to provide for themselves now? Have you ever had to sell something so precious to you? Was it the result of a series of other decisions?
- Considering chapter one, where Marcellus wakes up tied to a horse, how does his waking up fit with his departure? Where is he strong, where is he weak? What things did he left unsaid? How did he leave things with Byziana?

The Lost Trunk: Mesologue (see questions at end)

TOME the SECOND

CHALCEDON THE BETRAYED

Byziana and her Husband

- What does it mean "If we look on the other side of each What If coin we can find minted the words What a Marvel." Have you ever seen that in life?

- How is Marcellus different after Gothland? Is he right to think compassionately about Byziana still, when he knows she is already married? What might happen if he loves a married woman?
- What are the signs of stress in Marcellus's life? What things frustrate him and why? Is "ease of worship" a good or bad thing?
- Have you ever had a cross-cultural church experience where you noticed a significant difference between practice of faith?

Journey to Tyana

- Why are the young men so excited about seeing the innkeeper produce the Scrolls from beneath the counter?
- Have you ever had a fortuitious situation like this? Unexpectedly finding something you thought was lost?

Reunited!

- Have you ever been into a Roman/Turkish bath? What does the layout of the bath tell you about the character of the people?
- Why doesn't Marcellus understand Justin's hints?
- How is the state of the city like the state of Marcellus's life?

Bound to the Scrolls

- In what ways is Marcellus in a worse position now that he is with Byziana again?
- Why is there a problem with the Scrolls? What is the deeper problem? Do you see a similar problem with the Bible in your life?
- How has the church changed since the Bible became available? Think through your knowledge of church history and reflect on the impact of the Bible on lives.

Glass Bottle Days

- Is the relationship between Marcellus and Byziana ethical?
- How has the message of the world, seen in both Hollywood movies and in the lives of moviestars, affected the church? How has it compromised our understanding of right and wrong in terms of love and relationships? Is this message new? What examples can you think of from history, from the Bible, or even ancient history, that show the timelessness of the world's tolerance of unethical relationships?

A Consecrated Life

- What makes Marcellus so angry? Is he right to be angry?
- Is his decision to take vows and become a monk realistic? Why does he make this statement?
- What are the pros and cons of Marcellus returning to Gothland? What is the right thing for him to do?

Pater's Promise

- Which pater's promise pushes the story forward?
- Have you ever had a time in your life that someone else's decision pushed your life a direction you hated and could not prevent?

Eyes Wide Open

- Is Byziana right to go to Constantinople? Why does she go? Would it make a difference if she knew what happened to Marcellus on the Street of Colonnades?
- What is Marcellus seeing but not seeing from his family?
- Why does Byziana keep to her plans to marry Belisarius? Why do you think Marcellus allows for this, considering his feelings? Is he doing the right thing?

On the Pillion

- Why does Marcellus agree to take Byziana, when he believes he is taking her to her death?
- Why does Byziana want to be on the pillion behind Marcellus?
- What is right and wrong about what Marcellus says to Byziana at the inn? Does he do this because he is a weak person? What two opposing ideals fight within him?
- Have you ever had a secret so great that it impacted you in a way you could not hinder? Why do we keep secrets?
- What does his vision mean? Have you ever envisioned something when you were awake that terrified you, but made you alert to your own motives or actions?

The Tome of Leo

- Why did they meet up with John of Ephesus? List as many reasons as you can. Have you ever had a “chance” encounter with someone who changed your life?
- Do you know anyone in your life who is like John of Ephesus, with the Bible but not reading the Bible, all access to Truth but ignoring it or distorting it for political/personal reasons?
- (for further study: <http://darlenenbocek.com/facts/chalcedon-minutes/leostome>)

Chalcedon Virgin

- What does Marcellus mean when he says their Trunk of Scrolls was a more significant reliquary than bones of his sainted ancestors?
- Have you ever been in a church that has been around since AD 300? How did/would you feel? How does the continuity of the faith affect your heart?

