

# **The Book of Strange New Things Study Guide**

**The Book of Strange New Things by Michel Faber**

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# Plot Summary

- The Book of Strange New Things, by Michael Faber, study guide is written using the Kindle Version. All page numbers provided correspond to the e-version of the work.

The story opens with Pastor Peter Leigh driving to the airport with his wife, Beatrice Leigh. Peter is about to embark as a missionary for the mysterious group, the USIC. What makes Peter's mission so special is the fact that he's not just going to another country to preach the word of God. He's going to another planet, the planet of Oasis.

Peter is torn about leaving because he misses his wife, but he knows that it's an opportunity he can't pass up. The USIC needed him immediately, although they never told him why it was so important that he gets to Oasis. When Peter arrives at the facility he finds out through his driver and the facility pharmacist, Grainger, that they barely know anything about the aliens. Peter calls them Oasans, but the rest of the facility simply refers to them as creatures or aliens. Grainger trades her medical supplies to the Oasans in exchange for their food, as the USIC has been unable to grow any of their own food on the planet.

Oasis has a unique tropical climate. The day and night cycle is roughly 72 hours long, so it's sunlight for three effective Earth days. Rain is frequent, although only lasts for brief periods. The ground quickly absorbs any moisture, but the air is always hot and humid. The Oasans themselves are mostly humanoid in shape, except for their strange looking heads, which Peter initially finds disturbing. Peter learns that some of them can speak rudimentary English. Before Peter, there was another preacher, Kurtzburg, and also a linguist, Tartaglione. Grainger tells Peter that both of these men went missing, with some even believing that they were killed by the Oasans.

Peter begins to preach to the Oasans and finds out that they're quite receptive to the word of the Lord. The Oasans identify themselves as Jesus Lover 1, 2, etc. With their help Peter begins to construct a church and gain more followers. Peter spends days with the Oasans during each trip, gradually becoming more familiar with their customs, and also starting to emulate them himself. He only returns to the USIC facility so he can communicate with his wife Bea via a communication device known as the Shoot.

Peter soon has to deal with the fact that things are going poorly on Earth. Bea frequently writes about natural disasters that are happening, and how the governments are failing. She also breaks the news to Peter that she's pregnant with his child. Their relationship begins to grow strained as Peter spends more time with the Oasans. He simply isn't able to relate to the troubles that his wife is going through because they feel so distant to him.

Peter finds himself craving more time with the Oasans. He feels trapped and uncomfortable whenever he's at the USIC facility. He enjoys his time with the Oasans because they seem so much simpler to him. They don't worry about drama or linger on the past. He finds their devotion to Jesus reassuring as well, as nobody else on the



base seems to care much about God. Peter begins to notice that everyone on the base acts strangely. They don't seem to care about anything going back on at home. They don't fight amongst each other or form relationships. All they seem to care about is getting their jobs done and keeping the facility running.

Things between Peter and Bea continue to get worse. She's hurt that with everything that's going on he hasn't offered to come home, and never asks about her pregnancy. Peter is torn between his duty and love for the Oasans and the responsibility that he feels towards his wife. When working with the Oasans, Peter gets injured and is written off as dead. He believes that his wounds are poisoned or otherwise infected, but that turns out not to be the case.

His injuries do make him delirious though, and he ends up wandering out towards an abandoned Oasan settlement. He runs into the missing linguist, Tartaglione. Tartaglione rants about how the USIC is building Oasis because they know the world is coming to an end. They specifically select workers that aren't going to cause trouble and don't have any passion. They just want people who do their job. Tartaglione points out that this is a terrible idea because it makes it impossible to repopulate because nobody cares about one another.

Peter is rescued by Grainger, who takes him back to the USIC facility. It's there that Peter learns the Oasans thought he was doomed not because of poison, but because their bodies aren't able to heal like humans. They didn't realize he could recover from his wounds. One of the Jesus Lovers has come for treatment as they had injured their hand when working at the church.

Things continue to get worse for Bea, who reveals to Peter she's given up not only on God, but their relationship as well. She just feels too much time has passed and they've grown too distance, and without her faith she can't imagine that their relationship would work. Peter speaks with the injured Oasan, who seems to know that he has to leave. She remarks that he's become exhausted. She doesn't blame him though, telling him that he's just meant to preach the word of God, he isn't meant to be perfect.

Bea urges him not to come back because things have gotten so bad. Peter is determined to come back though. Both he and Grainger get permission to return to Earth, as she wanted to reconnect with her father and had simply grown tired of the way that the rest of the USIC personnel acted. Peter says his farewell to the Oasans, leaving his bible with them before returning back to Earth, hoping to reconnect with his wife.



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter 1

The book begins with Peter, a Christian missionary, preparing to leave for America. He's accompanied by his wife, Beatrice, also a devout Christian. Despite having spent the night together before, Bea wants to make love to Peter one last time before he leaves. Peter is surprised by the request, but he fulfills it because he wants to make his wife happy. Although he doesn't say it, he thinks to himself how hard it is going to be for them to be separated for such a long time. Once they arrive at the airport Peter goes to one of the churches so he can pray. When he returns, his wife is comforting another family that has been waiting hours because their flight was continually delayed. Peter notes that despite the many flaws of the couple, they are still God's children and valuable people. Peter and Bea say goodbye to each other one last time as Peter departs to his flight.

### Chapter 2

Peter arrives in the United States and meets up with his driver who is taking him to a USIC facility. The driver speaks about how Peter is an astronaut, revealing that Peter is going into space for his missionary work. Peter struggles to call his wife, revealing that he's not very good with technology. He gets through to her, but there's a lot of interference on her end so they can't really speak. Peter speaks with the driver, who asks about his training process. Peter reveals that it was mostly just answering a lot of questions. Some of them were questions relating to morality, while others are just about his habits and things that he found comforting. Peter enjoyed the training process because he felt like he was being tested and not judged. Peter asks the driver about USIC, but he doesn't seem to know much about it, not even what USIC stands for. Once Peter arrives he is given an inoculation from an USIC worker. He begins to hallucinate as he is sent into space.

## Analysis

### Chapter 1

Peter and Bea's relationship is established right from the start of the book. This is very important because the toll that the distance takes on their relationship is one of the driving conflicts throughout the course of the story. The religious nature of Peter and Bea is also established in the first chapter. Not only are both characters shown to be devout Christians, but they're both shown to care for their common man. Peter and Bea work together to help comfort the family at the airport, truly wanting to make them feel better and not just try to convert them to Christianity. The theme of Change is demonstrated in this scene. The theme of Community is demonstrated when Peter is in



the church, flipping through the visitor book and imagining the way that everyone is connected. Lastly, Bea's eventual pregnancy is foreshadowed with her insistence that she and Peter make love one last time before he embarks on his trip.

## Chapter 2

Readers get their first experience of the USIC as Peter recalls his meeting with them. Their intense line of questioning hints that they're looking for more than just an average missionary, something that Peter learns more about much later in the book. Peter's struggle with technology is introduced in the chapter as well, a character trait that frequently pops up when Peter arrives on Oasis. Although an exact year is never given, this chapter also makes it clear that the book takes place someplace in the future with advanced technology. It officially establishes that Peter is going into space and not just acting as a missionary to another country.

It is interesting to notice that during the conversation with the USIC driver that the training process wasn't very rigorous, though Peter enjoyed it. What Peter enjoyed the most was that he was being 'tested' and not 'judged'. This propensity to be challenged and tested will come back in the succeeding chapters in ways he could never have imagined. The struggle with technology indicates that Peter, while living in the world, is not a part of the world, and it sets up the likelihood that he is going to have severe problems later on because he is unwilling to embrace technological change.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare Bea to Peter.

## Discussion Question 2

What does the USIC training tell the reader about the type of person they are looking for?

## Discussion Question 3

What problems is Peter likely to have as a result of his inability or unwillingness to learn new technology?

## Vocabulary

utilitarian, veiled, symmetrically, plausible, duvet, poignant, dissuade, flummoxed, staccato, bulbous, sloughed, balmy



# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter 3

Peter wakes in a haze, still feeling the effects of the drugs. The other passengers, BG and Severin, wake as well and start to compete to see who can fully recover first. The pilot, Tuska, had wakened before all of them. BG and Severin help Peter, telling him that they've made the trip to Oasis before. While he is recovering, Peter thinks about Bea and how much he misses her. He imagines what she must be doing with her days. The jump into space has taken a month. Peter reflects on the difficulties of the journey, as one mistake in the jump could have left the ship stranded. He has dinner with the others and gets on well enough with the other passengers, despite their crudeness. Tuska reveals that everything has been successful with the jump and that they will be arriving at Oasis shortly.

### Chapter 4

The first thing that Peter starts to do is write a letter to Bea. In the letter he states that he is writing by hand at first since the delivery device, nicknamed the Shoot, isn't private on the ship. He starts the letter and will transcribe it into the computer when they arrive at Oasis. He writes about how the other passengers were nice to him, but almost in a condescending way. The letter shifts as he begins to write from his room in Oasis. He tells her that the very first thing he did was write to her and that he needs to rest and recover from the exhausting trip.

Peter wakes up after seven hours. It is hard to tell time on Oasis because it is effectively dark outside for three whole days. Peter is fascinated with the green water, which the USIC informs him is perfectly safe. He watches the rain and is equally fascinated with the way that it seems to dance and sway instead of falling normally. Hunger eventually gets the better of him so he goes out to the cafeteria. Unfortunately, there isn't any food ready when he arrives. One of the other men in the facility gives him a muffin to help tide him over.

Peter briefly speaks with the workers and gets familiar with some of the procedures in the facility. He decides to go outside and experience the planet for himself. He finds that the planet has a somewhat tropical nature to it and his clothing is getting damp from his exploration. After a short while, he is picked up by Grainger, the USIC representative who helped him when he first arrived. He asks her about the locals on Oasis and she reveals that barely anything is known about them. Peter is determined to meet them though and insists that Grainger drive him out to meet them. She eventually agrees and promises to take him in an hour.



While he waits, Peter reflects on his meeting with the USIC back on Earth. He had asked if the community had a minister. They told him that it wasn't that much of a priority, though there had been some in the past. They went on to say that his primary focus should be focused on the indigenous people, and then followed it up by saying how urgent it was that they send him to Oasis. Peter arrives back in the compound, bravely stepping into the cafeteria so he can greet everyone inside.

## Analysis

### Chapter 3

Peter officially begins his journey through space and towards the planet Oasis. Peter begins to meet members of the USIC facility. Despite their crude personalities, he's accepted by them, although they make it rather clear that he isn't going to be amongst many Christians once they do arrive at the base. Again, Peter's good nature is shown, as well as his patience. Unlike other missionaries he doesn't believe in just outright trying to convert people. Instead, he wants to help guide them towards God, knowing it's more effective when they begin the journey themselves. This foreshadows Peter's previous past, where as a deviant he refused to listen to anyone preaching about God. Peter meets a couple of the engineers, although BG is the only one that Peter really spends any time with later on in the book.

### Chapter 4

Peter kept his promise to Bea and wrote to her the moment that he arrived on Oasis. Their letters back and forth to one another are a huge plot point throughout the book. At this point in the book their relationship is still healthy, although things will soon become strained between them. Peter begins to explore the USIC facility, which is where the majority of the book takes place. Peter finds out about some of their procedures, namely how expensive it is for them to import any items.

More importantly, Peter learns that the USIC staffers aren't exactly close to one another. The theme of Community is demonstrated in this chapter and how man, as a species, has an intrinsic need to 'belong'. Even though he was assigned specifically to act as a missionary towards the Oasans, Peter still wants to get to know the USIC facility and its people. Peter meets Grainger for the first time, a character that will play a huge role in his development later on. The USIC's controlling nature is again hinted at by the fact that Grainger brings Peter back when he wanders away from the facility.

The tropical nature of the planet is explored as well, which frequently gets mentioned throughout the course of the book. The unique climate ends up being very important at the end of the book when Peter finds out that the USIC have been unable to grow food, but the Oasans have, hence why it became important that he continue to keep their trade going. Despite how important it is for Peter to preach to the Oasans, he notes that it doesn't seem like there is any interest for him or anyone else to preach to the USIC workers.





When talking with Grainger, Peter learns just how little the USIC workers know about the Oasans. In their eyes, the Oasans are an incredibly simple and thus inferior species. As Peter learns though, their simplicity doesn't mean they should be discredited. In fact, he soon discovers their simplicity is one of their strengths.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What is the author's point about Community in Chapter 4?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What action by Grainger indicates that USIC keeps a tight leash on their workers?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the Oasaans.

