

Deception: Discussion Questions

By Diane Meyer

Warning: Contains spoilers. Read only after you finish the book!

1. Can you relate to Ollie Chandler? If so, in what ways? (Besides a fondness for pastry.) How are you different than Ollie? What do you like and dislike about him?
2. What are some of your favorite scenes in *Deception* and why? Who are some of your favorite characters? (If you read the prequels [Deadline](#) or [Dominion](#), in what ways is this book similar, and in what ways is it different?)
3. What are your overall impressions of the book, positive or negative? What did you take away from it that might stick with you awhile?
4. Why do you think Randy Alcorn named the book ***Deception***? What forms did deception take in this book? What forms has it taken in your life or someone close to you?
5. Ollie often feels like he's on the outside looking in when he views the hope and faith in Jake, Clarence, Little Finn, and others. Has there been a time in your life when you experienced this feeling? Explain.
6. Ollie hesitates to believe in a good God because he sees injustice all around him. Read [Matthew 5:6](#) and [Luke 18:7–8](#). What does Jesus tell us about those who long for justice, like Ollie, and the God who loves them?
7. Ollie had a number of difficult questions for God such as, why do people suffer, why did He let Sharon die, and if He can make things right quickly, why doesn't He? There are no easy answers, but what would you say to Ollie—or the Ollies you know? What hidden purposes might God have for the heartbreaking troubles people often face? (See an article by the author, [“How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering?”](#))
8. Ollie drinks excessively to try to relieve the pain caused by his wife's death and his struggling relationships with his daughters. What things do you find yourself doing to avoid feeling pain in your life? What other pain-relieving activities are common in our culture?

9. When you read about Carly entering heaven, what touched you the most? How does your view of heaven compare with this scene in *Deception*? What do you think about the allusions to a future New Earth? Have you been taught to look forward to a New Earth, as [2 Peter 3:13](#) says we should be doing? (See the author's book *Heaven* for more information on the New Earth.)
10. Does reading about Professor Palatine's after-death experience affect your views about hell? What struck you about it?
11. When Sharon was sick and later died, well-meaning Christians made some unintentionally hurtful remarks to Ollie. Why do you think this sometimes happens? What do you say or do when someone you are close to is really hurting like Ollie was? What do you say to people who are without faith in Christ? Do you believe [Romans 8:28](#) is true? Why or why not? Is there a right time and a right way to share what's true, and a wrong time and a wrong way to do it?
12. Jake and Clarence are loyal friends to Ollie. They're usually sensitive to Ollie's skepticism, yet they seem unapologetic for talking about Christ. What does this teach you about friendships with unbelievers? Also, Jake told Ollie the hard truth when he needed to. Do you think this was right? How do your friendships compare to Ollie's with Jake and Clarence?
13. If you're not a Christian, what did you learn about Christians in *Deception*? If you are a believer, what did you learn about non-Christians, including how they view Christians? What misperceptions do Christians and non-Christians sometimes have about each other? How can we improve our relationships with each other? (What do you learn from Ollie's respect for Obadiah Abernathy, whom he met in *Dominion*? Why was Ollie so touched by this old man?)
14. Do you relate to Ollie's heartache and struggles related to his children—one whom he lost, one who has chosen to cut off contact with him, and one, Kendra, with whom he doesn't get along? Admitting that he wasn't the best father, Ollie finally started working hard at his relationship with Kendra. Is it possible for difficult relationships with family members to improve over time? Why or why not?
15. How do the following verses describe God? [Deuteronomy 1:31](#), [Psalm 68:5](#), [Isaiah 49:15–16](#), [Matthew 6:8–9](#), and [Luke 13:34](#). How do they change or enhance your view of God as our Father or parent?

16. In a scene with Sharon, the Lord tells her that we humans long for the light, but hate it because it hurts our eyes; that we sometimes prefer the comfort of darkness to the pain of sight. Are there situations in the world around you, or in your own life, that this describes? Explain.

17. Jake told Ollie that death is not a hole but a doorway, but Ollie doesn't know what to think. Read [John 5:24](#). What are your own beliefs about life after death? On what do you base these beliefs? What do people in our society commonly believe about the afterlife, and on what do they base their beliefs?

18. Seeing Jake's and Clarence's hope and faith, something in Ollie wants to believe, but his deeply ingrained belief system is that you can only put faith in what you can see. Whether you're a Christian or not, what holds you back from fully believing the claims of Jesus Christ?

19. A theme running throughout *Deception* is that many things are not as they first appear. What situations or people in the book ended up not being what they first seemed to be?

20. "Examine the evidence. Then follow wherever it leads." This quote was taped to Ollie's fridge. At the end of *Deception*, Ollie decided to examine the two-thousand-year-old murder of Jesus mystery. Where do you think his investigation might lead? Have you undertaken that investigation? If so, where has it led you? If not, what's keeping you from it?