

Optional Book Discussion Questions
(For Circleville Audiences)

1. What part of the book spoke to you? What was the deepest moment for you in the book? Which family and circumstance spoke to you the most?
2. What memories of Circleville did the story bring back for you? What has changed? What new opportunities are there for this small town? What do you wish was still available/around? What are you glad is in the past?
3. There were many subthemes in the book: the role of women, church and religion, social ladders, domestic violence, vibrant downtown, dealing with trauma, etc. Can you name others? Which of these subthemes did you relate to most, that have affected your life? How/Why?
4. How much of the story did you know before reading the book? What knowledge did you gain by reading the book?
5. What was the most important “take away”, lesson, or moral for you after reading the book? What might you do differently in your life, having read the book?
6. The book talks about the changing role of women. How has your life been affected by the changing roles of women? How has Circleville been affected by the changing role of women? Did the author write from a “feminist” perspective or a “historical” perspective?
7. The author calls this book a love story to the families. It took intention and effort to keep love front and center as she interviewed folks and wrote about this personal tragedy. Why was this perspective so important in telling the story? How did love transform this story for you? Do you believe in the transformative power of love? What keeps love from being our first response?
8. If the town of Circleville could have done anything differently fifty years ago, what might they have done better? Would Circleville be prepared today for a hometown disaster like the one in the book?
9. Many people interviewed reported that they had never talked about the event before. Why do you think this event wasn’t deeply talked about over the past 50 years? How would talking about it have been useful? How would you start those conversations? Who could help with those conversations?
10. The quote in the front of the book reads, “Everyone thinks that awful comes by itself, but it doesn’t. It comes hand in hand with normal.” (Brian Doyle, *The Sun*, Issue 494, February 2017) The rest of the prose goes on to talk about getting bad news while doing something mundane, like eating breakfast or watching a baseball game. You hear the news but keep moving forward with whatever you are doing at the time. It takes time for the awful to sink in, to alter what you are doing or how you respond. Why do you suppose the author chose that quote to start the book?