## **Vocabulary**

void, convulsion, caustic, bravado, bipedalism, viscose, lugubrious, delirious, serene, raucous, shunted, cyclical, synchronized, mundane, missive



# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter 5

Peter starts to talk to the other USIC inhabitants in the cafeteria. He first meets Moro, an engineer that was missing a finger. She doesn't talk to him for long, but Peter writes that off as her being tired, as opposed to being uncomfortable. Next, Peter speaks with Werner. Werner asks what he does and Peter tells him that he is a missionary. Werner speaks about how he doesn't know too much about religion. Peter is discouraged by this, but the conversation is cut short when he suddenly passes out, still suffering from the rigor of the trip. Werner and another worker, Stanko, take him back to his room where he can rest.

While Peter rests he thinks back to his past before he found God. He is reminded of vicious hangovers that he had after a night of partying. Peter sends a message to Grainger informing her that he won't be going out that day since he has to recover from the journey. He still hasn't gotten a message back from Bea which has him worrying. He reassures himself that God has sent him to Oasis with a purpose. Originally, he had decided that he wouldn't take Bea with him on the trip since he knew he'd be unable to work if that happened. Peter wakes up and gets a long message from Bea, who has been eagerly waiting the whole month to hear from him. She speaks about how much she and their cat, Joshua, miss him. She speaks about someone at their church that she is trying to help and how everyone has been calling out sick in the hospital she works at. Lastly, she talks about the weather and how there has been an increase in rain over the last month.

Peter is delighted to hear from her and feels reinvigorated. He goes through his belongings and finds the dishdasha Bea had packed for him. It is an outfit much more appropriate for the climate on Oasis. Peter is surprised to find that when his pens exploded in his pack, the ink made an image of the cross on the outfit. He takes this as a sign from God that his work is important. The chapter ends with Peter spotting headlights from Grainger's vehicle.

### Chapter 6

Grainger takes Peter out to meet the locals. Along the way, Peter starts to ask her about the planet and the inhabitants. Grainger reveals that she doesn't know too much about the inhabitants. She instead talks about the social structure amongst the USIC. Peter is surprised to hear that there aren't any managers at the facility. Instead, everyone just pitches in, and whenever there is a disagreement they simply have a vote. Grainger is surprised at how down to earth Peter is being, given that he is a missionary.



The two keep talking and Peter reveals that before he met Bea he drank heavily and did drugs. When he met Bea he wanted to change, and through her he was able to find God. Grainger tells him about how a young girl won a contest to name the planet. Her father was sick and her mother had just lost her job, but when they won she got \$50,000. Peter asks what happened to her afterwards and Grainger tells him she has no idea. Peter announces his plans to pray for her, which Grainger mocks.

The two speak about the aliens on Oasis. Peter keeps referring to them as inhabitants, pointing out that the USIC are the ones who are alien. Grainger tells Peter that they've had little contact with them. They used to be closer, but after awhile they moved far away without offering an explanation. They speak some English, and dress in long robes with hoods. Grainger doesn't know if they have genders or even how many of them there are. There used to be a linguist, Tartaglione, but he went missing before he could ever compile any sort of dictionary.

## Analysis

### Chapter 5

Peter continues to find out about the general lack of religion at the facility. At first, this might not seem like that big of a deal, but Peter will soon learn that it ties into the general lack of passion that the USIC workers suffer from. There are some people that identify with a certain religion, but they aren't practicing and don't seem to care much about it one way or another. The USIC recognizes that religion is often a touchy subject, so with the exception of Peter, they seek out workers that won't fight about it. Even with Peter, they make it clear that his focus should be preaching for the Oasans and not the USIC workers.

Peter tries to reach out to the USIC workers and build their sense of community. His actions towards building a community demonstrates the theme of Community. This continues the central community theme that is present throughout the book. At this point, Peter is still rather optimistic about his chances with the workers, but as time goes on he'll give up once he realizes how apathetic they are.

Peter's troubled past starts to get attention in this chapter as well. The theme of Change is demonstrated when he acknowledges that everyone is capable of changing and shows why he cares so much about helping others out. He knows what it's like to be lost, and how much difference proper guidance can make. He also knows from his troubled past that it isn't something that can be forced.

Bea begins to hint about the darker things happening on Earth, a conflict that will soon grow and last throughout the rest of the story. For the time being though, her message just serves to re-energize Peter. Peter finds his dishdasha with the cross on it, which to him is a sign from God that he's doing the right thing and has his support.

### Chapter 6



Through Grainger, Peter is able to learn more about the general nature of the facility, namely that there aren't any managers or really any sort of structure to the community. Grainger shows that she's uncomfortable about the idea of religion, and treats it in a rather dismissive and mocking fashion. She does relent a little when she realizes that Peter isn't as aggressive as some other preachers. In many ways, she mimics how a younger Peter felt about religion. He eventually came to accept it, but he talks about how he was initially dismissive when anyone tried to enforce it on him. It was Bea who was able to guide him along the path and make him realize that he needed God. Peter sharing these details with Grainger is meaningful since the USIC staff are so private and closed off that it's hard for anyone to form relationships. By sharing these details, Peter begins to establish a genuine relationship with Grainger.

Peter's respect towards the Oasans is shown in the chapter. He doesn't want to refer to them as creatures or aliens because as he points out, they're the ones who are actually alien on the planet. Nobody at the facility seems to give the Oasans this respect because they write them off as simple. Peter is able to recognize their simplicity isn't a bad thing and certainly not something that should make them lesser. Not getting to know the Oasans can also relate to the general lack of passion amongst the USIC workers.

Grainger also teaches Peter about the missing workers. This is important not only because Peter ends up meeting Tartaglione, but it also hints at the fact that there have been others that ended up going native, a fate that befalls Peter as he gets to learn more about the Oasans.

## Discussion Question 1

What is Peter's perspective about the Oasaans?

## Discussion Question 2

Why don't the USIC people want Peter to try and preach to those inside of the facility?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Peter's conversion to Christianity.

## Vocabulary

bemused, raucous, pensive, robust, auspicious, brusqueness, trove, frugal, corroding, rhetoric, trite, abstract, linguist, permeable



# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

### Chapter 7

Peter and Grainger arrive at the Oasan village. The buildings are made out of some sort of drab looking bricks. Most of the buildings are short, though there are a couple of two and three storied ones. One of the Oasans come out to greet them. Peter decides that it is a male. It appears mostly human, except for the face which is clearly alien. He speaks with an accent and has trouble with certain sounds. To Peter's surprise, he is already aware of the Christian gospel. He is absolutely excited to see Peter when he finds out that he is a man of God and wants to spread the message. This surprises both Peter and Grainger. Peter tells them that he wants to live with them, and the Oasan agree, with Peter promising next time to bring his Bible, a book that the Oasans call 'the book of strange new things'.

Grainger speaks about practicalities on the way back, telling Peter all the things that he seems to have forgotten when he initially landed. When he gets back, he has a message from Bea. She tells him about how some of the islands have been hit by a terrible tsunami and almost all of the inhabitants have died. Rescue workers are unable to land anywhere and offer help. The church is trying to figure out what to do, but it seems like all they can do is pray. She and Joshua miss Peter terribly, and she hopes that things are going better on his end. Peter writes back and explains what he learned about the Oasans and the planet, and how much he wishes they were still together.

### Chapter 8

Peter spends more time socializing with some of the engineers he met before, such as Werner and BG. They tell him about a substance known as whiteflower which can be turned into a variety of foods. Some of the engineers prefer to eat only food imported from Earth, even if it is expensive. They also inform him about another priest that was at the facility, a man named Kurtzberg. He went missing a year ago. Peter writes to Bea about this. He's determined to reach the Oasans and spread the word of God. Peter decides to wait before heading back out though because he wants to hear from Bea again. He decides to spend the day exploring the facility. At first he finds it to be too oppressing, but after a short break he is feeling less claustrophobic. He still feels uncomfortable in the facility though, but isn't sure why.

Peter decides to explore Kurtzberg's room, but he doesn't find too much of interest. He does note that Kurtzberg's bible doesn't have any sections marked, which suggests he didn't take the job too seriously. Peter discovers there is a gym where some of the USIC workers are, but he doesn't linger long. He goes to investigate a set of silos, but underestimates how far away they are. He is once again picked up by Grainger who



takes him back to the facility. She explains that the silos contain an altered chemical that they use for oil.

## Analysis

### Chapter 7

Peter gets his first glimpse at the Oasan community, discovering that not only were they already aware about the existence of God, but they were extremely eager to have a preacher once again. The Oasans display their unique way of speaking by referring to the bible as the book of strange new things. Peter starts to take his first steps into joining the Oasan community.

Back at the facility, Bea informs Peter about more of the horrors that are going on back at home. The theme of Community is once again demonstrated through Bea. Despite all the terrible things that are happening back home, she and the rest of the church are trying to band together and do what they can to help out, even if all they can currently do is pray.

### Chapter 8

Peter is once again trying to strengthen the community at the USIC facility. While everyone is amiable enough towards him, it's clear that they aren't looking for anything more sustained. While trying to get closer with the workers, Peter finds out about another missing man, Kurtzburg, who used to be the priest before him. Peter frequently thinks about the missing priest throughout the book and eventually has a journey that mirrors his predecessor's. Unlike Kurtzburg though, Peter has enough of a connection through Bea that he doesn't just wander away. While he's exploring the facility, Peter constantly feels trapped and uncomfortable. The feeling begins to subside, but he never quite feels fully comfortable. This foreshadows his eventual discomfort with the rest of the facility after he has gotten closer to the Oasan community.

The restrictive nature of the USIC is shown again when Peter is picked up while trying to explore, making it rather clear that he has limited access. After hearing about what happened with Kurtzburg, readers can piece together that the USIC is keeping close tabs on Peter because they don't want him to run off.

## Discussion Question 1

Why would the Oasans call the Bible, the Book of Strange New Things?

## Discussion Question 2

Why has Peter been brought to Oasis?



## Discussion Question 3

Why do the USIC workers think that the Oasaans are inferior to them?

## Vocabulary

ceremonious, domestic, solemnly, chastising, superfluous, reconnaissance, ruefully, congregation, polysyllabic, oxymoron, reconnoiter, sophistry, annotations, finesse



# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

### Chapter 9

Peter reads one of the letters that Bea sends him, talking about how the replacement pastor isn't doing as good a job as Peter could. She continues to express how much she misses him, but reminds him that God needed them to be separated for this period of time, and that she has her own mission to attend to locally. Peter writes back about how he misses her, not only emotionally, but physically as well. He ends his letter and drives out with Grainger back to the Oasan village, officially designated as C-2, and unofficially called Freak Town.

Peter and Grainger speak a little more about the planet. Peter asks about animals, and she tells him it mostly seems to be bugs, although the missing linguist once talked about seeing birds. Peter asks more about the missing priest and linguist, and Grainger informs him that they went from being sociable to gradually becoming distant and then eventually just going AWOL. Peter asks how the missing minister performed his job. Grainger doesn't really know, but she does say he apparently counseled some of the staff.

Peter struggles with being away from a Shoot for so long because it means not being able to speak with Grainger. He prays for guidance and Grainger tells him that he can use the Shoot in the car one last time before they are out of range of the facility. Peter is delighted to see that he's received a message from Bea. She warns him not to be too overzealous and still take practical steps to make sure he is safe, something that Peter isn't always the best at.

Peter does feel a little foolish because he hasn't brought some of the things she mentioned, like a compass and extra food just in case. Grainger informs him that she'll be back within five days to deliver medicine to the Oasans. When they arrive, about 70 of the Oasans are waiting for him, singing Amazing Grace. This makes Peter think back to his darker days when he was drinking and doing drugs, and how he was eventually pulled away from such a destructive and sinful lifestyle.

### Chapter 10

Peter spends five days with the Oasans. They start to build a makeshift church, though it currently lacks a roof. Peter finds that the Oasans get tired very easily. They make a bed specifically for him, but he finds it more comfortable to sleep in a hammock. It is hard to get any sleep given the climate though, especially since for the next few days the sun isn't going to set. The Oasans have identified themselves to him, simply as Jesus Lover followed by a number.





Even though Peter is having a hard time adjusting to the new town, his preaching is going well. The Oasans have all gathered to hear his preaching and frequently make requests to hear more or have him go over specific passages he has previously read. Peter tries passing out photos to tell stories about his life back home, but it doesn't go over as well as he would have liked. He suspects that given their lack of technology it might be hard for them to truly appreciate photos. They do at least seem interested in the stories behind the photos, especially when he explains how Bea helped him find God.

Peter worries about whether or not the Oasans are happy with his lessons or just simply interested. Given their alien nature it is hard to tell when they are emotional about something, but he reminds himself of the effort it must have taken to greet him with Amazing Grace when he first arrived. Peter thinks back to the day he proposed to Bea. Everything had gone wrong that day, she had trouble with her bank, their food spoiled, their car was vandalized, but at the end of the day she surprised Peter with how happy she was simply because he had proposed earlier that day.

## Analysis

### Chapter 9

The Oasans singing Amazing Grace has significant meaning for Peter. The song is very personal for him because he relates to it so much, especially the part about being lost but found. To him, this directly references the difficult past that he had, but how he was saved by God. The song demonstrates the theme of Change which is something that Peter strongly believes in. Besides directly relating to his past, Peter views the song as a message from God, acting as another indicator that he's doing the right thing.