Harken to the Golden Horn

- Knowing what you do about Byziana, what could she be thinking about? Discuss how she has changed in the way she views her betrothal.
- Why does Marcellus refuse to allow himself to interpret Byziana’s actions?
- What do you suspect will happen when Marcellus takes Byziana to Belisarius?

CONSTANTINOPLE THE MAJESTIC

Face to Face

- Do you learn anything new about Belisarius?
- When was the last time Byziana saw Belisarius? What might she be thinking?

Pater’s Fate

- What do you know about Gaius Justus that would have predicted such a turn of events?
- Why does Belisarius not take up Marcellus’s challenge?
- Have you ever been at a precipice, where the options do not look good in any light? What did you do and how did events change?

Things that Have Happened

- Why is Byziana laughing?
- How does “Jesus wept,” help Byziana find comfort in this crisis? What does she mean that “we have hope in Christ’s tears”?
- Describe Byziana’s journey from losing faith to finding it again? What events in her life spurred her forward to this point. If she becomes a slave, is she justified in still retaining her faith, or her “hope in Christ’s tears”?
- Think of a painful or difficult time in your life when this idea would have helped you. Why did Christ cry if he knew he would raise Lazarus from the dead?

Holy Wisdom

- Do you know about St. Andrew? What did you learn about him here? How was his suffering beneficial for the church? How was his suffering beneficial for him?
- Tell of a time in your life when you have “prayed like you have never prayed before.” Did the praying itself help you in dealing with the situation? Did/how did things change after your prayer?
- Discuss why Gaius Justus “was too ashamed to stop.” Have you ever been stuck in a financial nightmare and not been able “to stop”? Take a few steps away, and think of when it would have been easier to stop. How would you advise young people just starting out so they can avoid such a situations?

Pouches of Gold

- Here again, Marcellus sees Belisarius connected with pouches. How do these represent “unknowns” in his life?
- How do you deal with suspicions and unknowns? How can you know you are justified in your actions when they are based on a suspicion you have?
- Why does this spectacle remind Marcellus of his friend Thomas?
- Do you agree with the phrase, “Bread and circuses, it’s all the people want”? Do you see this in your daily life? In politics or entertainment? In the church?
- Are you ever entertained by seeing people get hurt or watching them die? How is Hollywood similar to the Roman Circus? How is it different? Does it matter?
- Why are humans fascinated with death, or with death-defying acts? Can you think of any Bible verses that relate to this?

Raging Torches

- What would turn the chariot races into the Nika riot that burned down Constantinople in AD 532? What reasons are given? Are they justified?
- Compare and contrast the chariot races with the Nika riots.
- Have you ever seen a live riot? For what reasons do the riots take place? What makes the riots calm down?
- Have you ever felt that the only thing left is taking law-into-your-own-hands? Why? What does this say about where our trust lies?

Merciless Inferno

- Why is fire so entrancing? How is it helpful? How is it hurtful? What changes its usage from beneficial to dangerous? Should we fear fire?
- Why did Byziana give her tunic to the little girl? How does this show a change in Byziana? How easy is it to give away the coat off our back?

God of Hidden Waters

- Was it ethical for the three to wear monk capes to get water? What determines a lie? Is lying forbidden in Scripture? How and why?

No Purple Shrouds

- What made the three go through the hidden door? Have you ever had a time in your life where a coincidence, or a strange occurrence, enabled you to save your life (honor/time/etc)? Do these always come from God? Does the Bible speak to these?
- How did all of Marcellus’s story up to now prepare him for this moment? Is what he did so fantastic? Did anything surprise you?

- What is a miracle? What does Marcellus mean when he says, “Anything good is a miracle.” Is it true? Why or why not? Have you ever had a bonafide miracle in your life?
- When did God start providing the water for the homeless in Waterside? How does this occurrence relate to Matthew 6:8, Isaiah 46:10, or Isaiah 65:24. Have you seen this in your life?

