

Discussion Guide for Tribulation Force

Just-for-Fun Facts

- 1) What is the name of Ray's new first officer?
- 2) Rayford travels to Dallas—Fort Worth airport to practice takeoffs and landing in order to become certified on what kind of jetliner?
- 3) Why did Chloe throw away the roses Buck sent her?
- 4) Who is the religion editor of the *Global Weekly*?
- 5) What kind of a special meal does Rayford cook for Chloe to celebrate her new job?
- 6) What is the name of the Secret Service agent who accompanied Buck to meet President Fitzhugh?

Discussion Questions

Prayer

- 7) In chapter 2 of *Tribulation Force*, Bruce Barnes shares that he now knows what people meant when they say they feasted on the Word. Describe similar experiences you've had like Bruce's where he sat for hours, drinking it in, losing track of time, forgetting to eat, and weeping and praying.
- 8) In chapter 3, Buck is discussing with Bruce Barnes his anguish over introducing Hattie Durham to Nicolae and his desire to rescue her from his clutches. Bruce tells him, "If you've prayed about it and feel a real leading from God to talk with Hattie, then do it. Occasionally each of us feels led to do something a bit risky. Share the times when you have prayed for guidance about taking action in one way or another."
- 9) At the end of chapter 12, Rayford phones Bruce Barnes just before boarding his flight to New York to meet with Nicolae Carpathia about being his pilot. Rayford prayed all the way, and now that he is about to go up to Nicolae's

office he remembers that Bruce, Chloe, and Buck would all be praying for him. When we are called to do something, undergirding our mission with prayer is crucially important. Remember and share with the group experiences that you have had where you learned firsthand about this important discipline.

Boldness

- 10) Buck and Tsion Ben-Judah approach (in chapter 15) the two witnesses not knowing what to expect. Earlier that day they watched as a man who tried to shoot the two witnesses was consumed in fire. Buck faced this challenge with courage and hope. He was rewarded by witnessing the exchange between the learned rabbi and Eli and Moishe. How have you stepped out in faith with boldness and hope? Share with the group times when your courage was rewarded too.
- 11) Throughout *Tribulation Force* both Buck and Rayford struggle between boldly proclaiming the truth to Nicolae Carpathia and employing subterfuge in order to surreptitiously compromise his masquerade as a good man trying to save the world. Sometimes it is very difficult to know whether or not discretion is the better part of valor. What is the difference between chickening out and being wise as serpents? If you've ever been in such a situation, give an example of a time when you had to make such a decision.
- 12) Near the end of the book in chapter 19:

Buck had been praying about whether to tell Chloe of President Fitzhugh's warning about New York City and Washington. Fitzhugh was well connected and undoubtedly accurate, but Buck couldn't spend his life running from danger. Life was perilous these days, and war and destruction could break out anywhere. His job had taken him to the hottest hazard spots in the world. He didn't want to be reckless or foolishly put his wife in harm's way, but every member of the Tribulation Force knew the risks.

Christians in the end times will need to confront their fear and trust God for whatever may happen. In our real world, Christians go to places like Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine, and Indonesia to share Christ no matter how dangerous it may be. It is not unusual for them to suffer a great deal. Discuss your feelings about this issue.

Sharing Faith

- 13) When the tribulation saints spoke with unbelievers about Jesus Christ, they could not promise them prosperity or protection only the truth that Jesus Christ dies for their sins and that even at this time God was inviting them to spend eternity with him. What are legitimate promises that can be made to unbelievers no matter when we are sharing Christ?
- 14) In chapter 14, Amanda White claims she met Irene Steele at one of the church's home Bible study groups. Now Amanda is grieving the disappearances of her husband and daughters, and she is looking for a church as a result. Rayford realizes that his wife had been instrumental in Amanda's life, and yet she didn't even really remember Irene's name. Often we pour a great deal of time and effort into people's lives, but they move away or we lose track of these people, and we never find out if our work bore fruit. Sometimes we have only one or two occasions with somebody but they take away a vision of God we never knew about. How have experiences like these been important in your life?
- 15) Sometimes when unbelievers know that we share our faith a lot we get into trouble for doing it even when we have not done it. This happened to Rayford in chapter 6 when Earl received a report that Rayford had been harassing the examiner on his recertification flight. Satan tries to discourage believers every way that he can from sharing the news that Jesus Christ has conquered death and sin. Tell the group about times when something like this has happened to you or to someone you know well.

