Bridge to Haven

by Francine Rivers



About the Book

To those who matter in 1950s Hollywood, Lena Scott is the hottest rising star to hit the silver screen since Marilyn Monroe. Few know her real name is Abra. Even fewer know the price she?s paid to finally feel like she?s somebody.

To Pastor Ezekiel Freeman, Abra will always be the little girl who stole his heart the night he found her, a wailing newborn abandoned under a bridge on the outskirts of Haven. Zeke and his son, Joshua --- Abra?s closest friend --- watch her grow into an exotic beauty. But Zeke knows the circumstances surrounding her birth etched scars deep in her heart, scars that leave her vulnerable to a fast-talking bad boy who proclaims his love and lures her to Tinseltown. Hollywood feels like a million miles from Haven, and naive Abra quickly learns what?s expected of an ambitious girl with stars in her eyes. But fame comes at an awful price. She has burned every bridge to get exactly what she thought she wanted. Now, all she wants is a way back home.

In this riveting and highly anticipated tale of temptation, grace and unconditional love, *New York Times* bestselling author Francine Rivers delivers big-canvas storytelling at its very best.

Discussion Guide

1. The bridge to Haven figures prominently in the story: Abra is born --- and abandoned --- under the bridge. Pastor Zeke finds her there. Abra crosses over the bridge to leave, and later to return. Joshua brings her as far as the bridge, and Zeke is waiting for her there, but Abra has to decide to cross the bridge herself. Eventually she is baptized under the bridge. Discuss the symbolism of the bridge to Haven. Who --- or what --- is the bridge? What are some bridges in your own life? Are you eager or reluctant to cross them? Why?

2. Pastor Zeke gives in to Marianne?s pleas to take the infant Abra home, even though he knows it?s dangerous. Do you think he made the right choice? Why or why not? Do you believe it?s important to distinguish between God?s leading

and our own desires? If you do think it?s important, what are some ways we can do so?

3. Peter and Priscilla Matthews want to adopt Abra from the start. Why do you think they are prepared to love this abandoned baby? In what ways do they show their love for Abra, both as a child and as a rebellious young woman? What mistakes do they make? Is there someone in your life who causes you the kind of heartache Abra caused her adoptive family? What are some of the ways you have coped with that relationship?

4. After Peter and Priscilla adopt Abra, she watches Zeke from her bedroom window and prays that God will give her back to him. Convinced that God has refused to answer her prayer, she turns her back on Him for many years. How and when is her prayer eventually answered? What prayers or dreams in your life have seemed to go unfulfilled, maybe for years, before finally becoming reality? What prayers or dreams are you still waiting to see fulfilled?

5. Mitzi is a stable force in Abra?s life, a loving friend who is always honest with her. Did you have a mentor like that when you were growing up, or do you have one now? If so, what is the most important thing your mentor taught you? Is there someone in your life --- a child or a young adult --- for whom you can be a godly mentor? What would that involve?

6. Joshua, a man of peace, is deeply scarred by his experiences in the Korean War. Today we would call his condition PTSD. How does his emotional state affect him when he returns home? How does it impact his relationship with his father? With Abra? Is there someone in your life who struggles with PTSD? What are some of the ways we can help people in this situation?

7. As soon as he meets Dylan Stark, Joshua sees him for what he is. But he isn?t able to persuade Abra to stay away from him. Could Joshua --- or Zeke or Priscilla or Peter --- have done something different that would have been more effective? Have you ever seen a loved one heading down a path you didn?t agree with? How did you handle it?

8. Part of Abra?s reluctance to return home, even once she realizes that running away was a mistake, is her fear of what people will say. Do you think her fears are founded? Has there been a time in your life when you struggled to make the right choice for fear of how other people would react? How did you handle it? What advice would you give to a young person in Abra?s situation?

9. As a teenager, Abra tells Joshua, ?I can?t remember a time when I haven?t felt like I wasn?t enough.? Why do you think she feels this way, when she is surrounded by people like Pastor Zeke, Joshua, Mitzi and the Matthews family --- all people who love her? What is missing? Have you ever felt this way? How have you tried to fill that need in your own life?

10. After Abra runs away, Joshua feels the need to pursue her. But Zeke repeatedly tells him that maybe the best thing he can do is let go of her. Did you agree with Zeke?s advice? Have you ever had to let go of someone or something --- like a dream? What was the result? How do you know when it?s time to keep pursuing something or time to let go?

11. Franklin Moss asks Abra what she wants, and she says she wants to be ?somebody.? What do you think she means? Why does she feel that way? What kinds of things does she think will help her achieve her goal? What do these things really end up giving --- or costing --- her? In what ways have you, or someone you love, chased after things you think will satisfy you? In what ways were those things fulfilling? In what ways did they leave you empty and wounded?

