

A READING & CONVERSATION GUIDE

Sacred Crossroads

The Path Appears When You Take the First Step

Mitch Russo

A story to read.
A conversation to share.

Single-meeting and four-week formats
Questions, reflections, and notes for your book club

BOOK ONE OF THE CEDAR SPRINGS CHRONICLES



Make room for conversation

Two ways to gather around the story

Welcome

A family hardware store becomes a place where ordinary needs reveal deeper ones. Use this guide to explore the novel's questions about attention, family inheritance, community, and the courage to change. Different readings are welcome; there is no prescribed conclusion.

One meeting / pages 3–4

Read the whole novel, then gather for a 60–75 minute conversation. Choose four or five of the eight questions. Let the group's curiosity determine where you spend your time.

Four weeks / pages 5–8

Read four chapters before each meeting, adding the epilogue in the final week. Each session offers story questions and an optional reflection. Stay within the assigned reading so everyone can discover the story at their own pace.

Before you meet

Bring your copy of the book and, if you wish, a passage or image that stayed with you. Ask one person to keep time and make room for quieter voices. Members may pass on any question.

A note about spoilers

The single-meeting questions assume you have finished the book. Each weekly page discusses its assigned chapters; the final week includes the ending and epilogue.

A shared agreement

Discuss the characters before asking people to discuss themselves. No spiritual belief or personal disclosure is required. Curiosity, disagreement, and listening all belong here.

The ordinary and the extraordinary

Read the complete novel before this conversation

Your 60–75 minute plan

First impressions: 10 minutes. Explore four or five questions: 35–45 minutes. Optional reflection: 10 minutes. Closing round: 5–10 minutes.

- 01 Which scene, image, or character stayed with you most? What made it memorable?
- 02 How did your understanding of Noble change as you read? Which choice of his did you understand, and which did you question?
- 03 How does the hardware store shape the story? What does this familiar, practical setting contribute to the extraordinary events?
- 04 Where does family legacy offer support, and where does it create pressure? Choose an example from the novel.

A passage to bring into the conversation

Write a page number or a few words to help you find it again.

What stays with you

Continue with the questions that interest your group

- 05 How did you interpret the magic: literally, symbolically, spiritually, or in another way? Which moments shaped your reading?
- 06 When do caution and resistance seem reasonable in this story? When do they become limiting? Did the novel leave room for both views?
- 07 How do relationships and community influence the characters' choices? Discuss a moment when another person makes change easier or harder.
- 08 Did the ending feel earned? What question did it leave you with, and how did it affect your understanding of the title Sacred Crossroads?

Optional personal reflection

Has the novel changed how you think about a familiar place, a family expectation, or a turning point? You may discuss a character's experience instead of your own.

Closing round

Share one thought you are taking away, or one question you would ask Mitch Russo. Passing is always welcome.

Foundations and awakening

Chapters 1–4 / The Hour Before through Crossroads

Begin with the story

Notice what Noble sees, what he dismisses, and what his familiar routines help him avoid. Consider how the store's ordinary work and its extraordinary life exist together.

- 01 What do Noble's routines in The Hour Before reveal about him before the call from Sarah? Which details suggest comfort, and which suggest confinement?
- 02 How do Sarah's call, Jenny's presence, and the changes in the store challenge Noble's explanations? Which would be hardest for him to dismiss?
- 03 What changes when Noble begins reading the family ledger differently? Has the information changed, or has his attention changed?
- 04 How does the Night Walker's guidance differ from a direct answer or instruction? What effect does that have on Noble and on you as a reader?
- 05 How does grief shape Noble's relationship with Eleanor's photographs and the things he cannot explain?

Optional reflection

Think of a familiar place you may have stopped noticing. What would it mean to look at it with fresh attention? You can also answer for Noble.

Carry into next week

One question you want to keep open.

Confronting resistance

Chapters 5–8 / What Thirteen Years Kept through The Test Begins

Begin with the story

The changes become visible in relationships and daily work. Look for the difference between recognizing another person's need and deciding what that person should do.

- 01 What does What Thirteen Years Kept reveal about the distance between Noble and Sarah? How does it change your reading of their earlier exchanges?
- 02 In The Real Need, Noble begins recording the need beneath a customer's purchase. Consider Paula Winters and the weather-stripping. What changes in his understanding of service?
- 03 How do Jenny's inherited knowledge and the townspeople's gifts complicate the idea that Noble is changing alone?
- 04 Compare Harold's concern for order with Noble's earlier resistance. Where are their fears similar, and where do they differ?
- 05 In Chapter 8, Dr. Stanford Blackwell arrives confident that Cedar Springs fits a pattern he already understands. What does he notice, and what might his assumptions keep him from noticing?

Optional reflection

When does a familiar explanation help you understand something, and when might it prevent you from asking a better question?

Carry into next week

An example of care, caution, or resistance to revisit.

The price of change

Chapters 9–12 / What the Father Kept through What Cedar Springs Is Made Of

Begin with the story

Private change becomes a public conflict. Consider what counts as evidence for each side and how the meaning of protection shifts as intervention escalates.

- 01 How does Noble's encounter with his father change his understanding of the family legacy? What can he honor without repeating?
- 02 The Business Association divides six to six. Which concerns on each side deserve a hearing? Where do fear and evidence become difficult to separate?
- 03 How does Diana Wells's understanding of her mother's death shape her certainty about the work she is doing? What do you know at this point, and what remains unresolved?
- 04 What makes it difficult for Noble to sustain his new understanding under pressure? Which moments show the cost of returning to his former life?
- 05 As intervention escalates toward demolition, how do the townspeople respond? What changes when an abstract policy becomes a physical threat?

Optional reflection

What evidence would you need to reconsider a position you had publicly defended? Discuss a character's situation if you prefer.

Carry into next week

Whose certainty is beginning to change, and why?

Integration and new beginnings

Chapters 13–16 / The Turn through The Work Becomes the World

Plus the epilogue / Where Three Waters Meet

- 01 Stanford reveals his former bookstore and questions his interventions. What distinguishes understanding his fear from excusing the harm he caused?
- 02 Diana discovers altered evidence about her mother and the program's subjects. What changes her mind, and what does she risk by acting on that discovery?
- 03 In *The Cleansing Power of Light*, how do Sofia's drawing and whispered message, public witnesses, and institutional duty shape Colonel Matthews's decision to pause the operation?
- 04 Sarah runs the Cedar Springs Institute for Balanced Transformation in the epilogue. How does teaching extend the work of the store? What might responsible guidance require?
- 05 Emma is Sarah's daughter and Noble's granddaughter. Eleanor's camera passes through Sarah to Emma. How does it connect the generations while allowing a distinct way of seeing?
- 06 The epilogue connects awakening communities while introducing Victoria Kane's property acquisitions. How does the continuing threat complicate the hopeful ending?

Closing reflection

Which character's journey most changed your understanding of the story? What feels resolved, and what remains open?

For hosts and readers

Ways to reflect, gather, and connect

Make participation voluntary

Invite examples from the book before moving to personal experience. Welcome different interpretations of the magic. Let people listen without speaking, and avoid treating disagreement as a problem to solve.

Try one optional activity

Photograph an ordinary place from a new angle, inspired by Eleanor, Sarah, and Emma. Or write a private letter about an inherited strength you want to carry forward. Share only what you choose.

Invite Mitch to your book club

To inquire about a complimentary virtual author visit, email authormitchrusso@gmail.com with your club's name, approximate group size, time zone, and preferred dates. Visits are subject to availability.

Stay connected

Book information: sacredcrossroadsbook.com

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Your next conversation

A question, a reader to invite, or a thought to return to.
