

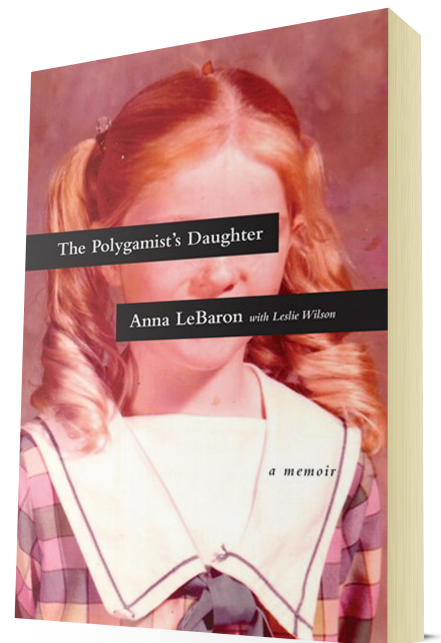
The Polygamist's Daughter

Anna LeBaron with Leslie Wilson

Discussion Guide

Anna's earliest memory of pleasing her father was when she served him coffee as he wrote during the night: "Though we spoke fewer than twenty words to one another, I'd never felt closer to my father, nor more needed as a daughter, as a person. Knowing I played a critical role in helping my father accomplish his important work gave me such a sense of belonging and fulfillment." This simple act of service sets Anna up for a lifetime of people-pleasing. How can someone differentiate between serving others out of love and seeking love by people-pleasing? How are these two practices brought into healthy alignment?

Anna was a "celestial daughter," the daughter of a self-proclaimed prophet--a seemingly high-status position. And yet, throughout her early childhood she seems expendable, disposable, and merely used for fetching or chores. Do you think Anna would have been treated differently if her father was a less important figure in the community?



Anna grew up with very little in terms of possessions. She recalled some of her happiest times walking on the beach in Mexico, collecting shells, building sand castles, and napping. These simple pleasures brought her immense joy even among a sparse upbringing. What simple pleasures bring you joy?

Anna's constant moving made her feel untethered and unsettled. She felt like an outsider for most of her life. What makes you feel like an outsider? To what do you tether yourself in order to feel grounded or secure? Is this a healthy approach to living or are you limiting your potential in exchange for security?

Anna recounts a time when, at age 9, she was promoted from "a liability to an asset" by being assigned to help a sister-wife with her baby. Think back to a time when you went from feeling like a little kid to a big kid. Under what circumstance did that happen and how did it impact you emotionally?

Even though she was pulled in several different directions, Anna's mom tried to carve out time for her to feel loved. Remember when Anna Mae, after a long night at the used appliance store with Anna, bought them both Wendy's hamburgers and a chocolate frosty to split? Something so simple and mundane to us made Anna feel elated. Growing up, how did adults (parents, caregivers, extended relatives, etc) make you feel special? How can you "pay it forward" now?

Lillian's two words of permission, "start walking," gave Anna the courage to make her first adult decision at the tender age of 13. Her act of defiance against the family was dangerous but necessary, and Anna took the road less traveled. Reflect on a decision you've made that felt similar to Anna's. How did it turn out? Do you regret it now or was it a turning point along your own road less traveled?

As Anna and Marilyn bonded over their shared escape, they seemed to gain strength from each other. Just knowing they were not alone buoyed their spirits and gave them courage to forge ahead. Do you have a "Marilyn" in your life for when times get tough? How can you help others who are struggling to find peace and safety in this world?

Lillian's sharing the letter from Ervil while he was incarcerated that had originally promised Anna in marriage to Mark in exchange for "monetary support and faithful obedience" elicited an unexpected reaction from Anna: love. Can you recall a time when you've had an unexpected

reaction like Anna's? Were others around you surprised or, in Lillian's case, a little put off by your reaction? How did you handle the situation?

Mark's announcement of Dan Jordan's murder was merely the latest version of instability in Anna's life. Instead of battling hunger, sporadic education, and a transient lifestyle, now Anna was facing a different kind of fear: staying alive. Discuss a time when you've felt the most afraid in your life. On what was the fear based? How did you handle it and what was the result?

With a price on Mark's head from Ervil's prison hit list, Anna writes, "the blood covenant had come full circle." There are a few times in one's life where he or she feels life has come full circle. Describe your full circle experience and its impact on your life.

Have you ever experienced God's intervention in your life as Anna did when she was too sick to work at the shop the day Mark was murdered?

Anna could not continue to put Lillian's needs above her own after Mark's death. Anna was ushering herself into a life of her own, something she craved. Should Anna have stood up to Lillian earlier? Recall a time in your life when you put someone's needs above your own. How did you reconcile that time in your life with now? What lessons were learned?

Do you agree with Anna's decision not to raise Lillian's children after her death? How do you think her life would have been different if she had done so?

In counseling, Anna realized that Ervil was her dad but God was her Father. She articulated a personal relationship with God that she never experienced with her dad. This realization filled a gaping wound she'd lived with until adulthood. What gaps are you trying to fill and does pursuing a more personal relationship with God make sense for you?