The lack of passion or emotional response is shown once again by the USIC. Under normal circumstances, space explorers would show more interest in the planet and the cultures that live there. Nobody at the USIC facility really seems to care. All that matters to them is that they're able to trade with the Oasans and keep getting their food. Even this is largely because they are ordered to, as Peter discovers later on, that even when the Oasans weren't trading nobody was that concerned because they could still at least get imported goods. The lack of both passion and a sense of community is shown by the staff's treatment of Kurtzburg. As Grainger herself states later on in the book, nobody even cared enough to go looking when he vanished, despite the fact he was trying, just like Peter, to get closer to some of the staff members.

On the opposite end of the spectrum the Oasans have turned out in earnest to show how passionate they are about learning more of God. Grainger had told Peter that she usually only had dealings with one or two Oasans at a time, but Peter is greeted by 70 of them, something that had never been seen before. Not only that, but singing Amazing Grace wasn't the easiest thing for the Oasans because they struggle with many of the syllables.



## Chapter 10

Peter shows off just how effective he is as a preacher by trying to adjust his style to something that the Oasans will be able to understand. The Oasans in turn give Peter another demonstration of their passion for God by helping him to create the church. Of course at this point Peter is still concerned about whether their passion is genuine or if they are simply interested in learning more about his culture. Seeing their dedication though, Peter is already leaning towards their faith being genuine.

Peter understands that because of their simplistic nature, the Oasans might have a hard time with the concept of photographs. Nevertheless, he treats them with respect and tries to make it as clear as possible. He recognizes that any confusion on their part doesn't make them lesser to humans as a species, but is simply an acknowledgement of their different cultures.

Peter reflects on Bea's optimism on the day they proposed. This is important because it helps to illustrate just how serious things are when she begins to lose faith later on in the book. Bea is an incredibly strong character that is frequently shown enduring the worst the world has to offer without losing her faith. As time goes on though, she begins to break down. Having her start as strong and resilient highlights just how bad things get, and makes things that much harder for Peter when he's torn between helping the Oasans and helping her.

### **Discussion Question 1**

Why would the Oasaans choose the song, Amazing Grace to sing for Peter?

### **Discussion Question 2**

Compare and contrast the role that religion and religious beliefs play in both the USIC facility and the Oasaan camp.

### **Discussion Question 3**

Compare Peter's lack of technology understanding with the lack of understanding of technology by the Oasaans.

### **Vocabulary**

arduous, deference, dissembling, raucous, aesthetic, colloquial, ambiguity, rendezvous, annotated, ricocheted, synchronous, edifying, indigenous, gregarious



# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

### Chapter 11

Peter and the Oasans continue to work on the church until it is time for Grainger to return. Peter has tried to learn more about the Oasan culture, but he hasn't gotten much information. He knew there were some Oasans that didn't believe in Jesus. They appeared to have some concept of gender, as one of the Oasans he spoke with mentioned having a brother. Peter tries to find out more about the missing linguist and priest, but the Oasans don't have much to say about them. They did seem to be happier with Peter though, and even seem worried that he might not return. Grainger arrives and starts to deliver her medicine. Peter can tell how uncomfortable she is interacting with the Oasans. She tends to Peter's sunburn, something he hadn't even noticed he got from all the time he spent working on the church. While she is taking care of him, Peter notices that she has old scars on her arm which he recognizes as being self-inflicted. At the end of the chapter, he admits to himself that he considers Grainger to be beautiful.

### Chapter 12

Grainger and Peter speak briefly about the Oasans, but Peter could tell something is bothering her. She reveals that one of the engineers, Severin, has died and they want Peter to conduct his services. Peter was unfamiliar with Severin, as he just met him the one time on the ship. When Peter gets back he is surprised to see so many messages from Bea. She talks about how things are getting worse on Earth. There have been earthquakes that disrupted trade so the stores are nearly empty. North Korea has been all but wiped out by a destructive cyclone. Peter has to stop reading the messages so he can conduct the service.

He gives a very long speech, which many of the USIC workers find moving. Several of them linger after the service to talk to Peter about religion and how moved they were by what he said. When Peter gets back he starts to read through more of the messages from Bea. To his surprise, she reveals to him that she stopped taking birth control before he left and has gotten pregnant.

## Analysis

### Chapter 11

The mystery of the missing priest and linguist continues to build up, giving the readers the idea that the Oasans might have actually been behind it. In a sense, this is true, but not in the sinister way that readers might think. Even though Peter still doesn't know much about the Oasans it's clear that they have a strong sense of community by the



way that they help him build the church. It's only been one trip, but he's already getting the sense of how eager they are to learn about God.

Peter and Grainger continue to grow close during the chapter as well. Up until this point, Peter has thought very little of Grainger. There were a few times he considered her features somewhat pretty, but by the end of the chapter he is starting to think of her as beautiful. Seeing her scars gives Peter the first real glimpse into the kind of woman that Grainger is, and she's no longer just another one of the USIC workers. Peter's infatuation with Grainger continues to grow throughout the book, a fact he frequently feels guilty about given his relationship with Bea. For Grainger, his feelings are important as well, since it helps her regain her zest for living.

## Chapter 12

This chapter primarily covers the concept of passion and the entire chapter demonstrates the theme of Passion. Peter tries to talk to some of the USIC workers about everything that is happening back down on Earth. Nobody seems to care that the world is falling apart, because nobody besides Peter ever seems to speak with anyone from Earth. After Peter gives his speech about Severin though, things change for the workers. For what seems like the first time, the USIC staff are acting like a community. Peter spends hours staying with and comforting the workers. Grainger would later tell Peter that his speech actually caused problems amongst some of the other staffers. They ended up deciding that he couldn't give any other eulogies because of the feelings that his speech brought up.

Despite being passionate about everything happening on Oasis, Peter seems almost disinterested when he finds out that Bea is pregnant. She even notes several times later throughout the book that it doesn't feel like he cares at all. He doesn't get angry, and he is far from excited. This marks one of the big transitions for Peter, when he starts to become more involved in the Oasan community than he does the USIC, or even his own marriage. Bea on the other hand is willing to show her passion, which is what drove her to getting pregnant in the first place. She wanted to have something that would keep the two of them connected, even when they were on separate planets.

## Discussion Question 1

Why did Peter's Eulogy cause problems among the USIC workers?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss Peter's reaction to hearing that Bea is pregnant.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of Grainger's scars.

## Vocabulary

sonorous, nuances, sieve, obstinacy, vainglorious, physiognomy, palpable, suffuse, potent, queue, cynical, calamities, bewildered, frugal



# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

### Chapter 13

Bea continues to update Peter about what is happening back home. The grocery store has shut down and it is even harder to get supplies. The weather continues to be erratic and their home has suffered some damage from an unexpected storm. Peter assures her that he isn't angry about her pregnancy, and she hopes that is the case. She keeps asking to hear more about what is going on at Oasis, but understands that it must be hard for Peter to find the time to properly write her. Peter feels guilty that he isn't able to say more, or offer her comfort with all the difficulties she has had to endure.

Peter speaks with Tuska in the cafeteria while waiting for Grainger to pick him up to take him back to C-2. Tuska tells him that he is surprised USIC had allowed him to come. It is rare for a married man to be sent to Oasis. He notes that everyone at Oasis is a loner because people with families and active lives back on Earth have such a hard time coping with the distance. The original crews could only last a few weeks at best, while the recent crews typically stayed for years at a time. Peter continues the conversation with Grainger, who notes that no one at the facility ever seems to get into a relationship, not even physical ones. They are together, but apart.

### Chapter 14

Peter is happy to arrive back in C-2 again. He finds that his time with the Oasans is very peaceful. He offers to help Grainger with the medical supplies, but she declines. They have a brief conversation where she asks Peter to pray for her father, even though she isn't very close with him. Peter is happy to accept the request.

Peter speaks with Jesus Lover Five about her brother, who isn't one of the believers. She reveals that he has passed away since they last spoke. She is grateful that Peter has returned. Peter is surprised to see that they have built a pulpit for him in the church. He is even more surprised to see that more Oasans have come to listen to him preach. He hands out specially made pamphlets that contain translated bible verses that will be easier for them to read and understand. Peter is happy to see that the Oasans all share amongst themselves as he hadn't expected the flock to grow. They all start to read together as a group and Peter finds himself getting lost in the simple pleasure of everyone reading the scripture in unison.

## Analysis

### Chapter 13



Peter continues to grow distant from Bea, who seems to be desperately trying to get him to talk about something substantial going on in Oasis. She wants to be part of his life again and feel some sort of connection to him, which is the whole entire reason that she had gotten pregnant in the first place. Peter recognizes that he isn't doing a good enough job writing to her, but despite his best efforts he can't seem to muster the energy to do anything to try and connect with her. Instead, it seems like his biggest focus is getting back to C-2 so he can continue to preach to the Oasans.

Tuska fills Peter in to the true nature of the USIC staff. Before, they used to employ more engaging people, but those staff members didn't last long. They could only stick around for a few weeks at a time before they got homesick. Now though, the USIC specifically handpicks people that have no connections to people back on Earth or one another. They just care about getting their jobs done. As a result, they are able to stick around for years at a time. Later on, BG even comments that Oasis became their new home, so there was little reason for them to want to return to Earth, except for the occasional visit. Most workers don't even bother with that. When Grainger states that most of the people there don't even have casual relationships, personal or otherwise, it indicates that each person is disconnected from a sense of community. This shows the unnatural state that the staff at the facility live in, while, in comparison, the Oasans seem to live peaceful and communal lives. In essence, then, the theme of Community is demonstrated by contrasting and comparing two lifestyle choices, indicating that living with and belonging to something provides a better way of living and a level of happiness not available to those who choose to live disconnected.

## Chapter 14

Grainger shows her vulnerable side by asking Peter to pray for her father. This is a big deal for her as she had previously looked down upon Peter's religious views, especially when it came to the subject of prayer. The fact that she's thinking about her father again is incredibly important as well, and is a direct result of the fact that she's becoming more emotional after spending time around Peter and hearing the way that he spoke at Severin's funeral.

Peter feels accepted by the Oasans when he arrives back at his church. Building him a pulpit shows how much they cared. Peter is even more pleased to see that more Oasans are turning up to hear about Jesus. When Peter speaks with Jesus Lover Five he gets a better idea about how their community works. Even though not everyone in the community believes in God, the Oasans still work together and care for one another. They don't let themselves become divided on whether or not they're believers. They're even accepting of Peter despite the fact that he comes from a completely different species.

Peter shows how much he cares about the Oasans by creating simple pamphlets for them. Again, he doesn't look down on their simplicity, but instead he tries to understand and embrace it. It doesn't matter how advanced they are, all he wants is for them to be able to understand the message that he's trying to get across. Peter sharing the pamphlets is also his way of contributing to the community that he wants to be a part of.



Most notably, Peter has put more care into doing something for the Oasan community than he has in trying to reach out to his wife, Bea.

## Discussion Question 1

At this point in the novel where do Peter's loyalties lie?

## Discussion Question 2

Compare the workers at UNIC and the Oasan camp.

## Discussion Question 3

What was the instigating factor that has caused Grainger to begin to accept prayer?

## Vocabulary

earnest, scintillating, tedium, cognizant, insensate, calamitous, reverberated, chuffed, quipped, pulpit, pathologically, permeable, grandiose, perfunctorily





# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

### Chapter 15

Peter continues to spend his time with the Oasans preaching. He tries to teach them the concept of different languages, but it seems too complicated to really express at that point. They touch upon the concepts of life and death, and Peter explains that when they die it is just their bodies that die, not their souls. One night, Peter wakes and finds himself crying. He doesn't know why, but he was thinking about all the bad things that had happened to him as a child, and later Bea. They range from childhood pets dying to losing prized possessions. Once he is done crying and mourning he feels much better.

Jesus Lover One approaches him shortly after, telling him that his (Jesus Lover One) mother has died. Peter tries to comfort him with a hug, but this seems to make Lover One uncomfortable. Lover One takes him to see the body. They hadn't had a funeral because they were busy with something called the Harvest. Lover One tells Peter that his mother had started to become a Christian, although she had been too weak to actually attend the sermons in person.

Peter is brought to witness the harvest. The Oasans place a type of poison on the body of Lover One's deceased mother, to paralyze the bugs that crawl over her body. They then harvest the bugs and their eggs from her body before burying her. Peter is disturbed by the ritual, but constantly reminds himself that it's just the way that this culture acts, and there are plenty of cultures back on Earth that have done things he disagreed with. He speaks to Lover One about it. Lover One admits that it is hard for him as well, and that his mother was very important to him.

Later, Lover One takes Peter to witness a birth. Peter is surprised to see that so many Oasans have gathered for the occasion. They treat it like a great party and celebration. Peter learns that the child is named for the word 'hope' in their language. Despite not being a Jesus Lover, she asks Peter to give a speech. Peter gives a speech about the importance of hope and the celebration of life, which the Oasans seem to appreciate.