My Princess

- Why doesn't the family just leave Constantinople? Will that solve their problem?
- What does Marcellus mean when he says they are better off than the pagans because, “We know our God”? How can this help them?
- Do you know your God? How much more is there to know about Him, and how can you get to that point?
- Discuss Byziana's idea that “adversity is part of joy.”
- How was Mari significant for the progress of the story? Was Mari trouble, as he suspected? How was she important in Marcellus's life? in Byziana's life?

God over All Kings

- What is the significance of the robe for Marcellus?
- How are the events in the circus directly instigated by Marcellus? How are they not?
- Who brought about this end for the family? Did anything surprise you?

Two Banquets

- Was it right or wrong for Emperor Justinian to give Hypatius's house to Marcellus?
- What does the last sentence mean, for you? How is it related to the theme of suffering? How is it related to the idea of the incarnation?
- In your own words, explain what Sophia meant when she said the answer to everything is the Incarnation.

The Lost Trunk: Epilogue (see questions at end)

Cover

- Look at the cover again. Now that you have read the book, what do you think the gears represent? Do you notice anything you didn't notice before, or is the cover more meaningful to you now?

Review

- ♥ If you think about it, the main reason anyone chooses to read a book is because of what others say about that book. Were you blessed by the story of Marcellus and Byziana? *If so, would you take a moment and write a short review of this book on [Goodreads](#), and if possible copy it onto [Amazon](#)? It would help get this book into the hands of others who will “Take and Read” Trunk of Scrolls, and then hopefully and consequently embrace their own Trunk of Scrolls more dearly and purposefully. Don't forget to suggest a book club read!*

Join the Trunk-lovers club.

- ♥ Join me on Twitter (DNBocek), join the newsletter ([darlenenbocek.com](#)) and join the Facebook page ([darlenenbocek](#)).

THE LOST TRUNK: A Serial Novel

(<https://darlenenbocek.com/thelosttrunk>)

The Lost Trunk: Prologue

- What are the parallels between John's life and Marcellus's life? What are the parallels between Andrew's life and Byziana's life?
- What kinds of goals does Andrew have for his life? Are these realistic? What is keeping him from achieving his goals?
- What is happening in the family? Sometimes life just plods forward, day after day, and we forget to treasure each moment. Have you ever had a time when you were so wrapped up in your own life that your family was neglected? How did you find this out, and what did you do?
- How has John used crutches to try to solve his problem? What does he think he needs to help him in his difficulties? What does he really need?
- By the end of the Prologue, how has the trunk already impacted the family?

The Lost Trunk: Mesologue

- Knowing what you do about the Trunk, how do you think the shopkeeper got it?
- Have you ever got into a "stalemate of the wills" with someone you love? Why does this happen? Why are we so hesitant to let our own will lose?
- What do you think about how Andrew applied the idea of "trust the Pater"? Is this a good idea?
- What seems to be the problem with the boss, Mr. Smythe? Is John responding correctly?
- Have you ever had a similar ethical problem at work? How did you respond, and what were the results?

The Lost Trunk: Epilogue

- Have you ever considered the history of the Book of Colossians? We tend to take the Bible and treat it as a whole, as it is. But the Book of Colossians has a past. It had a start. It had a period when it was just a single scroll. Then duplicated. Then many copies. How does the life cycle of this scroll impact your appreciation of the whole of Scripture? At what point did God start making the book of Colossians available for you to read? Are you treasuring it?
- How hard is it to move on after the death of a loved one? What things help us to find a new normal? Have you ever been stuck after a death?
- What do you think about John's use of the lyrics from *Singin' in the Rain*? Is it a good or bad idea to apply song lyrics to your life?
- What are the thematic similarities in the book and the serial novel? Do you see a similar theme in your life? Are you following the well-worn path? Are you carrying your torch? Are you reading your scrolls? Can you sing and laugh even in the rain?