



## **BAD GROUND – DISCUSSION GUIDE** *by Dale Cramer*

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1. The "bad ground" theme: the idea that God gives us the brightest of gifts in the darkest of places runs through every major and minor story in the book. Discuss the gifts that various characters find in the course of the book and the dark circumstances in which they find them.
2. Much of the action in *Bad Ground* takes place in a tunnel. Talk about the symbolism and significance of the tunnel for the characters. How can it be a place of darkness and fear for one man but a home and a refuge for another? What effect does our own past have on how we perceive our present circumstances?
3. Jeremy's mother, Julie, said, "when you're close to death all the unimportant stuff just sort of falls away and you know what's real." Do you think this is true? Why? What new insights did Julie gain in her last weeks about Jeremy? About Aiden? About God?
4. Moss Fisher, the old security guard who befriends Jeremy, tells him, "They don't trust what you got to say because you ain't been where they been." And shortly after that he tells Jeremy, "It could just be, if the people around you ain't disciples, it's because you ain't Jesus." How do these two statements relate to each other and to us as Christians? What does it take to be "in the world but not of the world"? Why do we ultimately feel compassion for a foul-mouthed man like Biggins?
5. When Julie visits Aiden in the burn unit she washes his feet and utters words of forgiveness, though it appears that she still harbors a deep resentment. Aiden

clearly sees through her words, and her condemnation has a lasting effect on him. What does this say to us about genuineness and self-examination and the importance of motive?

6. Julie said Jeremy and Aiden had something to give each other, something that she couldn't give them. What did they get from each other? Why had Julie not been able to give it to them herself? What would it take for a mother to give her son the instructions she gave Jeremy in her letter?
  
7. Moss said to Jeremy, "You got to have long faith." What did he mean by that? How can this view help us in our own lives?
  
8. Why was Snake ambivalent about Jeremy staying with him and working on the job? How did Jeremy's presence ultimately force Snake to face his own demons?
  
9. When we finally learn exactly what happened to cause the explosion that killed Tom and scarred Aiden for life, Aiden's deep sense of guilt seems out of proportion to the part that he actually played in his brother's death. Why?
  
10. When Jeremy finally gets through to Aiden and grants him genuine absolution, the scene is ripe with symbolism. What does it have to say about our responsibility as representatives of Christ?



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