

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Fifteen: Let's Talk About It:

1. Mona speaks truth and love to her niece when she says, "I think you decided to look for something the day you took your dad's bike and came to the beach house. I think you were hoping to find a way to forgive yourself because you thought that forgiving yourself would bring you peace. But God wanted you to find more than that when you ran away that day. He wanted you to find Him. He's chasing you, Hal, and you can keep on running, or you can turn around and fall into His arms. I promise He'll catch you. And I promise that if you keep on running, you'll never find forgiveness or peace. "

Question: Can you run away from God? Are you running from Him now? In what ways does God pursue you?

2. As Mona silently prayed for God to open the eyes of Hallie's heart, she said, "Do you think your sins are so great they cancel out God's desire to save you? What about the father who deserts his children or the pastor who has an affair? Or maybe the girl who sells her body on the street corner or the felon on death row? Who put you in charge of drawing the lines of God's grace? Are you so self-centered that you've drawn a circle just around yourself, or have you also taken on the job of deciding who in the rest of the world is worth saving? The truth is we're all prostitutes and felons and not one of us is worthy."

Question: How would you feel if someone you loved spoke to you in this way? How would you respond? Do you think someone who loves *you* should speak this way?

3. After Mona spoke, "Hallie's eyes stared back into her own. There were no tears, just a reflection of terror, the terror of a heart's first glimpse of its own strangulating lies illuminated by the power of truth."

Question: What do you think was going through Hallie's mind as she saw the truth? How do you think she could act on that truth?

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Sixteen: Let's Talk About It:

1. It doesn't seem like Hallie is making any progress toward healing from her pain and anger, and her time with Mona is growing shorter. Mona knows, "This struggle wasn't about telling Hallie the right thing the right way. It was about Hallie listening to the voice of God stirring in her own heart."

Mona prays, "God, create a maelstrom in this child's soul if You need to. Break through to her before her parents come to take her away."

2. In what ways can you hear the voice of God in your heart? Was it right for Mona to pray for God to create a "maelstrom" to get through to Hallie?

3. Mona continues her prayer, "And give me grace, Lord, not some feeling I try to muster up on my own. Give me Your love for Ellen and Phil and the vision to see who You created them to be."

Can God give us feelings we can't seem to create on our own? How? Must we help Him?

4. Elsie McFeeney has years of life experience to back up the advice she writes to Hallie, "God gives us a fresh page each and every day, Hallie. This is for your next page and many more to come. Choose carefully what you write."

On the inside of the diary Elsie wrote, "To Hallie with love on the first day of the rest of your life."

Do we really have a "fresh page" for each new day? Can you choose to believe that? Can you choose what to write?

Hallie's Heart

5. Mona won't wear her father's ring because of her anger and unforgiveness toward her father. Hallie has chosen to follow her aunt's example, and takes the ring as proof to herself that "...it was alright to be angry if you were angry. It told me it was alright to hate somebody, even if it was myself." Mona realizes in horror that she had fed the very lie that was consuming Hallie's heart.

Is there anyone from your past who taught you it was okay to be angry or to hate others or yourself? Have you – or are you – setting that example for anyone through your own actions?

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Seventeen: Let's Talk About It:

1. As Mona began the process of forgiving her father and releasing her anger, she began to see new images of him. "...her father standing behind her mother as she rocked, his hand resting lightly on her shoulder. One by one, new pictures washed over her mind with a brilliance that stirred something deep within her, and Mona smiled..."

Is it possible for you to forget the good memories as you focus on the bad memories? If so, can it be possible that we sometimes do not remember things as they really were?

2. A voice inside Mona tells her she must choose, "Bitterness or forgiveness. Truth or a lie. For the first time since the nightmares had come, Mona realized that it was not about choosing after all. It was about giving up."

How is choosing forgiveness "giving up?" How is choosing truth "giving up?" What is Mona giving up when she makes these choices?

3. Once Mona makes the choice to believe truth, "In that moment, the truth flooded her mind, the truth that forgiveness shapes our vision of those we forgive. The truth that forgiveness would shape her from that moment on."

Can there be a single moment when you decide to make a choice to forgive that will shape your life from that point on? Can you choose to forgive yourself?

