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My Son, John

by Kathi Macias



About the Book

Murder. Could there be a more chilling word? Could it be any more horrible than to have a loved one killed, brutally and heartlessly, without obvious reason or motive? When Liz Peterson?s elderly mother is found viciously beaten to death in her home, Liz and her husband, Charles, along with their grown son, John, and teenage daughter, Sarah, are horrified beyond words. Their previously predictable, respectable lives seem to have vanished without a trace, as they struggle to make sense of a senseless act.

And then a second blow --- more devastating, if possible, than the first --- rocks them to their core. John is arrested for his grandmother?s murder. As what?s left of the Peterson family begins to crumble under the weight of loss and accusation, the Petersons? longstanding Christian faith is put to the test in a way they could never have imagined, and unconditional love is stretched to its limits. Can God bring healing to a family torn apart by a brutal crime?

Discussion Guide

Prologue

1. Have you ever visited anyone in jail or prison? If so, what thoughts ran through your mind at the time? If not, would you be open to such a visit?

2. What do you suppose the silent clock signified in this scene?

Chapter 1

1. What one situation seemed to ?explode? in your own life, changing it so drastically that it seemed to mark the ?before? and ?after? of your existence?

2. What were some of the relationships/circumstances that were impacted by this drastic before/after occurrence?

Chapter 2

1. Consider Liz?s world, as it seemingly caved in around her. Why do you suppose she acted as she did toward the others in this chapter, John in particular, even though she knew nothing yet about who had murdered her mother?

2. Why do you think John acted as he did throughout this chapter? What do you see as the primary emotions fueling his behavior?

Chapter 3

1. What do you suppose was going on with John throughout the services, and why did he distance himself from his family?

2. What part did denial play in Liz?s life at this point, and what do you think was driving it?

Chapter 4

1. Describe the emotions that were playing out inside Liz while she met with the detectives, and why were they significant?

2. Now that you?ve met Sarah ?up close and personal,? how would you describe her character and maturity level, and how do those factors play into her ability to deal with the unfolding double tragedy in her family?s life?

Chapter 5

1. Consider Liz?s two main meetings in this chapter --- first with her lawyer-husband and his partner and second with her pastor. What do you suppose was her main objective in each of these meetings?

2. Describe the significance of the spark of hope Liz experienced when she spoke with her pastor on the phone after his visit with John.

Chapter 6

1. List/consider the various emotions that Liz experienced during this first visit to her son in jail.

2. Describe what is going on in the relationship between Sarah and her mother. How is the family tragedy affecting Sarah?s concept of God?

Chapter 7

1. What do you believe was going on in Liz?s mind during her phone conversation with her employer and the temporary girl? Is it possible Liz?s interpretation of those conversations was wrong, and if so, in what way?

2. What is your initial impression of Kate? Have you ever known anyone who, like Kate, made you feel inferior by comparison, even if he/she was not attempting to do so? How did that affect your relationship with that person?

Chapter 8

1. Have you, or someone you know, ever been like John --- claiming not to believe in God and yet wondering if what others believe about Him might be true? How much of a part do you suppose the fear of hell plays in the human response to faith in God?

2. Why do you suppose John found it so much easier to talk with his aunt about important issues than with his mother?

Chapter 9

1. Why do you suppose Liz experienced such conflicting emotions and behaved so erratically when she went to church on Wednesday evening?

2. Have you, like Liz, ever received so much bad news that you found yourself wishing you could die and go home to heaven --- or else blocking out the news altogether in an effort to make it go away? If so, what were the final results in the way you handled the situation?

Chapter 10

1. Why do you suppose Liz had such a difficult time accepting the fact that John was considering not having a trial?

2. Charles was a lawyer who well understood the legal implications of all that was transpiring; he was also John?s father. Describe what you believe was going on in his heart and mind throughout this ordeal.

Chapter 11

1. Describe the difficult and conflicting emotions Liz must have felt upon returning to her place of employment and meeting her temporary replacement.

2. What part do you suppose fear played in John?s thoughts during this time, and why? What other emotions seemed paramount in his thoughts at this point?

Chapter 12

1. As Liz drove to the beach that night, what do you suppose she was running from and to, and why did the theft of her family pictures impact her so deeply?

2. What do you suppose caused Liz to turn from gratitude for Linda?s visit to suspicion that Linda and Marge were betraying her in some way?

Chapter 13

1. Discuss the significance of the leaves blowing in the wind in Liz?s dream.

2. Consider Liz?s visit from her pastor and his wife. What times in your life were you so hurt that all you wanted was for someone to sit quietly and just be there while you cried?

Chapter 14

1. What do you suppose was behind Sarah?s removal of John?s picture from above the mantle?

2. Why do you think the simple joint prayer between Charles and Liz sparked hope in her heart, even though nothing in their circumstances had changed?

Chapter 15

1. Explain how Kate?s visit spurred Liz to make the visit to her father.

2. Discuss the emotions that ran through Liz?s heart and mind during her visit, and why her father?s words so impacted her at that time.

Chapter 16

1. Why do you think Liz felt the need to discuss her visit to her father with her pastor?

2. What was the significance of Liz?s dream about the unnamed shadow that beckoned her --- and the words that Linda shared with her about Job?

Chapter 17

1. What changed in Liz?s heart when she stretched her arms toward the empty spot above the fireplace where John?s picture had once been?

2. What was the significance of Sarah?s replacing John?s picture, and why do you suppose she did it?

Chapter 18

1. What reason could John have had for finally getting out the Bible he had received from Pastor Ken, and why was he so concerned that his new roommate not notice it? What was your reaction when you discovered that Chato was a believer?

2. Why was it a positive step for Liz to go to breakfast with Kate, and why did Kate react as she did when Liz told her

what had happened between her and the Lord? Why do you think Liz was finally able to hear the ticking of the once silent clock on the wall behind John?

Final Thoughts to Consider

1. How has this book affected the way you view people who have been arrested/convicted of a crime, and what, if anything, do you intend to do about that changed viewpoint?

2. In light of the message of this book, how would you define loving someone --- ?no matter what??

Author Bio

Kathi Macias is an award-winning author of more than twenty fiction and nonfiction books. She has also ghostwritten and collaborated on books for a number of well-known individuals. She is a staff member for The Christian Communicator Manuscript Critique Service and a member of The Christian Proofreaders and Editors Network, Christian Authors Network, American Christian Fiction Writers, Christian Writers Fellowship International, Advanced Writers/Speakers Association, for whom she serves as membership chair, and Orange County Christian Writers Fellowship. She is the 2008 winner of AWSA?s Golden Scroll Award.

A former newspaper columnist and string reporter, Macias is a credentialed minister and served as an associate pastor at a large church in Southern California, where she did biblical counseling, trained small group leaders, and oversaw support/recovery ministries. She is a popular speaker at churches, women?s clubs and retreats, and writers? conferences, and has appeared on several radio and TV programs. For more information, go to www.kathimacias.com.

Critical Praise

"A novel about the worst kind of betrayal a mother can experience, **My Son, John** is an emotional journey through places no mother wants to go. I found myself choked up on numerous occasions as I imagined myself in the same situation and wondered how God could turn such tragedy into good. This gripping story shows the beauty and power of forgiveness and demonstrates a love that surpasses human understanding."

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