Prophecy

- 16) When Buck Williams meets Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig for lunch in New York at the Manhattan Harbor Yacht Club, Chaim excitedly tells him about the new peace treaty Nicolae has negotiated with the U.N. Chaim tells Buck that Israel will be allowed to renew the agreement every seven years, but Buck thinks to himself that there will be no need for another peace treaty in seven years. How does Buck already know that this will be unnecessary? (see pp. 29, 64, and 103)
- 17) Ezekiel 38 and 39 tell about a great enemy from the north invading Israel with the help of Persia, Libya, and Ethiopia. The Scriptures also foretold of weapons of war used as fire fuel and enemy soldiers eaten by birds or buried in a common grave. In chapter 5, Chaim is describing the aftermath of the battle to Buck. Chaim neither realizes that those events were the fulfillment of

prophecy or that an agreement for the peace of Israel with the Antichrist is another. Why is there, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, a tendency in the church to become complacent about the fulfillment of biblical prophecies? How have the abuses of some affected the average person's attitude toward the fulfillment of biblical prophecy?

Fellowship

- 18) In chapter 3, Buck drives over to church to see Bruce. When Bruce comes out to greet him he embraces Buck. Buck realized that was something new for him, too, all this hugging, especially among men. Sometimes when we are new to fellowship altogether, or if we move and become part of a new group, we discover there are different customs. What kinds of things do you recall that seemed strange and new to you when you first tasted the fellowship of believers?
- 19) In chapter 18, we learn that after eighteen months New Hope Village Church has been growing and it is even bigger than it was before the Rapture. There is a great deal going on in these stories that the reader never sees. If you were one of the new believers at New Hope Village Church, how do you imagine you would feel about a brother in Christ like Buck a journalist who has met Nicolae Carpathia in person?

God's Sovereignty

- 20) We can never know the reasons why God chooses to do things the way he does, but sometimes we get a glimpse as in chapter 10.

Rayford was growing emotional, but he didn't mind as much anymore. His grief was more melancholic than painful now. The closer he grew to God, the more he looked forward to being with him and with Irene and Raymie after the Glorious Appearing.

He allowed his memories to bring his loved ones closer in his mind and heart. Now that he shared their faith, he understood them and loved them all the more. When regret crept in, when he felt ashamed of the husband and father he had been, he merely prayed for forgiveness for having been so blind.

Rayford spent an hour at the grocery store and another hour and a half in the kitchen before he had everything cooking in anticipation of Chloe's arrival. He

found himself identifying with Irene, remembering the hopeful expression on her face almost every night. He had said his thank-yous and complimented her enough, he supposed. But it wasn't until now that he realized she must have been doing that work for him out of the same love and devotion he felt for Chloe.

He had never grasped that, and his paltry attempts at compliments must have been seen as perfunctory as they were. Now there was no way to make it up to Irene, except to show up in the kingdom himself, with Chloe alongside.

What might God have had in mind when he decided to leave unbelievers behind without the support and love of their believing family?

- 21) While Rayford is in New York interviewing with Nicolae about being his new pilot, Buck is also in town on other business. Often God ordains that people or events occur in ways to comfort or help us. Can you recall some times when God arranged for just the right person to be in town, or some event taking place at a time when it could not possibly have been more convenient?
- 22) Cardinal Mathews is a man who is full to overflowing with himself. In chapter 12, Buck is interviewing him about the upcoming election for a new pope and hints at the realignment of the great religions of the world and the role he will play in the unfolding plan. Mathews has his own agenda, and Nicolae has his. How do the plans of Bruce and Rayford reflect their yielded wills to the sovereign purposes of God? How do their views compare and contrast to Mathews's and Carpathia's?

Answer Key for *Tribulation Force* Just-for-Fun Facts

- 1) Nick Edwards (see pp. 14 and 135)
- 2) the Boeing 757 (see p. 48)
- 3) Because she thinks Buck is living with and engaged to be married to a skinny little spike-haired girl in a short skirt. (see p. 104)
- 4) James Borland (see p. 213)
- 5) shrimp scampi (see p. 233)
- 6) Pudge (see p. 365)