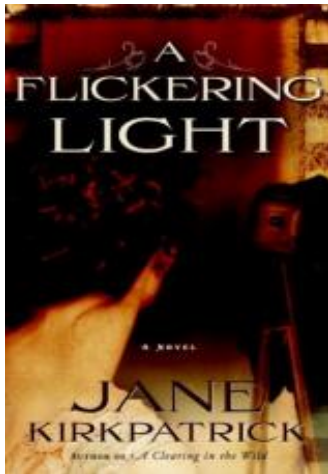


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# A Flickering Light: Portraits of the Heart, Book 1

by Jane Kirkpatrick

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## About the Book

Fifteen-year-old Jessie Ann Gaebele loves nothing more than capturing a gorgeous Minnesota landscape when the sunlight casts its most mesmerizing shadows. So when F.J. Bauer hires her in 1907 to assist in his studio and darkroom, her dreams for a career in photography appear to find root in reality.

With the infamous hazards of the explosive powder used for lighting and the toxic darkroom chemicals, photography is considered a man's profession. Yet Jessie shows remarkable talent in both the artistry and business of running a studio. She proves less skillful, however, at managing her growing attraction to the very married Mr. Bauer.

This luminous coming-of-age tale deftly exposes the intricate shadows that play across every dream worth pursuing --- and the irresistible light that beckons the dreamer on.

## Discussion Guide

1. What did Jessie Ann Gaebele think she wanted? What got in her way of achieving that? Or did she achieve her goal? What role did her being a woman in a man's profession play in the arc of her story?
2. What does Emily Dickinson's poetic line "tell all the truth but tell it slant" have to say about this novel? How do the lines "The Truth must dazzle gradually/Or every man be blind" apply?
3. How did a sense of unworthiness affect Jessie's decision making? What role did grief play? How did her sense of self affect the outcome of this story?

4. Who in this story deceived themselves the most: F. J.? Mrs. Bauer? Jessie? What truths did they have to tell themselves in order to change the path they were on? Did they? Why or why not?
5. Do you know gifted people who appear to sabotage or squander their talents? What kinds of actions by others can bring them back, or must one make such a journey alone?
6. Have you ever acted in ways that were contrary to your own self-interest? What might have motivated you? What lessons did you learn from that experience?
7. People engaged in clandestine activities often justify their thinking. A common thread of thought is that "no one else is being injured by my actions." In this story, who was adversely affected? Is there anything they could have done to change their own destiny?
8. How can we offer compassion to people we love who make poor choices without preventing them from discovering their own truths? Has there been a time in your life when someone spoke the truth with less dazzle so you could see it?
9. What role did artistry play in the lives of these characters? For whom did the particular art form such as music, textile creation, photography, provide direction?
10. What do you think of the definitions of faith, hope, and love offered by Edward Everett Hale at the beginning of this novel? Did the characters portrayed act in ways that demonstrated those "three eternities"?
11. While most of the story was told in third person, through the eyes of Jessie, F. J., and Mrs. Bauer, what role did the first-person accounts and pictures of photographs play in your experience of this story? Did their presence distract or did you look forward to what the next photograph would reveal through Jessie's eyes?
12. **A Flickering Light** is based on the author's own grandmother's story. Does that knowledge in any way shape your reading of the book differently than a novel that is formed of fully imagined characters? Were you aware of this prior to reading **A Flickering Light**? Does the timing of that awareness change your perspective on this story?
13. In the author's own notes prior to writing this story, she described her attitude toward **A Flickering Light** this way: "This is a story about integrity, wholeness, the blend of soul and role in order to fulfill God's promise in our lives." Did she accomplish that goal? Why or why not?

## Author Bio

Jane Kirkpatrick is the *New York Times* and CBA bestselling author of more than 25 books, including *A SWEETNESS TO THE SOUL*, which won the coveted Wrangler Award from the Western Heritage Center. Her works have been finalists for the Christy Award, Spur Award, Oregon Book Award, and Reader's Choice awards, and have won the WILLA Literary Award and Carol Award for Historical Fiction. Many of her titles have been Book of the Month and Literary Guild selections. You can also read her work in more than 50 publications, including *Decision*, *Private Pilot*, and *Daily Guideposts*. Jane lives in Central Oregon with her husband, Jerry.

## Critical Praise

"Jane Kirkpatrick's brilliance as a storyteller and her elegant artistry with the written word shine like a beacon in **A Flickering Light**. A master at weaving historical accounts with threads of story, Jane has that rare ability to take her reader on a journey through time. You nearly feel the ground move beneath your feet."

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### **A Flickering Light: Portraits of the Heart, Book 1**

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