

Discussion Questions for *He Belongs to Me*

- 1) Thomas and Catherine were driven apart by not only the death of their infant, but by terrible accusations charging Thomas with accidentally murdering him. How many young couples would have been strong enough to endure a tragedy such as that, defy her father, move away, and go to college? Would you have, or would your marriage have ended in divorce?
- 2) Parents often rule their children's lives under the guise of orchestrating what is "good for them", but are they fooling themselves? In what way did Eric fool himself that Catherine wasn't ready to mother Drew? What subconscious reason drove his belief? Do you make decisions for your children that are truly "for their own good", or might you sometimes have other, deeper, reasons that direct your decisions?
- 3) Eric testified, honestly, that had Catherine married a young man from a prominent family, such as a Kennedy or a Ford, he probably would not have opposed their marriage and probably would not have withheld her trust fund. When considering young people marrying, do social standing and family name really matter? How? Why?
- 4) After Catherine graduated from Stanford, she had a job and a home. Should she have just kept Drew and forced her parents to sue her to regain custody? After all, she is Drew's mother.
- 5) Catherine's mother, Sarah, was not a nurturing woman, yet she did quite well with her grandson. What changed? How could she love and understand Drew and not her own children? Is raising a grandchild really that different?
- 6) Emotional abuse and neglect is difficult to prove. Is it a good enough reason to keep children from having a relationship with their grandparents?
- 7) Given that the baby died in his hands, Thomas always carried a deep-seeded belief that he might have accidentally killed his infant son. Going to jail and enduring the beginnings of the trial was a humiliating, terrifying experience. So when the person he loved and trusted most in this world, Catherine, said that she believe he was guilty of killing their baby and that she could never trust him with Drew, she wounded him as no other could. Can Thomas ever really forgive her? Could you?
- 8) Catherine said awful things to Thomas to drive him away, knowing she'd devastate him and break his heart, but it was "for his own good". Was she any better than her father who interfered in her life "for her own good"? Is "for your own good" a good enough reason to take away a young adult's choice in a situation that is not life or death?
- 9) When Catherine's life is endangered during Elisa's delivery, Thomas orders the doctor to save his wife. If it comes to a choice, he wants the doctor to save Catherine and allow the baby to die. Do you agree with this decision? Does it make a difference if you are the pregnant woman who could die, or if it is your loved one who may die?
- 10) Eric pushed his children to excel at sports and academics. Andrew and Catherine's education was extremely important to him. In wanting the best for our children, parents often get caught up in reliving their youth through their children. Did Eric? If you're honest, do you?
- 11) Neither Catherine nor Thomas had an ideal, leave-it-to-Beaver childhood. Underneath family facades, what percentage of adults are luck enough to experience emotionally healthy childhoods? Are Catherine and Thomas' families highly dysfunctional or, unfortunately, more the secret norm?
- 12) Will Eric and Sarah's marriage survive what she did to Catherine?