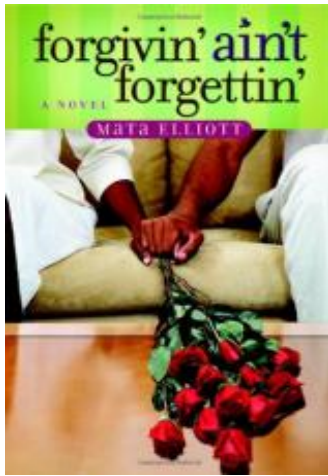


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## Forgivin' Ain't Forgettin'

by Mata Elliot

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### About the Book

A wrenching betrayal from long ago has left Cassidy Beckett a broken and unforgiving woman. For years, her solution has been to immerse herself in being a schoolteacher, running the reading program at her church, and burying her feelings behind her faith.

She's definitely not interested in Trevor Monroe, her community's hotly pursued Mighty Man of God-and not happy that this widower and single father has come to live with her and her aunt...or that he has a knack for getting through her defenses. But a bond between them is starting to grow, and soon Cassidy's past rises up, demanding to be dealt with. Now only the kind of deliverance and wisdom that God provides can help them find healing in His Word-and each other

### Discussion Guide

1. It isn't unusual for gossip to start surrounding a recently widowed (or divorced) person who resumes dating or even becomes engaged. Do you think there's an appropriate time lapse for a person to "mourn" a relationship before embarking on a new one? Why or why not? What reservations do you have about hooking up with someone who lost a former partner through death or divorce?
2. When depression threatens, Cassidy pulls out a memory verse to encourage herself. What scriptures do you keep on tap, so to speak, to lift your spirit?
3. To what degree are you content in the life God has given you --- single or married? How do you relate to friends who are in different phases of life --- or different degrees of contentment?
4. Cassidy knows her scripture, studies the Bible regularly, and truly believes the Word. However, she doesn't feel worthy of claiming the promise of God's peace and sustenance by surrendering her past to the Lord. What keeps you

from laying hold of God's promises?

5. Considering that both Cassidy and Trevor are wrestling with issues of grief, their discussion about tears raises interesting questions. How do you grieve? How do you relate to others --- men and women --- who grieve differently? What does scripture say about grief?

6. Derek doesn't want Trevor to call Social Services or the police about his abusive and neglectful mother. At the same time, he struggles against hatred for her. How would you counsel youth like Derek?

7. What vibe do you get from the Special Day ministry meetings? Have you ever had a similar experience in a ministry --- one that just didn't feel quite right? What was it about the ministry?

8. Like Brenda, Aunt Odessa dies without warning, giving no one opportunity to say good-bye. What comfort can we find when a loved one passes away suddenly?

9. While it is true Rave had ulterior motives for expressing concern about Trevor and Cassidy's living arrangements, Pastor Audrey seems to feel the concern is legitimate. Do you agree? Why or why not? How much effort do you expend in avoiding situations that might tempt you?

10. Do you believe in love at first sight? If so, how do you define it? What do you think of Oliver Toby's definition: "I'm saying that I only wanted good for Louise [from the first time he saw her]. She immediately became a part of my prayers . . . That's what true love is: wanting the best for the other person"?

11. Rave admits to herself that sex has become a drug for her. Does learning about her past experiences with sex (e.g., incest, rape, molestation) make it easier for you to sympathize with her and care about her? Why or why not?

12. Cassidy had Dunbar; Trevor had Kendall. Both struggled to accept the presence of the other's "friend" in their married life together. Is it possible for a married person to have a friend of the opposite sex without negatively affecting the marriage? Why or why not? How do you handle your spouse's (or boyfriend's or girlfriend's) friendships with a person of the opposite sex?

13. What was your response to Clement's advice about sex at the bachelor party? How do you apply Ephesians 5:28 to sexual intimacy? What experience have you had with power in a man's hands --- for good or for evil?

14. Oliver Toby advises Cassidy that while some memories are just that and safely left in the past, other memories can't remain secret --- because they can't be handled alone. How do you discern when you can safely put a memory to rest versus bringing it into the light?

15. Do you agree or disagree with this statement --- and why? "Cassidy had turned him away. So if her husband turned to Kendall, there was no one to blame but herself."

16. Cassidy accepts pastoral counseling from Clement and Vivaca but strongly resists therapy. Why? What experience do you have with counseling or therapy? Were they Christian or non-Christian, positive or negative? Do you believe that seeking therapy (even from a nonbeliever) is beneficial? Why or why not?

17. What would you advise young women like Cassidy and Rave, who found themselves pregnant and without a supportive marriage partner? What options are available to such a woman? What seems good for her --- and/or best for the child?

18. Second families --- whether created through remarriage, foster care, or adoption --- present complex politics, tensions, insecurities, and other challenges, for spouses and children alike. What experience do you have with such families? How have you navigated the challenges, and what sources of help have been available?

19. How has Cassidy's inability to love herself obstructed her abilities in other areas (e.g., marriage, parenting, ministry)? How does Cassidy's example shed new light on Jesus' selection of "Love your neighbor as yourself " as the second greatest commandment.

## Author Bio

Mata Elliott began writing, her first novel, *Forgivin' Ain't Forgettin'* during the difficult season of caregiving for two ailing parents. Prior to taking on the role as care giver, she graduated from Temple University with a degree in education and taught on the elementary level for nearly ten years. When Mata is not writing, she enjoys reading, taking long walks, eating ice cream, watching romantic movies with her husband, and playing with her two senior citizen cats. Mata has a soft spot in her heart for all animals and whenever possible she makes it her mission to rescue stray or abandoned cats and dogs and find them a loving home. Mata is the mother of one son and she lives in Philadelphia.

One of Mata's favorite websites is [Crosswalk.com](http://Crosswalk.com). A Christian who acknowledges that "I could not write one word without the help of God," Mata deeply appreciates the devotional and Bible study tools [Crosswalk.com](http://Crosswalk.com) offers each day.

Mata has been an avid reader since childhood thanks to her mother who made visiting the library and bookstore a priority. "I do not have a favorite author," Mata says, "but favorite stories. One of them from childhood was *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. This story allowed me to see what it was like for a young African-American girl growing up in Mississippi during a time when Blacks were not given the same opportunities as Whites."

A favorite book of Mata's is *The Darkest Child* by Delores Philips. "This story also takes place in the rural south and is the account of an African American girl's journey into young womanhood. The story was written in such a way that I felt as if I was this girl. The author drew me in with every word."

Mata is a member of American Christian Fiction Writers. Their website is [www.AmericanChristianFictionWriters.com](http://www.AmericanChristianFictionWriters.com).

Other sites she enjoys are:

[www.cookieaisle.com](http://www.cookieaisle.com)

[www.wordpraize.com](http://www.wordpraize.com)

[www.sormag.com](http://www.sormag.com)

[www.rawsistaz.com](http://www.rawsistaz.com)

[www.romanceincolor.com](http://www.romanceincolor.com)

[www.book-remarks.com](http://www.book-remarks.com)

[www.apooo.org](http://www.apooo.org) (a place of our own)

[www.goodgirlbookclubonline.com](http://www.goodgirlbookclubonline.com)

[www.spiritltdwriter.com](http://www.spiritltdwriter.com)

Mata Elliott lives in Philadelphia with her husband and son.

## Critical Praise

"A bright new star in faith-filled fiction."

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