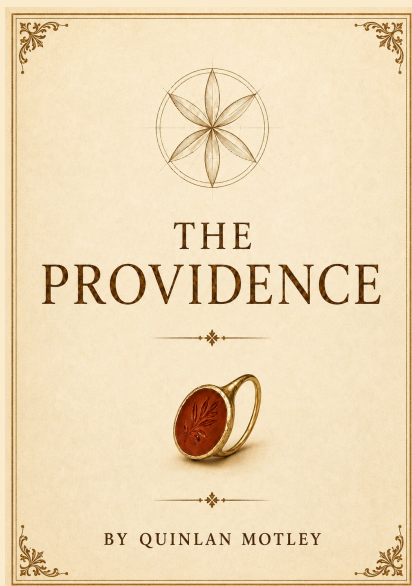


GOOD NOVELS
STORIES WORTH CARRYING

FULL DISCUSSION GUIDE

Twenty-four questions for readers who have
finished the novel

CONTAINS ENDING SPOILERS



THE PROVIDENCE

by Quinlan Motley

Full discussion guide

CONTAINS ENDING SPOILERS

Do not place the questions below in page previews, social captions, event invitations, or uncollapsed search snippets.

Character and formation

1. The ruler first learns about hunger through the unequal division of bread. How does that early experience shape both his generosity and his fear? Where does the lesson help him, and where does it begin to govern him?
2. His father returns grain that could have been hidden, yet the family loses its plot anyway. What does the boy learn from his father's integrity? Does the father see the outcome differently from the son?
3. The ruler's success grows from listening to people who know what he does not: a driver, a store worker, growers, carriers, field workers, and his wife. Why does listening remain difficult even after it becomes one of his strengths?
4. The wife repeatedly refuses to let him make risk disappear on her behalf. What does she understand about shared life that he does not? Which of their conversations changes him most?
5. The ruler tries to give his father rest, but his father asks for chosen work. What is the difference between providing for someone and making that person unnecessary?

Work, wealth, and power

6. The common measure creates a form of trust that does not depend on every party liking the result. What does the novel suggest fairness requires beyond good intentions?
7. During the shortage, the steward opens grain under a rule that limits strong buyers. The ruler stops him publicly, then reverses himself publicly. Why is the correction important? What would have changed if he had repaired the decision only in private?
8. The ruler pays wages before securing every receipt and refuses the price of fear. Which uses of wealth in the novel are genuinely good? Does acknowledging that good sharpen or soften the Gospel command?
9. The story repeatedly separates goods that belong to the ruler from goods entrusted to him by others. Why does that distinction matter when he hears the instruction to sell what belongs to him?
10. After the encounter, he gives more, listens longer, and pays closer attention to people who have not spoken. Is this obedience, avoidance, growth, or some combination? What evidence supports your reading?

The encounter

11. Before Jesus speaks the final command, the ruler feels seen without needing to defend his history. Why does the novel place such weight on Mark's statement that Jesus loved him?
12. The ruler forms several generous alternatives: keep the field but give its yield, open the stores wider, support Jesus' travelers, delegate but remain close enough to correct failure. Why is each plan insufficient to him? What do the plans have in common?

13. He recognizes that the people he loves are not empty vessels waiting for his hand, yet that knowledge does not free him to follow. Why not?
14. The narrator insists that the good he has done is not exposed as false simply because he does not follow. How does that sentence change your reading of him? Would the story be easier if his goodness were fraudulent?
15. Jesus does not chase him, and the crowd does not condemn him. What role does freedom play in the sorrow of the scene?

After the road

16. His wife does not give him either acquittal or accusation. She tells him, in effect, that he heard Jesus. Is this compassion, judgment, restraint, or something else?
17. The reports of Jesus' arrest, death, empty tomb, and appearances reach the ruler through imperfect chains of witnesses. How does his habit of testing reports serve him? How does it become another reason to delay?
18. The parable of entrusted money could sound like a defense of the ruler's entire life. Why does it instead reopen his question about what has been placed in his hands?
19. The steward, grower, and carrier choose to seek the resurrection witnesses themselves. What has the ruler successfully given them before he gives them provisions for the road?
20. On the final morning, the ruler walks farther than he intended. What is different in him while he walks beside the others? What remains unchanged when his pace shortens?
21. Discuss the final transfer of the lead rope. Is the ruler releasing the travelers, releasing control, declining discipleship again, or doing more than one of these at once?
22. The final bread is still in his hand when he turns home. Trace the bread motif from the first chapter to the last sentence. What has he learned to give? What has he not yet released?
23. Scripture does not tell us what became of the ruler. The novel refuses to declare a salvation verdict. What does that refusal make possible for the reader?
24. What does the title THE PROVIDENCE mean by the end? Where, if anywhere, does Providence appear in the events rather than in the ruler's explanation of them?

Questions worth carrying

End with one, without requiring anyone to answer aloud:

- What do I trust when everything matters?
 - When does care become control?
 - Is generosity the same as surrender?
 - What have I made impossible for others to carry because I needed to remain necessary?
 - What would it mean to take one step without first securing the whole road?
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