

Discussion Questions for The Doctor's Lady:

1. In the beginning of the book, Priscilla doesn't want to share her struggles with infertility with anyone. Her family also wants to keep the matter private. Are there times when we should bear our burdens privately? And if so, when?
2. Priscilla didn't talk about her infertility because of her embarrassment and concern over what people would think about her. Once she shared with Mabel, however, she realized her fear and pride had kept her from experiencing Mabel's encouragement and support. Has there been a time when you hesitated to share a personal problem due to fear or pride? When you finally opened up about the problem what happened?
3. During the missionary movement of the early 1800's, the American Mission Board sent missionaries all around the world to save the "heathens." The men and women were largely unprepared for the reality of life in foreign cultures, and many of the women did indeed die on the field. How could they have better prepared themselves for the harsh realities? Was Eli justified in thinking Priscilla (and other cultured women like her) were better off serving God at home rather than on the field? Why or why not?
4. During most of the book, Priscilla looked at her outward qualifications for being used by God. She believed things like education, piety, family background, years of ministry, etc. made a person more acceptable for service to God. When hardships and trials came, all the outward trappings fell away and what really mattered was her heart. How much emphasis does our modern culture (even within the church) place upon a person's outward qualifications and appearance? And how can we take steps to place more emphasis upon the heart—especially within our families and with our children?
5. Priscilla's cameo pin represented her old life, the life of a proper lady and the expectations that came with it during that time in history. During much of the trip, she clung to her cameo along with her beliefs of superiority to the natives. But by the end, she came to a point where she was able to give the cameo away and to see the natives with new eyes. Have you ever had to let go of a previous way of thinking or living and embrace a new path? Tell about your experience.
6. The missionary journey took them from one end of the country to the other. The path was new and uncharted. The Oregon Trail as we know it today was nonexistent. Only rough mountain men were daring enough to brave the dangers. Priscilla (playing the role of Narcissa Whitman, the first white woman to make the crossing) was a brave woman to go where no other woman had gone. If you lived then, do you think you could have made the overland trip? What do you think would have been the hardest thing for you?
7. At the beginning of the trip, Eli didn't want to rely on anyone else for help. He wanted to be strong and prove he could make it West on his own. By the end, he came to realize that learning

to rely on others wasn't a sign of weakness. How well do you accept help when you need it? Is it easier for you to offer help or accept it?

8. After getting cholera, Priscilla realized she was slowing the group down and diminishing their chances of making it to Oregon. She sacrificed her desire to finish the trip for Eli's sake, because she wanted him to make it. In turn Eli sacrificed for her, giving up his drive to make it over the Blue Mountains because he wanted to stay together. Good marriages rest on the principle of sacrificing our needs for our spouse. Why is this one of the hardest things for us to do? Should one spouse sacrifice his or her needs, even if the other doesn't?