### Chapter 16

Peter is starting to distinguish the different Jesus Lovers. He keeps making notes about their mannerisms to help to get to know them better. He is even making an effort to try to get to know the non-Christians as well, although he obviously can't communicate with them. Peter finds himself admiring the way that the Oasans live. He enjoys the fact that they are such a humble race. They don't concern themselves with drama or make a big deal out of forming identities for themselves. They are comfortable with who they are and working together as a community. Peter goes to join them working in the fields.



When he gets back, he feels bad when he learns that Grainger had been waiting several hours for him.

They drive back to the compound and Peter finds himself longing for the simplicity of the Oasans. Grainger offers to let him use the Shoot in the car to check on his messages. Even though he wants to rest first, Peter agrees because he doesn't wish to seem rude towards Grainger's kind offer. Bea speaks about how things are still chaotic back at home. Large corporations are going out of business, and Bea has been without gas for a week. Engineers are saying that it is because of all the problems being caused by the strange weather. Peter stops reading, and Grainger is able to tell that he feels distant from Bea. She explains that it's something that naturally happens when people are so far apart.

## Analysis

### Chapter 15

By the end of the chapter, Peter is fully accepted into the Oasan community. It isn't just the Jesus Lovers that have come to accept him, but all of the Oasans. At first, it would be easy for the readers to draw parallels between the USIC workers and the Oasans. While the Oasans were initially more passionate than the USIC workers, they were still extremely guarded and didn't really share anything with Peter. As Peter learns in this chapter though, there's a lot more to the Oasans. They might not be the most open of a community, but unlike the USIC they do truly care, as shown by the pain that Lover One feels about losing his mother, and the happiness and hope that the Oasan couple displays when they have their child.

Peter's emotional breakdown is important because it does show that despite pouring himself into the Oasan community, he still cares about Bea and his past life. For the first time, Peter is trying to address the issues plaguing his marriage as well as all of the troubles back on Earth. Unfortunately, while he makes himself feel better, he doesn't do anything to actually address any of the problems between himself and Bea. Instead, he comforts himself by throwing himself into the Oasan community. He treats their acceptance as a type of rebirth and doesn't snap out of it until he gets the chance to speak with Bea again.

Peter choosing to talk about the importance of life is very important to the Oasan people. Peter doesn't really realize it at this point in the book, but to the Oasans life is precious because of how vulnerable they are. Even when Oasans know they are about to die, they continue to passionately live their lives to the best of their ability.

### Chapter 16

Peter has not only joined the Oasan community, but he has started to reject the USIC, and even his life with Bea. His rejection isn't because he doesn't care about them though, but simply because he's getting overwhelmed by not only the distance, but also the sheer weight of what's happening back home. Grainger is able to pick up on this,



and cares enough about Peter to comment on it. This isn't just out of general concern for Beatrice and Peter though. Grainger has come to like Peter, and as she comments later on at the base, she's afraid that he's going to end up leaving just like Kurtzburg did.

Bea's messages continue to show the downfall of society, which can be seen as their communities break apart. Peter on the other hand continues to grow and thrive in the Oasan community. Since he has become fully embraced he's joined them working in the fields, as well as adapting to their lifestyle. He doesn't mind the sun burns, and his dietary needs have changed to start reflecting how the Oasans eat.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the distances that Peter is experiencing, both physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What actions by the Oasans indicate that they have accepted Peter into their community?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How is Peter avoiding some of his own personal truths?

## **Vocabulary**

benign, certitude, poignant, aberration, cadences, sojourn, perturbed, facile, dilute, equanimity, opulent, nuances, pensiveness, luminescence, ruminations



# Chapters 17-18

## Summary

### Chapter 17

Peter still wasn't ready to write to Bea, though he did read more of her messages. He went to the cafeteria and briefly spoke with Tuska and one of the engineers. He found he was having a hard time communicating with them. He missed the simplicity of Oasan communication, the way that they spoke so directly, and only when necessary. He struggled to make small talk, simply because the words seemed so meaningless to him. He realized that the USIC workers were trying to talk with him because they didn't want him to go native, like the missing linguist and priest.

Peter retreats back to his room, where he discards his clothing because it feels too uncomfortable to him. On top of that, he throws up the food he ate in the cafeteria and finds himself wishing for some of the food that he had when he was still at C-2. Peter reads more messages from Bea. He is hurt when she panicked and wrote to Grainger because she wasn't sure if Peter was even still alive. She goes on to talk about all the terrible things happening in the world, how there are more riots and robberies.

Another town has been wiped off the map by the strange weather, causing a volcano to erupt. Peter is quick to apologize and he forces himself to write about what happened. He explains how he is having such a hard time relating to her because of the distance, but he still loves her and isn't angry at her. He writes about his time with the Oasans, how they've been painting murals on the ceiling of the church and how eager they are to accept the scripture.

### Chapter 18

Peter is brought down to see the doctors. He dislikes seeing doctors because they always struck him as being too judgmental of people. One of the doctors has recently passed away. They aren't sure why and are worried that it might have been something on the planet that caused the unexpected death. Peter assures him that the Oasans are healthy. The doctors asks if there is anything he needs, but Peter just wants to be away from them. They are treating the Oasans like primitives, which he strongly disagrees with.

Peter reflects on how drained he feels in the facility. At C-2 he could spend 18 to 20 hours awake, but in the facility he struggles to remain awake for more than 12 or 13 hours. He is too tired to write Bea, but he keeps looking for her messages. He wonders if they purposefully made it so Shoots could only be used at the facility. He wants to talk to Grainger about getting a Shoot set up at C-2, so he can write Bea when he has more energy and is feeling inspired.



He reads some of the letters from Bea. Things are getting a little better, but are still chaotic. Their house has been repaired though, and she was able to get some chocolate which helped improved her mood. Peter starts to write back, discussing what it is like in the USIC facility and discusses some of the passages he was preaching to the Oasans. He is interrupted before he can send the letter when Grainger shows up with tears in her eyes, saying she needs to talk to him.

## Analysis

### Chapter 17

Peter goes from feeling uncomfortable in the USIC facility to outright struggling to remain part of the community. Before, he made an effort to try and relate to the other workers and showed that he cared about them as a community. Now he's struggling to speak with them at all. Peter was also starting to realize that none of the USIC workers had much to say because they lack passion. All they can really do is make small talk and occasionally discuss the day-to-day operations of the facility. Peter can't even stomach the food that's being served, and finds himself craving meals that he had when he was still with the Oasans.

Any sense of community that Peter might have been feeling is shattered when he realizes that the USIC members are only trying to speak with him simply because they don't want him to run off. It isn't even a concern for him personally, but simply because the USIC decided that his position was important.

Peter's exhaustion begins to show itself when he finally has to write back to Bea. He openly admits that he's having trouble relating to Bea because of how far away they are from one another. Despite that, he still tries to reassure her that he loves her and cares about her. Instead of writing about their lives or the issues that she's going through, he instead talks about his new community. This is Peter's way of shielding himself from the serious issues that are just too exhausting for him to deal with. This is of course the last thing that Bea wants to hear about while she's struggling back at home without his support. His messages to her have ramifications in later chapters.

### Chapter 18

The theme of Change is demonstrated again when Peter spends some time with the doctors. In his eyes, their judgment doesn't help anyone. They're already decided if someone has any value to them or not. Peter understands better than anyone that people shouldn't be written off just because it seems like they have problems.

Peter continues to feel trapped in the facility. He went from being awake for long hours with the Oasans to suddenly getting fatigued, becoming too tired to even try and write Bea. This once again demonstrates the theme of burn out. Again, he's willing to show that he cares about Bea by at least checking for her messages. Wanting to get a shoot installed at C-2 is a huge step as well. Normally when he's at C-2 he can just bury himself in his new community, but by bringing in a Shoot he's making it so he can't just



keep ignoring Bea. Plus he's also making it so he'll be able to write her directly in the moment when he's feeling sufficiently energized.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Peter feel so drained once he's back at the Facility?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How is the theme of Change demonstrated in Chapter 18?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What does Peter's discovery about the personnel at the Facility and their friendship to him cause Peter to do?

## **Vocabulary**

melancholy, bourgeois, deadpan, languorously, jargon, farcically, dowdy, gauche, acclimatizing, estranged, jaundiced, commiseration, tawdry, quarrel



# Chapters 19-20

## Summary

### Chapter 19

Peter starts to talk to Grainger, trying to find out what is wrong. Grainger makes a few comments about how strange it is that everyone is happy in the Oasan village, something that Peter finds himself agreeing with although he doesn't linger on it too much. She tells him that she had been crying because she was worried about her father. Peter tells her that he is still praying for him every night like she requested. They debate the effectiveness of such faith, with Peter seemingly comforting her, but in his mind not really getting through to her. He finds himself overwhelmed with the simple intimacy of hugging her to offer her comfort. It feels like the first real contact he's had since he got off the ship. Grainger leaves after again commenting on how strange it is that everyone on base always act so happy and never seem to have real problems.

Peter resumes his letter to Bea. He explains how the facility makes him uncomfortable. Part of it is the fact that it lacks any sort of feminine touch. The majority of the inhabitants are male, and the few females aren't exactly very feminine. Peter pushes through the letter and promises to write more, even starting another letter after having sent that one. He talks about Jesus Lover 5 being one of his favorites, but changes that line because he doesn't want to make Bea possibly feel jealous. He tries to read through her other letters but finds himself overwhelmed with the news. It is just too much to hear and it ultimately is hard for him to feel invested about it when he is so far away. Feeling guilty, he decides to pray and read the Bible, hoping to find guidance. He feels like God is telling him that he needs to learn and study, but he isn't sure what to read or study. While reading the Bible, he notices there is a group of people gathering outside so he goes to investigate.

The USIC staff have gathered outside to watch a small herd of strange featherless chicken creatures roaming towards C-2. Everyone is fascinated as it is incredibly rare to see animal life on the planet. Peter feels bad because he is sure the Oasans have a word for these creatures, but he doesn't know what it is. He is determined to learn how to communicate with them.

### Chapter 20

Peter finds himself longing for Bea. This makes him realize that he only seems to have sexual thoughts when he is at the base, and never when he is out with the Oasans. He starts to read more messages. He is overwhelmed with how angry Bea seems in the next few messages. She chastises him for being a poor husband and not caring enough about her. She goes on to say that he never tries to talk about the child they are going to have, or offer to get home early to help take care of her. Her message is filled with spelling errors, something very unusual for her.



Peter writes back and apologizes for his poor behavior and tries to explain that he does care and he loves her. He believes there was something wrong with him where he had a hard time processing events that weren't around him. He tells Bea that he wants to move somewhere safer when he gets back, so they can raise their child together. Bea responds, still angry that he isn't offering to come home early. She assures him that she does still love him, but doesn't like the implication that she should just quit her job and move when he gets back.

She goes on to say that he is being selfish by claiming he can't possibly understand what she is going through. She needs him to offer emotional comfort but she says that, instead, it is like he is pulling away. She goes on to say that the world is falling apart and things are even worse than she has been letting on. Peter is hurt and urges her to pray and believe in God, but she just writes back that Peter doesn't understand. He responds with the bible verse that helped him when he was living in sin. He finishes the letter and starts to pray for her, hoping that she is listening and praying herself. Peter speaks with Grainger about getting a Shoot installed at C-2, hoping he'll be able to do his job and stay in touch with Bea, who clearly needs him.

## Analysis

### Chapter 19

Grainger and Peter's relationship is explored in greater detail in this chapter. He makes it clear that there's something more than friendship brewing between the two when he lingers on how much he enjoys their shared contact. Physical contact is something Peter isn't able to get with the Oasans. Given the Oasan's physiology it makes sense that they would want to avoid physical contact because they're so vulnerable.

Peter talking to Grainger does start to bring him back towards humanity. For a short period he's acting like the man he was before he had arrived on Oasis. He's trying to guide her onto a better path. Grainger is changing back to the woman she used to be as well, breaking out of the passionless trance exhibited by most of the USIC workers. She's becoming passionate about finding her father, wanting to make up for all the lost time and reconnect with him before it's too late.

Peter notes the lack of females on the base. He wishes that Bea had been allowed to come with him because she would brighten the place up and fill it with life. This passion would have done wonders for the community, but it was the exact opposite of what the USIC wanted, which is why she was rejected. Peter's exhaustion continues to show as he reads through Bea's message. He wants to care about what's going on with her so badly, but each letter is just wearing him down further. Without anywhere else to turn, he goes towards the bible. The message that he receives is ultimately one that pushes him further away from Bea and back into the safe comforting embrace of his new community with the Oasans.





At the end of the chapter, Peter witnesses the animal hoard that will eventually threaten the Oasans and result in Peter getting injured.

