

STUDY QUESTIONS
FOR...

GREATER *miracles*

by Mark S. Haskett

1 From the very beginning, Gabriel admits to a need for arranging periodic trysts with women whose health and fitness are more important than looks or personality. What do you think is the primary drive behind this need?

2 What are the circumstances that precipitate Gabriel's latest "journey" to the small town in Southern Oregon where he eventually meets Lane, and where most of our story takes place? Why does he feel like he's never able to stay in one location for very long?

3 If you were in possession of a gift such as Gabriel's, would you try to keep it secret, or make it public? Why or why not?

4 Gabriel recalls a mid-80s film, *Starman*, in which the leading character brings a deer back to life after a hunter has killed it. A decade later, the film *Powder* included a scene in which the death of a doe is a transformative event. What is the significance/symbolism of deer in these films? And why do you think Gabriel felt the need to save the deer after it was hit by Vincent's truck?

5 Gabriel's character combines powers we normally think of as divine or supernatural – or even saintly – with sensuality and raw physicality. Do you think it is possible for men and women to reflect both a strong "physical" nature and a deeply spiritual side? Does one aspect diminish or complement the other?

6 Are there special gifts each of us possesses that others don't? How do we incorporate such gifts into our lives and still maintain balance with other personal needs and functions? Are these gifts related to what we think of as our purpose or "mission" in life? What happens if we focus solely on such gifts to the exclusion of others – or, on the other hand, we neglect or ignore them?

7 Who are the "Maqlaqs" and "Bustins" in our story, and where did their names come from? While these are real names for real people, do they also represent other divisions or classes in our society?

8 Deputy Chino tells Gabriel about a Maqlaq legend depicting a kind of Prodigal Son figure who returns to the area to lead his people back to their Old Ways. How is Gabriel thought by some to fit this role? What are the "ways" the Maqlaq legend refers to, and how were they lost? What are the practices or ideals *we* have lost? And are there methods for recovering the essence of them, while accommodating the realities of today?

continued on next page

9 The ammunition plant near the existing town of Chiloquin, Oregon, is merely fictional. However, that industry *does* symbolize a very real presence in that town – and in communities throughout America. What is this “presence,” and what does it say about us? About our future? How does our story resolve the issue, and is that solution realistic for our lives?

10 The title of our story, *Greater Miracles*, is drawn from a term used in the Bible’s New Testament. What is its meaning, theologically speaking, and how does it underscore a major theme in the book? How does Gabriel’s analysis of Rev. D’Arcy’s sermon on the “Loaves and Fishes” miracle relate to that theme?

11 As the story unfolds, two issues arise which seem to complicate the growing relationship between Gabriel and Lane: The possibility that he may be a union activist, and the Termination/Restoration issue between America’s Native American population and the federal government. How does this “complication” advance the plot? How is it relevant to the book’s theme?

12 Lane’s disability as a result of her accident at the munitions factory is a primary element in the story, and an ongoing challenge to Gabriel. Why does Gabriel view her disability a “miracle,” both for himself and for Lane?

13 How do Lane’s life choices in response to her accident illustrate the ways many of us deal with our own personal tragedies and challenges? How and why have her attitudes evolved? In what ways are her actions symbolic of our own spiritual journeys?

14 In literary parlance, Lane can be described as a “strong female protagonist.” How is her strength illustrated as the story develops? What exemplifies her strength at the conclusion?

15 The book’s apparent climax at the munitions plant isn’t really “the end of the story.” The narrative continues with a single chapter that takes us through another two years of Gabriel’s life, and brings us to one last, bittersweet scene between Lane and Gabriel... and another deer. How does this chapter tie up any “loose ends” – or does it?

16 (Optional) Is the conclusion of *Greater Miracles* satisfying, or does it leave you wanting more... or both? Please tell the publisher if you’d like to be notified if/when a sequel comes out. You may also share your thoughts with the author, or send a brief review of the book, by going to: www.IFMedia.com/GreaterMiracles/Comments.

The author welcomes readers’ suggestions for other questions relating to issues raised in *Greater Miracles*, both to fuel discussion in book clubs or other group settings, and to inspire personal reflection. If you have any such suggestions, or would like to submit comments or a formal review of this novel, please visit: www.IFMedia.org/GreaterMiracles/Comments.