

*Study Guide Questions for*

*The Storekeeper's Daughter*

*A Memoir*

by **Katie Funk Wiebe**

Discussion questions for writer's groups, book clubs, Sunday schools, and other settings:

Reading, writing, and discussing memoirs is popular today. Each person has a past, not the same as Katie's, but unique to you. What value is there in taking a trip to the well of memory? After having read Katie Funk Wiebe's *The Storekeeper's Daughter*, use the following questions to get your discussion group started.

1. Why are memoirs popular today? Frequently it is because they present inner truths about life that inspire and provoke thought. They give meaningful shape to life. What values and truths did your family uphold?
2. Every person has at least one story he or she would like to have recorded for history. In Katie's case, it was the story of how her father found her mother's parents lost during the Russian Revolution of 1917-19. What is the great narrative of your life or that of your parents that should be recorded?
3. In Katie's family the Russian windmill near which her father grew up and the samovar (Russian tea urn) brought along from Russia have become the accepted symbols of their family story. The family news sheet is called The Funk Windmill. What are some objects in your family that have been assigned value beyond their immediate significance? Why?
4. Where you ever theologically confused as a young person? Why? How did you resolve this confusion?
5. How did you learn about sex? About death? What are some of your earliest experiences with either one? Many people of Katie's generation share her experience of sort of blundering ahead in ignorance when it came to sexuality.
6. What are the stories of the great Depression in your family life that have taken on almost mythic qualities because of the many times they have been told? How did the Great Depression affect you (or your parents if you were born after that time)? Someone

has said that the Great Depression left an indelible imprint on all who lived through it.

7. What is the importance of a name? Katie writes she finally learned to accept her name, even if she saw it as an "immigrant name." How have you come to terms with your name if you didn't like it?

8. What humorous stories have come out of your past? Can you recall difficult experiences that have now become family anecdotes for the whole family to chuckle about?

9. What societal and religious changes have you had the most difficulty incoming to terms with? Why?

10. Story-telling gives children stability and security by informing them where they came from. What stories are you passing on to your children to root them and then give them freedom to follow their own path? How have you dealt with the unpleasant aspects of your family life?