4. Hallie's heart begs to erase the past. God wants her to know that "the past can't be erased, but it can be redeemed. He doesn't erase the mistakes of our past because He transforms them and redeems them, the same way He redeems and transforms us to become the people He created us to be. That's where freedom lies."

God forgives us for our mistakes and even our deliberate sins. He doesn't erase what has happened or the consequences we live with. But He does turn them around and uses

Hallie's Heart

them for good. Can you allow God to use your mistakes, sins and even the consequences in order for good to come of them?

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Eighteen: Let's Talk About It:

1. Mona is nearly killed in the same way that her niece died – by drowning. Do you think it was cruel of God to allow Hallie to experience this?

2. Was it cruel of God to allow Mona to experience such horrible pain and suffering if it helped to heal others? Does being a Christian sometimes mean suffering? If so, that is very different than our society's view of "all about me." What do you think?

3. Throughout the book Ellen appears selfish, demanding, and even mean. What do you think lies behind her outward actions and appearance? What do you think Ellen is really like inside, in her deepest heart and mind?

4. Through Mona's near death, even from the first rings of the telephone which Ellen fears so much, Ellen is made to face her fear and sorrow. Was it a cruel or merciful situation God allowed?

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Nineteen: Let's Talk About It:

1. Life is full of questions. But in the end "...all the pain, the suffering, the injustice in the world come down to two questions: who is God, and can you trust Him?"

Who do you think God is? Can you trust Him?

2. Hallie has been wrestling with the questions, "Who is God?" and "can you trust Him?" She is not sure of either, because when she looks at her life all she sees is "pain and betrayal and people hurting each other."

If all we have seen is pain and betrayal, and people hurting each other, could that influence the way we see God? Do you think that is what He wants? What He is like?

3. Mona asks Hallie if she thinks there is only pain and betrayal and people hurting each other in life. Hallie's voice breaks as she says, "No." Mona digs a little deeper into Hallie's heart, asking, "And is that a starting point for you? A starting place toward God?" Hallie's answer is "Maybe." So that is where they start.

Can "maybe" a starting place?

4. Where is your "starting place?"

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Twenty: Let's Talk About It:

1. Ellen, the sister Mona said had never been a “friend” had come faithfully to Mona’s bedside at the hospital, massaging her arms and legs, sleeping in a crumpled heap at the foot of the bed and thumbing through the Bible.

What would make Ellen do such things for a sister she “hated”?

2. Hallie is beginning to seek answers about God, like, “Why we’re here and...where we’re going. Whether there’s any reason for all the...garbage.”

Why do you think you are here? Where are you going right now? Five years from now? Ultimately?

3. Why do you think we have to live in this “garbage?”

4. Hallie says she is “...working on believing that I’m really dear to God, that He could really love me so much that He came running after me when I’d done so many awful things.”

Do you believe you are dear to God? Do you think He would come running after you? Even if you did awful things?

Hallie's Heart

5. As Mona lay unable to even speak she prayed, asking God for only one thing – that she would see Hallie and Ellen become the people God created them to be.

It sounds like Mona loves her family enough to want them to be what God created them to be. What do you think that kind of love means?

6. Who has God created *you* to be?

Hallie's Heart

Chapter Twenty-one: Let's Talk About It:

1. Dan thought his plans for college were on hold due to finances. And God was using Dan to help Hallie and her family all the while. In the end, Hallie's dad helps to provide the finances for Dan's education. Why do you think Hallie's dad would do that? Did he do it out of guilt because he left her mother? Or is it possible he did it out of love for Hallie and gratitude to Dan, regardless of what had transpired between him and her mother? Are people's always what they seem to be?

2. Adam Dean and Mona did not get off to a very good start. In fact, for many people the confusion and anger that came between them in the beginning would have been the end of any potential friendship. But in the end they become friends. How did Adam's actions toward Mona, even though she had misjudged him and treated him unfairly, help to heal and create a friendship?

3. As the book concludes, "Mona was suddenly aware, hilariously aware of the stubble on her head and the perspiration on her cheeks. She threw back her head and laughed, a laugh that bubbled up from deep within her.:

Clearly what had happened to Mona, Hallie, and their family was not funny. So what kind of laugh was Mona laughing? Is there a difference between happiness and joy?

4. Are you able to find joy, even when you have painful circumstances and memories in your life? What can bring you joy?