## Chapter 20

Beatrice finally snaps when she's writing back to Peter, pointing out how little he cares about her and how he's only making excuses. Peter tries to reach out to her again, but all he does is continue to cause problems and ignore the real issues. To her, she's completely ignoring everything that she's going through by writing about a fantasy that they'll never be able to live out. He should be able to realize by everything that she's saying there's no way she could just quit her job so they can move into a city together. She points out that there might not even be cities by the time he gets back with the way everything is going. Peter is at least making an effort to be part of her life again, but he's still too exhausted to confront just how serious things have become on Earth. He's even more determined to get a Shoot installed though so he can keep up with Bea.

### **Discussion Question 1**

What is causing Bea to write the angry letters that she's sending?

### **Discussion Question 2**

Why is Peter finding it so hard to connect and feel anything about life on Earth?

### **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the changes that are going on with Grainger.

### **Vocabulary**

placard, permeate, lathered, churned, sluiced, belatedly, sordid, haphazard, vehemence, mesmerized, hankering, blotched, askance, gallantly



# Chapters 21-22

## Summary

### Chapter 21

Peter returns to C-2 and starts to learn the language of the Oasans. He enjoys the lessons because he gets to interact with a smaller group and learn from some of the Jesus Lovers that he doesn't normally get the chance to speak with. He's learned some of their words, such as the word they use for themselves and the sun. The language had a simplistic charm to it, and although it is basic compared to other languages, it is still simple enough to get their point across. Peter notes that only adults attend his services and never children. He speaks to one of the Lovers about this, who simply say that their child don't love Jesus yet, but they are hopeful that they will learn to.

Peter notices they have few words to talk about the past because they live in the present. They are aware of what happened previously, but they don't seem to linger much on it, instead trying to focus just on moving forward. Peter speaks with Lover Five about her deceased brother, asking if she feels pain. She admits that she does, but she doesn't want to linger on it and at least seems to take some comfort in the fact that he is no longer hurting like he was in life.

Peter also tries to find out more about the missing priest and linguist. He brings up concerns that they had been killed by the Oasans. They are quick to clarify that they brought no harm upon either of the men and that the men simply decided to walk off. As far as they knew, they were still out there walking.

Peter reflects on how he wouldn't have come out if he hadn't heard from Bea before taking the trip. She had prayed and was feeling much better. People were coming to take care of the garbage that had been left on the streets, and one of her friends had given her a bunch of clothing for herself and the church. Things seemed to be getting better, a fact that both Bea and Peter are happy about. In addition, USIC had promised to try and build a Shoot for Peter near the church.

Peter has been eating less, just like the Oasans. Despite that, he is still feeling energized. He works the fields with them and enjoys the menial labor. While working in the fields, swarms of the chicken animals Peter encountered before show up. The chickens tear through the crops. The Oasans run, but Peter tries to fend some of them off, getting bitten and clawed. The Oasans proclaim him dead, making him believe his wounds are poisoned.

Peter returns to his church where the USIC workers have finished installing his Shoot. An engineer, Conway, gets Peter into the car to return to the base where he can be treated for his injuries. Before going to see the new doctor, Peter goes to check his messages. Bea has written back with one simple message: there is no God.



## Chapter 22

Peter is stitched up by the new doctor, who doesn't believe he was poisoned. He also believes the previous doctor has simply passed away due to natural health issues, as it apparently ran in his family. Grainger waits for Peter to get out of surgery, taking him back to his room. She hugged him before she left, chastising him for not taking better care of himself. She is worried that he will leave like the others, as all of the others had lost a lot of weight, too, just like he has, before leaving. She tells him she cares about him. She also adds that she isn't going to drive him anymore.

Peter quickly writes Bea, dismayed to see she hasn't written back since his accident. He goes to sleep and has a dream where he was sleeping with both Bea and Grainger. He wakes and instantly feels guilty for the dream. He sees that Grainger has left medication for him, and wonders if she came while he was sleeping or if he was just too delirious on the return trip to initially notice it. Peter wanders out into the cafeteria and tries to pour his heart out to one of the engineers, but she doesn't offer much sympathy. When he explains about his past, she assures him they wouldn't judge him based on that and they were all doing better work in the facility.

Peter goes back to his room and checks his messages. Bea has written back, explaining how the replacement pastor has run off with the church treasurer and stolen all the money. On top of that, the cleaning staff had left the hospital and they were treating what she called, 'the dregs' of society. Peter is worried by this and quickly writes back, trying to convince her that it is just money and that everyone deserves to have God's love in their life and shouldn't be judged. He points out that he was one of those dregs before he met Bea and found the embrace of God. Peter ends up wandering outside of the base, away from the facility and even away from C-2. He eventually returns to see if Bea has written back.

Bea writes back that she doesn't want to be lectured. She explains that the world is going to hell, then goes into detail about what made her lose faith in God. She had accidentally stepped on Joshua's leg. When she tried to treat him he ran away from her. Later that night, she found him being tormented by a pair of kids. She attacked the kids and doesn't know what happened to them. She rushed Joshua to the vet but he just put Joshua to sleep, not knowing that Bea wanted to get help for him as it seemed like all he did now was put animals to sleep. Bea says that she doesn't believe in God and she doesn't believe in their relationship anymore. She knows even if they were together, they'd be so far apart spiritually because of his faith.

## Analysis

### Chapter 21

Peter retreats back into the comfort of the Oasan society. He continues to follow their way of living, even though as a human it's far from healthy. Still, he feels energized enough to keep working in the fields with the Oasans. He even cares enough about



their community to try and chase away the hoard of animals when they descend upon the crops. Peter knows how important the crops are and does everything he can possibly do to protect their livelihood. The Oasans mistakenly believe that Peter is dead simply because he's injured. This foreshadows the eventual discovery that Oasans are unable to heal like humans are, which is why they believe a few cuts are fatal to Peter.

Peter can find even more comfort in the Oasan community because their simplicity makes it so they don't have to linger on problems. This is important for Peter because he's currently struggling so much with everything that Bea is going through. His importance to the USIC project is shown when they install the Shoot at the church for him. This leads Peter to discover the shocking message that Bea has left for him. Hearing such serious news forces Peter to confront the reality of everything that Bea is going through. Of course in his injured state there isn't much he can do about it.

## Chapter 22

Grainger makes her feelings for Peter very clear when she waits for him to recover from his injuries. Not only does she show that she cares about him, but this also marks the point where she completely breaks down and gives up on the USIC facility. Peter has his own breakdown as well while he's trying to recover from his injuries. Everything that Bea is going through has finally settled in, and Peter doesn't have the Oasan community to bury himself in. Peter is desperate for someone to relate to on an emotional level. He pours his heart out to his coworkers, but they're completely dismissive of his stories. The only one who has shown any sort of emotion or passion when talking to him is Grainger.

When Peter writes back to Bea he brings up one of the reoccurring themes of the book, that anyone is capable of change and doesn't deserve to be judged. Bea herself used to embody this trait as well, but in her exhausted and frustrated state she's given up. She's been spending all of her time up until now trying to help people at work, but the world keeps falling apart around her and as she points out, she has no real emotional support from Peter.

Bea makes it clear that she doesn't believe in their relationship anymore because Peter only cares about his community on Oasis. Even if they were together, it wouldn't be the same because she doesn't have her faith anymore, while it seems like that's all Peter can talk about. Even in his responses trying to comfort her, Peter went right to the scripture and tried to argue that she needed to be strong because God was just testing her and this was all part of his divine plan.

While he is recovering, Peter has a dream about being with both Bea and Grainger. Throughout the book, Peter's feelings for Grainger have grown. He's commented several times on how attractive she is. While Peter does have strong feelings for Grainger, he's still ultimately faithful towards Bea. His attraction to Grainger is a direct result of being away from Bea. He isn't able to get the physical comfort he got from Bea from anyone else. The Oasan community obviously cannot reciprocate, and nobody else in the USIC is interested in any emotional connections that Grainger needs. His



cravings for her are based around missing his wife. Despite everything going on with Bea, he still loves her and wants to be with her, which is why he feels so guilty after the dream.

## Discussion Question 1

What revelation about the Oasans' ability to heal explains why they thought Peter was dead after he received a few scratches from the chicken animals?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Change in Chapter 22.

## Discussion Question 3

What has made Bea lose her faith?

## Vocabulary

eminence, contentious, retrospect, arcane, susurrus, dawdling, contemptuous, rapport, suture, embroidered, trundled, emaciated, fiasco, desolation, cloying, fastidious



# Chapters 23-24

## Summary

### Chapter 23

Peter realizes that he has actually been poisoned. He feels increasingly sick and knows that his time is short. In desperation, he takes one of the vehicles out to drive to C-2, hoping they will have a cure. He ends up driving to their old town closer to the facility in his confusion. To his surprise, he runs into the missing linguist, Tartaglione. Tartaglione takes him inside to where he is living for a drink. Tartaglione rants about what he believes is the true nature of the project. He is convinced the world is ending and the USIC had gathered what they believed is a dream team to build Oasis for a new society.

He believes that everyone lacked passion, however. The Facility's planners had assembled a team that just wanted to work and had no other concerns. Nobody wanted to rebuild the human race because they had no regard for one another, they just wanted to get their work done. Peter tries to argue this, but he is too tired and Tartaglione just keeps ranting. Peter asks what happened to the missing priest, Kurtzberg. Tartaglione says he left because they disagreed about the Oasans. Kurtzberg loved them, while Tartaglione despised them.

### Chapter 24

Peter wakes up in the infirmary. He has been rescued by Grainger, who is arguing with the medical staff. She has been drinking and is getting unruly and they don't know how to deal with her. She is finally removed so that Peter can recover. He eventually gets back to his room and tries to write Bea, but his message won't send. He goes to get help from Grainger. She looks over the message and reveals that it was stopped because he has spoken about the world ending and how the USIC is censoring any information about current events.

Grainger reveals that each message costs \$5,000, which is why nobody else writes their family or friends back on Earth. Peter is surprised, and she goes on to say that USIC specifically told them not to let Peter know this. They just wanted to give him everything he needed, within reason. They were desperate for a priest because the Oasans had gotten angry when Kurtzberg left. They refused to trade food with the facility, and the USIC hadn't figured out how to grow their own food yet.

Peter goes back to see the doctors. They talk about a conversation he had regarding the Oasans. Peter is confused, but they clarify that it was about the Oasans coming in for medical treatment. Jesus Lover Five comes to see the doctors. She has injured her hand weeks before when a painting fell on her hand. Peter realizes the wound has never healed. Jesus Lover Five simply quotes a verse from the bible, citing that her faith had stopped her from feeling pain. She realized that she was going to die without



treatment though and tells Peter she wants to live. The doctors assure him they will give her the best treatment possible.

## Analysis

### Chapter 23

While Peter has his suspicions about the USIC workers, Tartaglione confirms and expands on them when they meet. He rants that the USIC workers have no passion and just act as zombies. He believes the world is about to come to an end and the USIC is trying to restart humanity by building a facility on Oasis. He firmly believes that they'll never be able to succeed because nobody in the community has any sense of community or regard for one another. They aren't going to be able to repopulate or defend the planet. He points out that all throughout history humanity has used that love of life (passion) to fight and do whatever was necessary to survive. If it came down to going against the Oasans to survive, he doesn't believe the USIC would care enough to try.

Unlike Peter and Kurtzburg before him, Tartaglione hates the Oasans because of their simplistic nature. He believes they are just as bad as the USIC because he doesn't grasp how passionate the community actually is. Like everyone else, he mistakes their simplistic nature as a sign that they aren't developed or worth learning about. Kurtzburg recognized their passion and cared about him, which is why he and Tartaglione disagreed with one another.

### Chapter 24

Grainger again shows her transformation by going out to find Peter, even though she had dismissed him in the previous chapter. Without her coming to his rescue, Peter would have likely never been able to make it back to the facility. Her feelings for Peter shine through as she fights to remain at his side in the infirmary. Her descent into drinking could also be seen as an act of defiant resistance against the USIC, since it lets her express herself in a way that the facility looks down upon. Peter later learns that this worked and the USIC decided to suspend her and let her go back to Earth.

Grainger confirms everything that Peter had come to suspect about his purpose on Oasis, filling in a few extra details he hadn't even considered. Peter is outraged when he finds out that all of his messages are first being read before going out to Bea. He has no idea there were charges associated with the messages as well, although with everything else going on it was hard for him to really care about that fact. Attaching a fee to the messages is just another way to keep the USIC workers from becoming too engaged in anything. As Peter learns earlier in the book, workers who have attachment to Earth can only last for a few weeks. Attaching an outrageous fee to any messages was just another way to discourage the workers from getting distracted by anything going on back home.



Peter finally discovers that the Oasans aren't able to heal like normal people. This again shows how passionate they really are, since even when they know they are going to die they continue to try and live and make the most out of their lives. Jesus Lover Five shows that the Oasans do care about their lives and don't just give up. Before now, they just simply didn't understand that it might be possible for such injuries to be treated.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What was the ultimate plan of USIC?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How has Grainger changed since the beginning of the novel?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What does Jesus Lover Five indicate when she comes to the clinic to be healed?

