

DOWNSIDE SEVEN
By Myra Nagel
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION
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1. Which character in *Downside Seven* did you most identify with—Skipper, his mother, dad or older brother, the minister Cal, a church member, Detective Mason Shue, other? Why?
2. Parts of the novel are told from Skipper’s point of view. Did seeing events through the eyes of an eight-year-old autistic boy enhance your enjoyment of the story—or detract from it? Why? What insights, if any, did you gain from seeing through Skipper’s eyes?
3. How does the challenge of raising an autistic child affect the relationship between Skipper’s mother and father? How does it affect other relationships within the family?
4. What picture comes to your mind when you think of a small Protestant church in a rural, southern town? How does Loblolly Congregational United Church of Christ fit that picture? How is it different?
5. On page 135, Cal states that the job of the church is to be “a community that reflects the love of God for each person.” What do you think of this statement, especially in this situation when Cal is urging her congregation to act with love toward a person who is accused of a terrible crime? When in the novel does Loblolly Congregational act like a community that reflects God’s love for each person? When does it not?
6. At one point, Cal cares for Skipper in her home for a few days to allow his parents to take a much-needed vacation. Do you think this was an appropriate action for a minister to take? Why or why not?
7. As the story progresses, real historical events in North Carolina’s history are interwoven with fiction. What is your reaction to these true events?
8. What do you think the future might hold for the relationship between Cal and Detective Mason Shue? For the relationships in Skipper’s family?