

Dear Reader,

You have just finished the poignant story of *Leota's Garden* by Francine Rivers. As always, Francine desires for you, the reader, to go to God's Word to discover His principles for living. The following questions are merely a portal to exploring all God has for you.

Leota was a virtuous woman with godly intentions. However, she did not live in a perfect world with a perfect family and ideal circumstances. Rather, Leota and her family represent the typical dysfunctional family. Leota tried to keep the peace out of respect for her husband and her elders. Her silence cost her!

Like Leota, we live in an imperfect world. We each find elements of dysfunction in our own families. God has called us not to "keep the peace," but to be peacemakers. Making peace always means confronting the truth—confronting the truth in love and kindness.

May God bless you and challenge you to be a peacemaker.

Peggy Lynch

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Compare Leota to the woman described in this passage. In what ways is she like this woman? How is she different?
2. Compare Grandma Helene, Nora, and Annie to the woman described in Proverbs 31. How does each of them fall short or measure up?
3. How do you compare to the woman, husband, and/or children described in Proverbs 31?
4. Consider the instructions given in Ephesians 6:1-4, as well as the husband described in Proverbs 31. Discuss Bernard's role in the lives of his children. How did he treat their mother? How did he add to their alienation? In what ways did he contribute to the wedge created by his parents? How did he avoid the truth? How is Nora's husband, Fred, different?
5. Compare Leota and Nora as mothers. In what ways were their parenting styles different? In what ways were they the same? How do you account for the differences?
6. Compare Nora and Annie as children. Discuss their motivations. What contributed to their differences? In what ways, if any, were they alike?
7. What have your parents passed on to you? In what ways have they shaped who and how you are? What unfinished business is there in your family?
8. Discuss Corban and Sam in light of 2 Timothy 2:22-25. What had Sam learned, and at what cost? In what ways did he demonstrate that God had changed his heart? What does Corban learn about wrong companionship? What does he discover about himself?



9. Contrast Susan and Ruth. Both young women are modern; however, they choose to run in different directions. How does each of them deal with truth? How do friends influence them?
10. What kinds of relationships do you pursue? How do you handle truth? How well do you know yourself? Explain. What changes does God need to make in your heart?
11. Read Ephesians 4:15, 25-27, 32 and James 5:16. Keeping these passages in mind, what lies does Leota harbor? What lies does Nora harbor? What lies do you harbor?
12. When Leota confesses and speaks the truth in love, as Ephesians 4 exhorts us to do, what happens? Why do you think the author portrayed Leota's granddaughter as the one chosen by God to hear?
13. Leota found solace in the garden she planted and maintained, yet she was lonely and estranged from her family. As she learns to speak the truth in love, she finds solace watching her garden develop into a gathering place for family and friends. She is no longer lonely, and the longing of her heart for her children begins to be fulfilled. What does your heart long for? What truth might you need to speak of in order to experience God's fullest blessings? Speak the truth to God, your heavenly Father. Speak the truth to those who need to hear it from you. Do it today! Then trust God to bless your obedience in His time and in His way.