## **Vocabulary**

lamented, abstract, antipathy, befuddled, abode, fricative, tethered, ferment, addled, brazened, incredulity, addendum





# Chapters 25-26

## Summary

### Chapter 25

Peter prays that the doctors will be able to fix Lover Five. Her injuries aren't healing, and even if they amputate the hand, the rot will continue to spread. Peter still hasn't heard back from Bea, even though he sent another message. Grainger approaches him, wanting his help in going out to find Tartaglione. Peter eventually agrees, in no small part because he is starting to see how beautiful Grainger is. They drive out and end up getting in a storm. To their surprise, the car is damaged by a bolt of lightning. They get out and decide they can just walk back as they hadn't traveled that far. Peter hopes that someone might come out looking for them, but Grainger points out that nobody in the base would care enough to do that. They'd just shrug their shoulders and continue on with their day, just like they always did.

While they walk, Peter confesses that he is having trouble remembering things from Earth. Grainger warns him that it happens, and starts to talk about her own memories, of growing up on a farm. She wants him to be able to remember because it means that he isn't broken. Peter listens, but finds that he doesn't really care about what she is saying. She shifts the conversation to the speech he gave at Severin's funeral. She says it was beautiful, but the USIC was unhappy with it and wouldn't let him speak again if anyone died because his words were too real and meaningful. Grainger admits that she had tried to defend him.

Grainger and Peter cuddle together while they rest. She keeps trying to get him to talk about Bea, to recall memories. He explains what she looks like and what their wedding was like. He talks about her abusive father, and how he had his own troubled past. Peter tells her how worried he was that Bea stopped caring about him, about the way he used to write about loving her and missing her in her wedding dress. Grainger assures him that everyone is sentimental and cares about those things, everyone except the other workers at USIC.

They continue on and find a tent that belonged to Kurtzberg. Upon seeing it, they collapse. Grainger vows that she will get back to Earth and find her father. The pair end up getting rescued by another engineer, BG, and brought back to the facility.

### Chapter 26

Grainger continues to insist that she is going to get home. She quit her job with the USIC so she can go to Earth and find her father. BG dismisses her claims, remarking that everyone always comes back. She asks about what the Earth was like when he went back. He tries to ignore the question. When she argues that the Earth is falling apart he points out that it had been falling apart for years. During the whole ride, she



ignores Peter's presence. When he gets back he prays for Lover Five. He speaks with one of the doctors, who is still hopeful they'll be able to fix her, or at least learn something that could save others. Peter realizes that this whole time all the Oasans had been doing was using painkillers to ignore injuries that their bodies were simply unable to heal.

Peter goes to check on Number Five, who is happy to see him. She recognizes that Peter has grown tired, just like the previous priest. She says that he isn't perfect, not like God. Peter asks if there is anything he can do, and she asks for him to sing Amazing Grace with her. After the song, she promises Peter that she will always be his brother, although it is unclear if that meant she was in fact a he, or if that was the only word she knew for people who shared the same faith.

Peter returns to his room, still with no messages from Bea. He simply writes that he is going home, and then sends a message to the administration demanding that he be taken back, and be allowed to return with Bea. As he is writing, his memories of his wife are starting to become clearer in his mind. After a few minutes, Tuska writes back and says that it will take up to 24 hours, but he imagines that Peter's request will go through.

## Analysis

### Chapter 25

Grainger and Peter continue to discuss the dispassionate nature of the USIC workers. She points out that nobody cares enough about one another to go out when someone is missing. They just ignore it and continue to do their work. Grainger is starting to believe in the strength of community again, which is part of why she wants to go and rescue Tartaglione. She tells Peter about how the USIC was unhappy with the speech he gave because of how strong and powerful it was.

Grainger knows that Peter is in danger of losing his passion for Earth. She recognizes that he does still care though and seems to be struggling to make himself care. She asks him about Bea because she knows how strongly he feels for her. She wants him to use those memories to make him care about Earth, to give him a passion that separates him from the rest of the USIC community. Grainger does a similar thing herself, except she uses her father as a way to remind herself what's important back on Earth.

Peter and Grainger cuddle together while they recall memories about their life back on Earth. Despite how close they were to one another, their closeness doesn't necessarily reflect a romantic nature. Both are once again acting in defiance of what the USIC wants from them. The USIC wants workers that have no romantic passion. They don't want their workers to see beauty in one another or get close. Both need that kind of passion at the moment because they need the constant sense of motivation so they can fight to get back to Earth. Peter is still very much in love and faithful towards Bea. Grainger understands that and doesn't want to see the two of them pull away, but at the same time they both need that comfort.



## Chapter 26

BG shows that, unlike Peter and Grainger, he doesn't care about what happens back on Earth. He's seen that the planet is falling apart, but in his eyes this was inevitable. He's decided to just give up on Earth and focus solely on doing his job in Oasis. He doesn't want to talk about Earth not because it's too hard for him, but because he doesn't want to care. He simply says that he finished up what business he had on Earth so he could be focused entirely on his life in Oasis.

Jesus Lover Five spells out one of the themes in the book, that everyone is capable of getting exhausted. When people become worn out they simply aren't able to help anyone out. It doesn't mean that they don't care though. Jesus Lover Five doesn't treat Peter wanting to leave as a sign of betrayal to the community. In fact, she gives him her blessings because she wants him to be happy. Since he is part of the community, she hopes that he will be able to return once he's gone back and recovered. No matter how far apart they are, their bond will never be broken.

For Peter, those words are incredibly meaningful. Bea had insisted that their relationship was over because they had grown so far apart. Jesus Lover Five is telling him that distance isn't able to destroy a relationship. Just like Peter, Bea has grown exhausted and frustrated, which is what made her want to give up. She just didn't have the energy to keep caring about their relationship because it was hurting her so much, but as Peter keeps communicating with her she does reveal that she does still love him.

Peter is determined to get back to Earth, no matter what it takes. While it is never stated outright, it isn't a stretch to imagine that the USIC agreed to send both him and Grainger back because they recognized that he was so passionate. His ideals have always clashed with what the USIC wants. Even though it's important they have a priest to keep things diplomatic with the Oasans, Peter has become too much of a liability. They can always find another priest, after all.

### **Discussion Question 1**

Why wouldn't the USIC administrators want people on the Facility that had emotional connections or a need for human interaction?

### **Discussion Question 2**

What does Jesus Lover Five tell Peter before dying that makes him change his mind about going to Earth?

### **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss BG's character.

## Vocabulary

pall, destitute, ethos, belated, hodgepodge, charlatan, provocatively, vehemence, insidious, pensively, tremulous, unadulterated, forage, belligerent, pathos



# Chapters 27-28

## Summary

### Chapter 27

Peter is given permission to return to Earth. He finds out that Grainger is going as well. She has been placed off duty because she holed up in her room drinking. Peter drives out with Flores and Tuska, who are responsible for delivering the medicine now. The Oasans are surprised to see Peter again, having believed him dead. Only Lover One had believed Peter might still be alive. Throughout the trip, Peter keeps thinking back to Bea, trying to hold onto his memories of her. He is happy to see that the Oasans seem to like Flores. He goes to his church and is even happier to see that about fifty Oasans have gathered in the church, even without him there as a pastor.

He speaks to them in their own native tongue, until he has to use the word for forgiveness, since he doesn't know a good word in their language. He gives them a copy of his bible and returns with Tuska and Flores to C-2. Flores tells Peter that she is determined to find out more about the Oasans, and how they can help them. When Peter returns he finally has a message from Bea, saying that she loves him, but begs him not to return.

### Chapter 28

Peter spends his remaining time on the base working out, wanting to get strong. He reflects on the message that Bea has sent him. She has asked him not to come back, but it is because the Earth has fallen apart and she doesn't want him to suffer. She tells him she is leaving their home and joining with a group of strangers because it isn't safe anymore. Peter writes back that he is determined to find her. He speaks with Grainger, who is also determined to find her father. Peter feels strange leaving without his Bible, since he has carried it with him for so long. He has come to memorize all of the verses though, and he knows the Oasans need it more. As the ship for Earth takes off, he reflects on words from the Bible, assuring the reader that God is with them always.

## Analysis

### Chapter 27

Peter wants to show the Oasans that even though he's leaving, it isn't because he doesn't care about them. He treasured the time that he spent with them, but he knows that he has to leave to be with Bea. He shows how much he respects them by using their language as much as possible. He has to switch over to use the word for forgiveness. The rest of the conversation is spoken in the alien tongue, but it's clear that Peter is asking for forgiveness and trying to make it clear that he doesn't want to abandon the Oasans. Just like with Lover Five, the Oasans understand what Peter is



going through and care about his happiness. They know that Peter is part of their community, and the distance won't be able to change that. Peter giving away his Bible helps to show how much he cares about the Oasans, since it is easily his most prized possession, and his way of encouraging them to keep pursuing and learning about their faith.

The Oasans seem to be more accepting of humans thanks to the effort of Peter. It helps that Flores is making more of an effort to interact with them. In her own way, she's showing passion by trying to develop a relationship with the Oasans, and even promising Peter that she was going to try and find a way to help the Oasans heal.

Bea begs Peter not to return, although in the next chapter Peter goes over the whole message and shows that it isn't because she doesn't want to see him, but more out of genuine concern. She loves Peter and she knows that he's in a better place. She doesn't want to see him suffer on Earth where everything is falling apart.

## Chapter 28

Peter spends the last chapter focusing on the theme of community. He's physically preparing his body so he'll be able to integrate back into the community back on Earth. Bea might be running, but even she recognizes the strength of community and comments that she won't be going alone. Peter is much gruffer towards theUSIC workers. At first, this might seem like it's because he's still exhausted as Jesus Lover Five suggested. While that does likely play some part, Peter is ultimately hopeful at the end of the book and determined that he has God's love and will be able to find Bea. His rougher attitude is more likely as a result of him seeing the truth about theUSIC workers.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the author's purpose in having Peter return to Earth?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does the author seem to believe that the new colony atUSIC won't thrive?

## Discussion Question 3

What is the medicine that Flores delivers to the Oasans?

## Vocabulary

delineated, austerely, flippancy, abhorred, parities, sinewy, fastidious, consternation, cadences, alluded



# Characters

## Peter Leigh

Peter is the main character of the story. He's an English preacher with an unwavering faith in God. He wasn't always that way though. Peter came from a difficult home. Before finding God, he was a homeless drug addict that was constantly getting into fights and committing crimes in his desperation to find his next fix. Peter met Bea when he was running from the police and ended up breaking his ankles. Through her, he was able to turn his life around and find the path of God. Peter is a very charismatic man and an effective preacher because he is able to relate to people. He doesn't preach for himself, but because he genuinely wants to help people. He's respectful of their beliefs and tries to help them onto the right path, not force them onto it.

Throughout the course of the book, Peter's faith begins to change. He never gives up on God, but he starts to change the way that he sees people. While he used to be accepting of the way people acted, by the end of the book he's looking down on people and visibly getting frustrated by them. He compares them to the Oasans, who all manage to work together and don't linger on false pretenses or create drama. They are able to function as a perfect society and help one another. Peter is one of the few characters that treats the Oasans with respect and doesn't look down on them. He even goes so far as to learn their language by the end of the book.

Peter begins to act more like an Oasan as time goes on. When he's at the USIC facility he feels more comfortable going without clothing. He has trouble eating normal food. In fact, he barely wants to eat at all, having grown accustomed to the limited diet that the Oasans have. At the facility, Peter also finds himself struggling with his primal urges. He physically longs for contact with his wife, and at times he finds himself attracted towards Grainger, even dreaming of her towards the end of the book. Despite those urges, Peter still tries to remain faithful towards his wife. Even as they begin to grow distant, Peter continues to profess his love for her, and he genuinely tries to show interest and concern towards what's going on with her life.

## Beatrice Leigh

Bea starts off the book just as faithful as her husband, Peter. Unlike Peter, she was denied by the USIC and had to stay on Earth, where she worked as a nurse. Throughout the book, Bea writes to Peter about the disasters that continue to befall Earth. By the end of the book, Bea has given up on not only her faith, but also her relationship with Peter. She still loves him, but she thinks that too much time has passed for them to be a couple. They're both completely different people than when the book started.



Like Peter, Bea used to display patience and tolerance towards people. She cared about everyone in her life and treated all of her patients with respect, no matter what their situation was. As things continued to get darker, Bea gave up on people, even going so far as to call her patients the dregs of society by the end.

## Alex Grainger

Grainger is the only USIC member that Peter finds himself able to tolerate. She's very emotional and frequently gets annoyed with Peter, especially when he starts talking about God. She has a very cynical outlook towards the rest of her workers. In her eyes, they don't care about anything besides doing their job. Grainger has an estranged relationship with her father, but she's determined to return to Earth to find him. She even cares enough to ask Peter to pray for him, despite not being religious herself. By the end of the book, Grainger has developed some level of feelings for Peter, but she's afraid that he's going to run away from the facility. She gets so afraid and frustrated about this that she refuses to take him out to the Oasan village at the end of the book. Grainger is a recovering alcoholic who eventually relapses by the end of the book.

