

Critical Care

Book Discussion Guide

1. In the opening scenes of *Critical Care*, nurse Claire Avery must counsel ER staff after a heart-wrenching disaster. This might be viewed as step one in God's plan for her own healing. Why?
2. Dr. Logan Caldwell is initially seen as critical, controlling, heartless. How does this impression change as the reader sees more scenes through his eyes? What motivates his behavior? Discuss.
3. *Critical Care* utilizes symbolism through various motifs. For example, daffodils signify hope. In your opinion, what does Logan's oak stump represent?
4. Claire and the ER, Smokey and the raccoons—why are these conflicts strangely similar?
5. Claire prays with her patient Jada Williams. Many hospitals today attempt to provide for patients' spiritual needs. Have you (or a friend or family member) ever had a medical care worker offer spiritual support? offer to pray with you? How did (or would) you feel about that?
6. The Sierra Mercy ER staff participates in a voluntary debriefing after the Little Nugget Day Care tragedy. The facilitators recommend several ways to combat symptoms of stress, including exercise, eating well, journaling, and doing things that feel good to you. What have you found effective in helping you de-stress?
7. Nurse Sarah Burke's near-fatal accident becomes a catalyst in the healing of both Claire and Logan. How does that happen for each of them? Discuss.
8. In a climactic scene, Claire confronts Logan regarding his treatment of newly hired nurse Keeley Roberts. Why do you think that defending this nurse becomes so important to Claire?
9. Sarah, during most of her hospital stay, has recurring dreams about a birthday party. The elements include the blazing light of candles, a silver balloon reflecting that light, her daughter at age two, and the appearance of a man she thinks is her father but who has long hair, a bathrobe, and eyes full of love, acceptance, and patience. Even though he is attending a child's birthday party, this man seems to have eyes for only Sarah. Though confusing, it fills her with "unimaginable joy." How does this affect her? What hope do you see in this? Discuss.
10. ER nurse Erin Quinn finds it difficult to trust. She forces herself to try, despite red flags warning her about the sincerity of her boyfriend, Brad. Have you ever had that experience? What are signs you might be heading down a wrong path—anxiety, a sinking stomach, sleeplessness? How easily do you trust? How readily do you turn to God to provide the answers to these nagging doubts?
11. Jeremiah 29:11 sets this book's theme, and Claire must learn that God is the ultimate planner for her life. Can you identify with this struggle? Are you a planner? How difficult is it for you to "let go and let God"? Discuss.

12. The prominent message of *Critical Care* is one of hope. The book's epilogue offers both elements of closure and hints of struggles to come. Claire, Logan, Sarah, Erin—how far has each come in personal growth? their faith journeys? What do you see for their futures? Why?