

Discussion Questions for *The Trail*

1. Matt and Brenda represent two perspectives on how to discover God's will. Matt takes a common-sense view: "Just read your Bible, consider your options, and make the most reasonable choice." Brenda embraces a more mystical method: "God guides through circumstances, feelings, and signs." Which way do you lean, and why? What are the potential downsides of each?
2. According to Sam, "If you want to experience God's guidance, you must go beyond understanding to trust." How does Proverbs 3:5-6 support that advice? Describe a time when you relied on your own understanding and strength to make a decision. What happened?
3. In what area of your life (marriage, children, career, finances, relationships, etc.) do you struggle most to trust God? How does this affect your capacity to hear God's guidance in that area?
4. When Matt doesn't listen to Sam's advice on where to set up camp, he witnesses the potentially disastrous consequences. What kinds of dangers do we face when we don't trust God enough to recognize his guidance?
5. Sam believes that "90 percent of knowing God's will is staying within the circle of intimacy by genuinely opening our lives up to his examining Spirit." In what ways are you opening your life up to God? In what ways are you still holding back?
6. Why is it important that we affirm God's omniscient love and invite him to examine our hearts before we plead for guidance?
7. Picture the circle and dot Sam scribbled in the dirt. Which of these represents God's will for every Christian? Which represents God's specific will for individual believers? Why is it important to make sure you're in the circle before you start looking for the dot?
8. In your own life, where have you seen God's timing in an unexpected or unwelcome event? Can you now look back and recognize God's love in that experience? Why or why not?
9. How does God use the Bible to guide Christians? In what way will knowing the Bible help you keep going down the path God has prepared for you?
10. In chapter 6, Sam prays for a sign of encouragement. Have you ever experienced a sign of encouragement from God during a hard time? What did that look like?
11. Brenda lists several signs she's noticed—for example, "how the light shining on a painting in a doctor's office looked like a cross, so she knew that was God's doctor

for her.” In response, Sam tells her, “There’s a fine line between a sign from God and superstition.” What are the hazards of viewing almost any circumstance of life as a sign from God? How can we guard against this tendency? On the other hand, what are the risks of deciding that you’ll never receive a guiding sign from your heavenly Father?

12. In chapter 7, Matt and Brenda don’t understand why community is often necessary for Christians to discern God’s leading. Why is opening our lives to others a particularly difficult step for many Christians to take? Can you think of a time in your life when someone was courageous enough to tell you the truth and it saved you from making a mistake?
13. Which of Sam’s principles for discovering God’s will is most difficult for you to apply? Why?
14. How can these principles help you make decisions as you walk with Christ?