

Discussion Questions for *Dayspring*

1. What are the predominant themes of this book?
2. Who is Spencer Bain?
3. Why has Bain traveled to New Mexico? What does he find interesting about the native people and why?
4. Who is Jose Mirabal? What is a diabolist? Why do you think the author included a diabolist in the story?
5. What is Bain's relationship with his wife? Why do you think they are both unfaithful? Does this bother either of them?
6. Why does Bain "convert" to Catholicism?
7. Describe the characters of the local priests, Nunes and Gannon. Do they have an influence over Bain?
8. Discuss the characters of the local scientist and artists that Bain associates with (Marsha Senton and her friends). How do they view religion and Bain's "conversion"?
9. Who are the Penitentes? Why were they controversial in the Church?
10. What does Bain experience through the "honest, simple, God-struck" Penitentes regarding sin and grace?
11. Discuss Elva's visit at Christmas. What is their attitude toward having children and why? Why do you think that Bain grieves for his aborted child for the first time?
12. Discuss the character of Teran, the leader of the Penitentes. How does Teran explain why the Penitentes have to do severe penances? Why does he think that Bain does not need these penances?
13. What is Bain's reaction to Elva being pregnant for the second time and wanting another abortion?
14. What happens when Scrapper and the Kendals visit Bain? What his reaction when Kendal attempts to seduce him?
15. What happens to Bain during the Good Friday procession? Why does he weep for the "icy vanity of his own people"?
16. How does Schapper's death affect Bain? What temptations does he experience after he is offered the chair position at the university? Why is it so important to the president of the university that Bain rejects the Catholic faith?
17. How does Mardaña's arrival effect Bain? Why do you think that Mardaña arrives early?
18. What changes Bain and makes him choose to leave the university, accept the Catholic faith and go home to his pregnant wife?
19. This novel was written in 1945. Is its message still appropriate today? Why or why not?

