

The Mitford Years Book IV: *Out to Canaan*

1. In times of crisis, Father Tim and Cynthia pray “The prayer that never fails.” What prayer are they referring to? Why is it a prayer that never fails?
2. Pauline’s growth and redemption is a gradual, step-by-step process. Who helps her? Where does Pauline succeed? Where does she fail?
3. Father Tim’s home is transformed from staid bachelor quarters into a topsy-turvy household. Lace quizzes Harley on his schoolwork in the basement, Dooley pounds up the stairs, Puny cleans with her twins underfoot, Violet the cat balefully eyes Barnabas from atop the refrigerator. How does Father Tim’s household compare with your own? Do Jan Karon’s descriptions make you view the chaos in your life differently?
4. The construction boss, Buck Leeper, is a diamond in the rough. In *Out to Canaan*, what is Buck Leeper feeling? How does he view himself? How do you think he may view others?
5. Note the ongoing presence of children and the elderly in the Mitford books. How does this enhance these stories? What lessons do they teach Father Tim?
6. Why does Father Tim have such trouble going to Fancy Skinner, Mitford’s unisex hairdresser, for his haircuts? Who does he press into service to cut his hair when he is avoiding her shop? Choose one of your group members to read the monologue by Fancy found toward the end of Chapter Five.
7. Do you have a Main Street Grill? What function does a place like the Grill fill in a town? Where do you get your town news? Where are you likely to meet friends and neighbors?
8. Esther Bolick’s orange marmalade cake plays a role in each book. What is the specialty in your region? What food item makes an annual event special? Festive? What other object can fill this role?
9. Describe the ways in which those who come in contact with Father Tim are changed. How does contact with others change Father Tim?