

Discussion Questions

for

The Randolphs

These questions are designed to enhance your conversation about *The Randolphs* by Isabella Alden.

1. Maria Randolph closed and locked her bedroom door so no one could walk in and find her reading her Bible. Why do you think she did that? Do you think she was ashamed of reading her Bible or feared how others would react? What other emotions do you think motivated Maria's behavior?
2. What words would you use to describe Maria Randolph at the beginning of the book? How do you think she changed over the course of the story? Which of Maria's qualities did you admire?
3. Some of Maria's friends dropped her and looked down on her because she decided to take in washing as a way to make money to support her family. Think about your best friend; now imagine that your best friend fell on hard times and had to take a job as a janitor or housecleaner or fast-food worker in order to make ends meet. How would you react? Would you think less of your friend for taking such action?
4. Tom decides to hire a woman as cook for The Randolph hotel, even though she drinks alcohol to excess and The Randolph hotel is a temperance hotel. Tom thinks employing the woman will give her a chance at reformation. Maria thinks Tom is trying to do a wild goodness to somebody who doesn't appreciate it. What do you think of Tom's reasoning? Did Tom make the right decision? If you were in Tom's situation, would you have done the same?
5. Tom gives Maria what he calls simple advice to live by: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Tom tells her whenever she is in doubt about a question of any sort, to stop to think what He says on it, or what He would say if He could speak to Maria face to face. What do you think of Tom's advice? How difficult do you think it would be to live by? Describe how different you think the world would be if all Christians followed this principle?
6. Peter Armstrong told Tom Randolph about an incident at a church social where some people quoted the Bible and made fun of the words of Jesus Christ. Peter felt ashamed that he said nothing and compared his own behavior to the disciple Peter's behavior when he denied knowing Christ. Do you think Peter Armstrong over-reacted? Should he have spoken up at the church social and defended Jesus Christ at the Bible? If you were in that situation, what would you have done?

7. Maria believed in religion “for those who needed it”; but she considered herself entirely self-sufficient. What do you think of Maria’s position? Do you think capable, strong-willed people like Maria need religion? Why do you think so?
8. Tom, Peter and David were “fishers of men.” They went out into the city to invite young men to the praise meeting at the hotel. What do you think of their efforts? Do you think Christians should follow the “fishers of men” motto? What can today’s Christians do to encourage non-believers to attend church services, prayer meetings and Bible study sessions?
9. When Maria is upset about Grace’s relationship with Alfred, she turns to her brother-in-law for help, because she was certain that “whatever went into Mr. Harper’s hands was sure to be acted upon, promptly and wisely.” Do you have someone in your life that you know will listen to you as an ally and give you wise advice?
10. Maria takes great pride in her hard work and ability to support the family. What were some of the ways Maria’s pride made life more difficult for her and the people she loved? How do you think her life might have changed if she had let down her guard and allowed others to help?
11. Which character did you find most interesting? Why?

Add your own questions here:
