



## **THE OAK LEAVES**

### Discussion Questions

1. Characters in *The Oak Leaves* reacted differently to the knowledge that Ben's delays involved a genetic factor. Talie's reaction was to withdraw, keeping the information to herself as long as possible. Luke was more pragmatic, but at one point he finally realized this was something he couldn't "fix." Dana's reaction was to push everyone away, including Aidan. How do you think you would react if you learned you were a carrier for a genetic disorder?
2. Some of Luke's dialogue suggests that Talie interferes in her sister's life. Talie saw herself as a concerned older (and wiser) sister. In what way do you think Talie acted in the best interest of Dana, and in what way did she end up hurting her?
3. Do you think things would have turned out differently for Dana and Aidan if Talie had told Dana sooner that she is probably a carrier for a genetic disorder?
4. In the playgroup Talie attends, one of the other young moms bluntly asks Talie if she wants to know what's wrong with Ben. Why do you think her questions to Talie were so hurtful, even if she didn't intend them to be?
5. During the course of the story, Talie decides not to have an amniocentesis to determine if her new baby has Fragile X Syndrome, because there is a slight risk to the baby. Do you think it would have been better for her to have the test, or did she and Luke make the best decision for them?
6. Have you ever known a family who received a serious diagnosis on one of their children? How has their faith been impacted? Would your faith be impacted if you had this happen to you?
7. Toward the end of the book, Talie's mother offers to bring her friend for a "pastoral" visit in the hope that talking with someone else who's suffered would help. Talie rebuffs the offer. How would you have reacted?

8. Talie and Luke pray together for God to help them in their unbelief. Have you ever been through something that made you doubt God? Or His goodness? How did you make it through that time?

9. Though Talie's father is dead, it was from him she inherited her Fragile X carrier status. Do you think if he'd been alive it would have changed their relationship? Do you think it would have brought them closer or torn them apart?

10. Peter Hamilton's mother, Lady Hamilton, did her best to keep Peter and Cosima apart once she learned of Cosima's "curse." Would you have acted differently if you were in her (historical) shoes? What if this happened today? How would you react if your child planned to marry someone who carried a genetic disorder? How would you feel about marrying someone who carried a genetic disorder?

11. Cosima thought of Peter as an optimist. Do you think if he'd been a pessimist he might have changed his mind about wanting to marry Cosima once he learned about her family background?

12. Reginald Hale professed faith in a God that seemed to love Peter Hamilton more than He could love someone like Reginald. What do you think of Reginald's views about God?

13. Dowager Merit proved herself to be legalistic but in the end fair-minded toward Cosima. How do you think she would have handled it if the genetic disorder had come from her side of the family?

14. One of the verses in Cosima's journal is from 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (KJV) Have you ever seen Christ's power turn your own weakness to a strength? Something that benefits not only you, but Christ's kingdom here on earth?