## Jesus Lover One

As his name implies, Jesus Lover One is the first Oasan to find God. He's also the most diplomatic of the Oasans, handling the negotiations between the USIC facility and their town. Before Peter learns their language, Lover One acted as a translator for Peter whenever necessary and was typically the one he went to with any questions regarding their society. When Peter is injured protecting the crops, Lover One is the only one that has faith that Peter will survive.

## Jesus Lover Five

Jesus Lover Five is considered by Peter to be his favorite. When she gets injured at the church she ends up going to the USIC facility for treatment, which is how they discover the Oasans don't heal normally like humans. She feels very close towards Peter and predicts that he's getting ready to leave before he even brings it up.

## Tartaglione

Tartaglione is the linguist that ended up going missing before Peter had arrived. Peter eventually discovers him in the abandoned Oasan town. Tartaglione has become an alcoholic and spent the majority of his time ranting about the USIC. He believes that they're sending people to Oasis because they know that the world is coming to an end and want to restart society on Oasis. He thinks they've selected the wrong people though. Everyone at the USIC lacks passion and only care about their careers and getting work done. They seem to have no romantic interest towards one another and





thus are unsuitable for repopulating the species. They also lack the passion to defend Oasis or do what's necessary to keep the planet going.

## Kurtzburg

Kurtzburg is the former preacher that first taught the Oasans about Jesus. Peter has his doubts about how effective Kurtzburg was. Not too much is known about Kurtzburg and he never physically appears throughout the story. It's hinted that he was similar to Peter though and ended up going native when he spent time with the Oasans. He and Tartaglione argued about whether or not the world was actually ending, which is why he ended up leaving the linguist. It's unclear whether or not he's still alive.

## Flores

Flores is a relatively minor character that only shows up a few times throughout the book. She's one of the USIC doctors and ultimately ends up taking over supply runs when Grainger is suspended. Unlike most of the USIC staff, Flores seems genuinely interested in helping the Oasans, promising Peter that she'll find a way to make them heal.

## Conway

When Peter is attacked by the chicken creatures, the Oasans claim that he has been poisoned. Conway is one of the USIC workers that put Peter into a car and rush him back to the facility for treatment.

## Tuska

Tuska is one of the workers at USIC. He doesn't care about Earth and knows that it is falling apart. When Grainger leaves to go back to Earth, he takes over delivering the pain medications to the Oasans.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Peter's Bible

Ever since he found God, Peter carried his bible with him. Whenever Peter's faith is challenged, he would go through his bible, trusting that God would guide him to the appropriate verse that would shed light on his situation. By the end of the book, Peter still has his faith in God, but it isn't quite the same as the start of the book. He's become exhausted with his role as a preacher. He leaves the Bible to his faithful followers though when he sets off to Earth. Handing the bible away doesn't mean that he has given up on his faith, but it does represent how exhausted he's become, and that he's determined to focus on fixing his and Bea's life.

## Peter's Camera

When Peter first arrives on Oasis he tries to take pictures with his camera. He wants to document his whole journey so that he has something to show to Bea and everyone else once he returns to Earth. Unfortunately when he arrives, the camera doesn't work. This represents and foreshadows Peter's distance to Earth. As is shown by the rest of the USIC facilities, once you arrive on Oasis you become disconnected from Earth. It doesn't matter that Peter has no pictures to show because Peter was never meant to return.

## Cross on the Dishdasha

When Peter first arrives on Oasis he finds that his normal clothing isn't suited for the damp environment. Peter has one outfit that is suited though, his dishdasha, which becomes the primary outfit that he wears when he's preaching to the Oasans. When Peter pulls it out from his bag he finds that his pens had exploded and the ink left a cross on the outfit. Peter takes this as a sign from God that he's doing the right thing and will be successful in preaching to the Oasans.

## USIC Facility

When Peter first arrives in the facility he feels disconnected from everyone else. As time goes on, he starts to feel oppressed and trapped in the facility. Unlike everyone else, he never seems to be able to learn the facility. After spending time with the Oasans, Peter finds himself acting completely different in the facility. While he never becomes outright hostile towards the USIC workers, he does come to dislike them by the end of the book because to him the facility represents everything that is wrong with humanity compared to the simplistic Oasans.



## Amazing Grace

When Peter first arrives in the Oasan village he is greeted by a rendition of Amazing Grace, even though it isn't the easiest song for the Oasans given their limitations with the human language. To Peter, the song has even deeper meaning. Peter directly relates the song to his own life, especially the part about once being lost, since he himself used to be a vagrant with no understanding of God. When Peter is with Jesus Lover Five, her last request of him is to once again sing the song because it has the same meaning to them. While they might not have been vagrants, they were still lost before learning about God, but just like Peter they were able to hear the word of God and become saved.

## Pencils

Throughout the book, Peter talks about how much he dislikes technology. It's just something that he's never been able to understand and he primarily relied on Bea to handle that sort of thing when he was back on Earth. Whenever Peter needs to write, he uses his pencils. He notes that even though they are such a basic tool, they are much more reliable than technology. Peter specifically carries around pencils because he knows that he can rely on them, unlike other more advanced technological tools.

## Church Paintings

When Peter begins to decorate the church he encourages the Oasans to make their own paintings. He finds that the paintings are very direct and much more literal than the art that he normally sees in churches back home. To him, these paintings represent the eloquent and simplistic lifestyle that the Oasans have, while to them the paintings can be seen as a direct representation of their newfound faith and acceptance of the Bible into their lives.

## Prayer

Many of the non-religious characters mock Peter whenever he prays. Grainger especially doesn't seem to understand why he does it, pointing out that even though he prays bad things still happen. Peter explains that prayer isn't about asking God for something. To him, it's a way to show his love for common people. He isn't trying to alert God to anything because he knows that God is already aware, he simply sees it as a way of lending his positive energy to a situation, representing how much he cares about people even if he doesn't know them.



## Bea's Wedding Dress

There are several times where Peter is struggling to remember things from Earth, especially when it comes to Bea. He knows that he loves her, but he has a hard time remembering what she looks like or the sound of her voice. One of the images that Peter vividly remembers is the white wedding dress that Bea wore. To Peter, the wedding dress represents his connection and love towards Bea.

## Peter's Health

When Peter is working with the Oasans his health begins to suffer. He gets sunburned without realizing it and he begins to eat less. He spends hours awake, just like the Oasans do. Even though his health is deteriorating, he doesn't realize it because he's become so embedded in the Oasan way of life. This represents Peter losing his connection with humanity and instead adapting to and favoring Oasan society. By the end of the book, Peter has become healthier as he's getting ready to return to Earth and once again become part of humanity.

## Grainger's Scars

Grainger, who seems to be in charge of security at USIC, is a woman that Peter meets when he first arrives. It is she that comes to pick him up from the Oasan camp. This is when Peter notices her scars, which would seem to have been self-inflicted at one point or another. These scars are symbolic of the scars on mankind, those that are self-inflicted through war, disease, pollution, and other self destructive behaviors.



# Settings

## Airport (United Kingdoms)

The book begins with Peter and Beatrice travelling to the airport where Peter will be ferried off to America. Before they officially arrive at the airport, Bea pushes Peter into making love with her one last time, where she ultimately ends up getting pregnant. When they arrive at the airport, Peter briefly visits the church. He and Bea also help a frustrated family that have been dealing with a cancelled flight.

## Florida

Peter only spends a brief time in Florida after flying in from the UK. He's picked up by a limo that takes him to the ship destined towards Oasis. On the way there, he tries to get in touch with Bea and reflects upon the grueling interview process that the USIC put him through.

## USIC Ship

Peter spends the majority of his time on the USIC ship asleep as it makes the long trip from Earth to Oasis. When he wakes up, he gets his first introduction to the USIC crew. They have a very crude sense of humor, but they treat Peter well enough, even helping him to recover from the injections he was given before the flight. It's here that Peter finds out the majority of the USIC crew don't seem to care much about religion, with very few actually seeming to be Christian.

## USIC Facility

Peter spends a good deal of his book at the USIC facility. When he first arrived the whole building made him feel claustrophobic, and he had a hard time navigating around. As time went on, he continued to grow more and more uncomfortable when he was in the building. He struggled to keep down any of the food that he ate at the cafeteria, and just being in the building seemed to physically exhaust him. The majority of his time was spent in his room where he could use the Shoot to communicate with Bea, which was essentially his main reason for wanting to return to the base at all. Towards the end of the book he does spend a bit of time in the medical wing after being attacked during the harvest, and when Jesus Lover Five comes down seeking help for her injury.

## C-2

C-2 is the official name given to the Oasan village. Unofficially, the USIC facility like to refer to it as Freaktown. Peter, of course, doesn't ever use such an insulting title. Peter



finds himself most at home when he's in the simplistic village. The Oasans surround their homes in a circle amongst their crops, which is why none of the USIC members have ever seen where they work. When he first arrives, Peter begins to construct a church which is soon finished after a couple of more trips down to the Oasans. Peter spends the majority of his time in the church, though towards the end of the book he starts to go out and toil in the fields alongside the Oasans, and he even visits their homes a couple of times.

## **Abandoned Oasan Village**

Peter stumbles upon the abandoned village when he believes that he is dying of poison. The village was where the Oasans originally lived, but they moved further away from the base after the USIC had gotten comfortable. Peter encounters the missing linguist, Tartaglione, here. Tartaglione rants about how Earth is being destroyed and the USIC were trying to restart civilization on Oasis. Peter and Grainger try to return to rescue him, but a lightning storm damages their car and they were never able to reach him.

# Themes and Motifs

## Community

Community living is ultimately the major focus of *The Book of Strange New Things*. Both Peter and Bea go on their own journeys to explore the importance of a strong community. They both get to see examples of what makes a community work and what doesn't. To Peter, the Oasan community is far superior to the USIC community. In his eyes, they're all willing to pitch in and work together. They don't get wrapped up in meaningless melodrama, and they don't waste their time with unnecessary conversation because they feel uncomfortable amongst one another.

In contrast, Peter finds the USIC community to be lacking and incomplete. They might work together, but that isn't enough to make them a genuine community. They only care about getting their work done, not the effect that their jobs have on one another. As Grainger points out, everyone was well aware that Kurtzburg and Tartaglione had gone missing, but nobody thought to ask why, or even look for them. This is ultimately what causes Peter to embrace the Oasan lifestyle, and what causes Grainger to want to return to Earth. It's also why Tartaglione left, because he recognized that the community didn't have enough life to succeed.

Beatrice has her own positive and negative experiences with community. The majority of her experiences tend to be negative. She frequently focuses on the downfall of society because nobody is willing to work together as a community. Everyone is concerned with their own selfish needs. There are a few moments where she sees the positive benefits of community. When the garbage services have given up on retrieving trash, Beatrice talks about how a group of young men decided to take it upon themselves to go around and remove the garbage from their neighborhood. Even at the end of the book, with everything that has happened Bea still believes in the strength of community. She tells Peter that she's leaving with a group because she recognizes that she can't go out alone in the world.

## Passion

When Peter meets Tartaglione he's ranting about how everyone at the USIC facility acts like a zombie. The workers don't have any passion. They never fight with one another because they really don't care about anything outside of whether or not someone is doing their job. Even in the rare circumstance where someone isn't doing their job, someone else steps in to fill the missing role. This is evident at the end of the book where Grainger's position is immediately filled when she becomes suspended. This lack of passion infects Peter whenever he returns to the USIC facility. He goes from being able to work and preach for 20 hours a day to becoming exhausted after only 11 or 12 hours in the facility.



Tartaglione goes on to say that humans will never be able to survive on Oasis without bringing in more passionate people. He believes that the world is ending, and nobody in the USIC cares. Because they don't have any passion they aren't going to be able to restart the human population. Nobody ever pursues any sort of romantic relationship. In addition to that, nobody at the USIC facility has the passion to fight for the planet.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Peter is constantly motivated by the passion that the Oasans show towards their faith. Even though they aren't as physically strong as humans they still give their everything to construct the church. They want to hear literal translations of the bible, even when it involves using syllables that they struggle to pronounce. Grainger notes that the Oasans were passionate enough to stand up to humanity when they lost their preacher, refusing to give them food until a replacement priest could be found. This form of resistance is especially meaningful because due to their physiology, standing up to the humans was incredibly risky.

What makes things even more impressive with the Oasans is how they continue to live their lives even when they're facing their own demise. Jesus Lover Five never once stopped working on the church, even when her hand was injured. She wasn't able to work as well as before, but she still didn't quit or never once asked for sympathy. All the Oasans are determined to make the most out of their lives, even if they know they're about to run out of time.