12. Is Abra to blame for Franklin?s suicide? If she had not left the note for him, do you think things would have turned out differently? Are there things you have wished you could take back after you saw the effect they had on someone else?

13. As Joshua points out, it seems providential that both he and Abra end up in Agua Dulce at the same time. Can you point to an instance in your life like that --- something that was so coincidental you couldn?t help but see the hand of God at work? Why is it easier to see God?s hand in our lives in retrospect than to trust that He?s leading us in any given moment?

14. When Abra reads the Gideon Bible in her motel room at Agua Dulce, she seems only able to focus on the verses that confirm her guilt and sin. If you could sit down and talk with her at that moment, what would you tell her?

15. When Joshua brings Abra home to Haven, Zeke is praying on the bridge, almost as if he is waiting for her. How did that scene make you feel? Have you ever experienced a similar situation, either in Abra?s or Zeke?s position?

16. Joshua is the only man who has ever loved and desired Abra as God intends for a man to love and desire a woman. What are some examples that show how his love is different from the ways Dylan and Franklin felt about her? Are there people in your life who love you in a godly way? Are you able to love others like this?

17. What do you imagine will happen to Susan Wells after the conclusion of the story? Do you think her life will be different when she starts over somewhere else? Should she have stayed in Haven? Why or why not?

18. Each of the main characters in the book has a unique struggle: Zeke has to give Abra away; Joshua has to let Abra go; and Abra has to decide whether to return. Which character do you most identify with? Why?

Author Bio

International bestselling author Francine Rivers had a successful writing career in the general market for several years becoming a born-again Christian; she then wrote REDEEMING LOVE as her statement of faith. A retelling of the biblical story of Gomer and Hosea set during the time of the California Gold Rush, REDEEMING LOVE is now considered by many to be a classic work of Christian fiction and it continues to be one of the industry?s top-selling titles year after year.

Since REDEEMING LOVE, Francine has published numerous bestselling novels with Christian themes --- including THE MASTERPIECE, BRIDGE TO HAVEN and A VOICE IN THE WIND --- and she has continued to win both industry acclaim and reader loyalty around the world. Her Christian novels have been awarded or nominated for numerous honors and in 1997, after winning her third RITA Award for Inspirational Fiction, Francine was inducted into the Romance Writers of America?s Hall of Fame. In 2015, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from American Christian Fiction Writers (ACFW). Francine?s novels have been translated into over 30 different languages,

and she enjoys bestseller status in many foreign countries.

Francine and her husband live in Northern California and enjoy time spent with their grown children and grandchildren. She uses her writing to draw closer to the Lord, and she desires that through her work she might worship and praise Jesus for all He has done and is doing in her life.

Critical Praise

Rivers (REDEEMING LOVE) returns with a page-turning recasting of the story of the prodigal son, here a prodigal daughter. In 1936, Abra Matthews is found as a newborn under a bridge in the small California town of Haven by Pastor Ezekiel Freeman. She?s taken in, but never feels as if she quite belongs, so she is susceptible to a beguiling young man who years later lures 17-year-old Abra to Hollywood. There, she becomes starlet Lena Scott, made over by a Pygmalion-like agent who wants everything from her, even while Abra/Lena comes to understand the cost of what she thought she wanted. Rivers nicely evokes 1950s Hollywood, with its gossip columnists, high-wattage movie stars, and ladder-climbing aspirants; Elvis Presley and Lana Turner put in cameos. This story arc will be particularly resonant for Christian readers, but Rivers has the writing ability to reel in others who enjoy a well-told tale of redemption.

?Publishers Weekly

In Rivers? exquisite style, she takes the Biblical story of Ezekiel 16 and translates it into a character-driven tale set in the ?30s through the ?60s. Relating the experiences of the characters to the reader?s relationship with God takes the story to the next level. Richly detailed, at times disturbing, but completely real and dynamic, this is a book to savor.

?Romantic Times Book Reviews

Francine Rivers is perhaps the best novelist of our time. In BRIDGE TO HAVEN, she quickly captured me with her characters and pulled me into the story of this prodigal daughter. It?s a story you can?t forget. I predict it will become a blockbuster like REDEEMING LOVE. Novel Rocket and I give it our highest recommendation. It?s a 5-star must read. BRIDGE TO HAVEN has been added to my Top Ten for 2014 and My All Time Favorites List.

?Novel Rocket

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Publication Date: April 1, 2015
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 480 pages
Publisher: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
ISBN-10: 1414368194
ISBN-13: 9781414368191