## Burn Out

Passion is certainly an important part of life, but one of the lessons that Peter learns throughout the book is too much passion can actually be a bad thing. When Peter is working with the Oasans he's inspired by their passion. His health ends up drastically suffering because he doesn't realize that he's getting sun burned and barely eating. He spends hours working and preaching alongside the Oasans. While this might seem good, every time he returned to the USIC facility he was too exhausted to ever address any of the problems going on in his life. As Bea points out in one of her messages, he barely tells her anything about his life in Oasis, or ask about Bea's pregnancy. Peter argues that he's just too tired whenever he returns, and it gets to the point where he has to force himself to respond to her messages.

Peter starts out feeling genuinely concerned for the lives of others, especially the USIC workers. By the end of the book though he's become too burnt out to care because he poured all of his energy into the Oasan community. Lover Five even comments that she knows Peter was getting to leave just like Kurtzburg because they were exhibiting the same signs of exhaustion. Bea undergoes a similar change. She started off caring about everyone in the hospital where she worked, but by the end of the book she's too exhausted and drained from all the horrors she's had to endure back on Earth. She's stopped thinking of her patients as good people who just need help and instead refers to them as dregs.





## Simplicity

Throughout the course of the book nearly everyone looks down on the Oasans because they believe they are a simple people. Compared to the USIC workers, the Oasans are severely underdeveloped. They don't have electricity or any real form of medicine. They have no vehicles and their structures are extremely basic. Even their beds are incredibly simplistic compared to what they have at the USIC facility.

Peter recognizes that the Oasan community has far more life than the USIC facility despite their simplistic lifestyle. In fact, he prefers the Oasan lifestyle because there's an elegance in their simplicity. They know what's important to them in life and that's what they focus on. Unlike humans, they don't struggle with making small talk over meaningless subjects, or focus on buying lavish products that don't actually do anything to enhance their life. Most importantly, Peter recognizes that they still live rich and passion filled lives, even if they aren't as developed as humanity.

## Change

When Peter is in the USIC facility he frequently focuses on his troubled past. Before he found God, he was a homeless thief who was willing to do just about anything in order to get his next fix. He was constantly getting into fights. He ended up meeting Bea after he broke his ankles when he was trying to run away from the police. With Bea's help, Peter was able to find a better path in life and become a new man. Throughout most of the book both Peter and Bea are strong believers that anyone is able to change and find salvation, just like Peter was.

Towards the end of the book they've both become more jaded and cynical because of how exhausted they've become. Throughout that time though, Peter still believes that people are capable of change, he just doesn't have the energy to try and show them a better way. Even though he isn't trying to change people, he still ends up having an effect on Grainger. By seeing his passion she begins to change, starting to drink once again and become passionate about finding her father. The

Oasans constantly show that they are willing to embody change as well. They were a completely alien species, yet they were able to discover God. Peter's church was originally a small number of Oasans, but at his peak he had over one hundred different Oasans showing up for visits. Even when they believed him dead, the Oasans continued to preach on their own and were trying to enlighten the other Oasans and spread their faith.



# Styles

## Point of View

The Book of Strange New Things is written with a limited third person view, with the narrator focusing on Peter as the main character. For the most part, the story is presented in a linear fashion. Every so often though, Peter will flash back to a time where he was still a wild and rambunctious youth, or he'll briefly focus on some of the time that he first spent with Bea. Peter's thoughts are very important to the reader because there are long stretches where he isn't directly interacting with anyone. When Peter and Bea are writing to one another, the book momentarily shifts to a first person perspective to reflect who had written the letter, however these sections are still frequently interrupted by Peter chiming in with his thoughts.

## Language and Meaning

Because of the religious nature of the book, many of the characters make references to different Bible passages and religious beliefs. Even if they aren't being spoken outright, Peter is frequently thinking about lessons from the scripture. The Oasans use a very unique language when they're speaking with Peter and the other human characters, reflecting their alien nature. Even though Peter becomes incredibly close to them, their speech pattern is a constant reminder that they come from very different species. Even with these differences though, they're still able to connect to one another.

Towards the end of the book, Peter is speaking fully in the Oasan language. These passages are never translated and ultimately left up to the imagination of the reader. There are a few context clues provided as to what they're talking about though when Peter has to shift back into English, ensuring that readers can still understand what is being discussed, even if they don't know the specific words that are being used.

## Structure

The Book of Strange New Things is generally told in a straight forward fashion. Every so often though, Peter will flash back to a different part of his life. Chapters frequently have small time jumps, which the missing time being summarized in the first few paragraphs. Typically, this will involve Peter's time with the Oasans. It might focus on his first day of arrival, and then summarize the rest of the days. Every so often, these time skips will also focus on a letter that Bea had sent to him, with Peter reflecting on her words while he's spending time with the Oasans.

One interesting thing about the book is the title of the chapters. The title of each chapter is actually the last few lines from the very end of the chapter, with the line either summarizing a major event in the chapter or hinting at possible conflicts to come.



## Quotes

He sighed, squeezed her hand. What was he going to do without her, out in the field? How would he cope, not being able to discuss his perceptions? She was the one who stopped him coming out with claptrap, curbed his tendency to construct grand theories that encompassed everything. She brought him down to earth. Having her by his side on this mission would have been worth a million dollars.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

**Importance:** Peter and Bea's relationship is a huge focus throughout the rest of the book. The reader needs to understand how much they care for one another and recognize that it isn't easy for Peter to just leave her behind while he goes on his mission.

They'd done this hundreds of times before. Conversation, genuine unforced conversation, but with the potential to become something much more significant if the moment arose when it was right to mention Jesus. Maybe that moment would come; maybe it wouldn't. Maybe they would just say 'God bless you' in parting and that would be it. Not every encounter could be transformative. Some conversations were just amiable exchanges of breath.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1)

**Importance:** Both Peter and Bea are very caring individuals. The author wants to make it clear that they aren't the type of preachers who try and enforce their faith on everyone they meet. They do genuinely care, but they understand that people need to be guided and not forcefully converted. It's important for readers to see this early on because it makes it easier to understand the way Peter acts and thinks throughout the book.

If I was really haunted by what I saw in that restaurant, I suppose I could devote my whole life to re-educating the people in that society so they would kill the ducks more humanely. But I would rather devote my life to something that might persuade human beings to treat each other more humanely. Because human beings suffer so much more than ducks.

-- Peter (Chapter 2)

**Importance:** Initially, the line of questioning about the ducks might seem like a random tangent on behalf of the USIC. Later chapters illustrate that the USIC were simply using the ducks to represent the Oasans. The USIC look down upon the Oasans because of their simplistic nature, seeing them as nothing more than animals. Peter's answer pleases them because they want someone who cares about humanity and won't be sympathetic towards the Oasans. This ultimately backfires though. While Peter might not favor animals over humanity, he recognizes that the Oasans are very much a sentient race and shouldn't just be dismissed.

He and Bea had already discussed what they would do with the money he earned on this mission. Pay off their mortgage. Rebuild the nursery room of their church so the



children had more light and sunshine. Buy a van adapted for wheel-chairs. The list went on and on. Every dollar he spent here would cross something worthwhile off it.

-- Narrator (Chapter 4)

**Importance:** Both Peter and Bea want to do things that better their community. This passage is a great example of their caring nature.

Peter paused in the doorway, suddenly cold in his sweat-soaked denims and bedraggled hair. How ridiculous he must look! For just a few seconds, the sheer alienness of these people, and his irrelevance to them, threatened to flood his spirit with fear, the paralysis of shyness, the terror that a child feels when faced with a new school filled with strangers. But then God calmed him with an infusion of courage and he stepped forward. 'Hello everybody,' he said.

-- Narrator (Chapter 4)

**Importance:** Peter wants to make the USIC into more of a community and not just a collection of workers. While he ultimately ends up being unsuccessful, the fact that he cared enough at all to try is very telling of Peter's character.

Bea sighed. 'Anything can be sold for drugs. Or at least the person can try. If he's desperate enough.' And she gave him a 'You'd know all about that, wouldn't you?' look. Indeed, he knew all about that. He just had a tendency to forget.

-- Bea (Chapter 5)

**Importance:** Peter's troubled past is a huge part of his character, and also serves to highlight the theme of anyone being capable of changing. This passage is one of the first hints of just how far Peter had fallen when he was younger.

Grainger's voice was tainted with despondency. Clearly, she had little faith that her words made any sense to the recipients. She spoke faster and less distinctly as she went on, almost gabbling. Peter had witnessed that sort of behavior before, in inexperienced or ineffectual evangelists who were trying to win over a hostile audience and sensed they were losing the battle. Mumbled invitations to come along to church sometime, spoken as if to satisfy a watchful God that the invitations had been made, rather than with any real hope that anyone would come.

-- Grainger (Chapter 11)

**Importance:** Of the current USIC facility, Peter is the only one that actually seems to care about the Oasans. Even Grainger who had shown herself to be different is uncomfortable around the Oasans and doesn't want to spend much time lingering around them, as this passage shows.

What Saint Paul is saying to his new friends,' Peter explained, 'is that once you've heard the word of God, it doesn't matter how foreign you are, how far away you live. You become part of the community of Christians, all the Christians who've ever existed, including the ones who were alive when Jesus walked the earth. Then Paul goes on to compare us to a house. A house is built from many bricks or stones fitted together to



make a big structure, and all of us are stones in the house that God is building.  
-- Peter (Chapter 15)

**Importance:** Community is one of the ongoing themes throughout the book, and Peter very clearly spells it out in this passage. The part about distance is especially important because it mirrors the struggles that Peter is going through being so far away from Bea. It also foreshadows the fact that even though Peter ends up leaving, he's still a part of the Oasan community.

He only wished he'd had the chance to explain more fully how prayer worked. That it wasn't a matter of asking for things and being accepted or rejected, it was a matter of adding one's energy – insignificant in itself – to the vastly greater energy that was God's love. In fact, it was an affirmation of being part of God, an aspect of His spirit temporarily housed inside a body.  
-- Peter (Chapter 19)

**Importance:** Passion is another theme that comes up throughout the course of the book. In this passage, Peter is showing the passion and love that he has for all sentient beings. His prayer is a direct expression of that, and unlike what Grainger believes he isn't simply trying to ask God for something.

Her message, when it came, was brief. There is no God, she wrote.  
-- Bea (Chapter 21)

**Importance:** Bea losing her faith is a huge change for the factor, and something that has a profound effect on Peter. When Peter reads this message, it sets him on the course of returning home to Earth.

He hadn't been born one, that's for sure. He'd turned himself into one, by force of will. There were many ways of becoming a Christian but the way that had worked for him was to switch off his capacity for cynicism, switch it off like a light. No, that was the wrong comparison . . . he'd . . . he'd switched on the light of trust. After so many years of playing games, exploiting everyone he met, stealing and lying and worse, he'd re-made himself into an innocent. God had wiped the slate clean. The man who'd once littered his conversation with casual expletives like 'Jesus fucking Christ' became the man who said 'gosh'. There was no other way. You were either a raging alcoholic or you didn't touch drink. Same with cynicism. Bea could handle it – in moderation. He couldn't.  
-- Peter (Chapter 22)

**Importance:** This passage highlights two themes, that anyone is capable of changing as well as highlighting the dangers that come with becoming exhausted and troubled. Bea lost her faith and became incredibly jaded and cynical because she didn't have enough support from Peter. She was forced to endure horrible atrocities on Earth with no real support, so she became broken. Peter realizes how serious things are, which is why he's so determined to get back to Earth to be there for her, just like she was there for him when it seemed like he had given up on everything in his troubled youth.



Peter, I'm only going to say this once. This experience is not educational. It is not instructive. It is not God moving in mysterious ways, it is not God figuring out exactly what sublime ultimate purpose can be served by me stepping on Joshua's leg and everything after. The Saviour I believed in took an interest in what I did and how I behaved. The Saviour I believed in made things happen and stopped things happening. I was deluding myself. I am alone and frightened and married to a missionary who's going to tell me that the fool has said in his heart there is no God, and if you don't say it it will just be because you're being diplomatic, because in your heart you're convinced I made this happen through my faltering of faith, and that makes me feel even more alone. Because you're not coming back to me, are you? You like it up there. Because you're on Planet God. So even if you did come back to me, we still wouldn't be together. Because in your heart you'd still be on Planet God, and I'd be a trillion miles away from you, alone with you by my side.

-- Bea (Chapter 22)

**Importance:** Bea's haunting words highlight just how serious and grim things have become on Earth. She's given up on God. She knows that God is important to Peter and will always be a part of his life. Even if they were physically together, it would feel like they were apart because she couldn't share in that part of Peter's life anymore. Furthermore, all Peter had been able to talk about up until that point was God. He tried to convince her that this was all part of God's plan. While this might be comforting to him, it was the exact opposite of what she needed in terms of support. Bea mistakenly believes that all Peter cares about now is God and preaching, but Peter is determined to get back to her because he loves her and genuinely does want to help her.