ReadingGroupGuides
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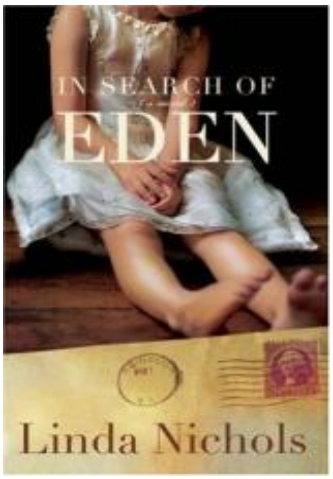
In Search of Eden

by Linda Nichols



About the Book

A fractured heart... A hope renewed...

Today is your birthday... I want you to know that you are in my heart, as you always have been. I pray for you every day. I pray I did the right thing...

Thus wrote Miranda DeSpain on the anniversary of the day that changed her life forever, the day her heart was torn in pieces. Ever since that wrenching event, she's been unable to settle down, embrace life. She finds herself starting one adventure after another, trying to forget. But she never can. As she approaches her twenty-seventh birthday, she determines once again to reinvent her circumstances, to start anew. But there's one loose end to tie up first...

Joseph North, chief of police in Abingdon, Virginia, has always tried to do what is right, to perform his duty and protect those he loves. He is suspicious of the new woman in town and, checking further, discovers she is a person with seemingly no history. Then he finds a baby picture of his niece in her possession....

A story of law and grace, of forgiveness and redemption, of finding joy and rest in a broken world.

Discussion Guide

1. What did the epigraph "He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord" say to you before you read the story? What does it mean to you now? Have you ever had a wilderness or desert experience that God turned into a garden of Eden?

2. Nurse Wanda, disregarding the instructions given by her patient's mother, allowed the young girl to see her baby for a few moments before it was taken away by the adoptive parents. Discuss Wanda's action. Was it right or wrong? Why?

What would you have done in the situation?

3. Discuss your reaction to Dorrie's mother, Noreen. Did she do the right thing in making adoption arrangements? Were there any other options? Was it right for her to never tell Dorrie anything about the baby? Did your opinion of Noreen change at any time? If so, when and why?

4. Noreen said Dorrie inherited her wandering spirit from her father. Do you think it was an inherited characteristic? If not, where did it come from? What events influenced or molded Dorrie's character?

5. Miranda (formerly Dorrie) felt an enormous amount of guilt regarding her child, that somehow she'd abandoned her or him. Was that a credible feeling? Do you know of anyone who has given up a child for adoption? If so, how does she now feel about her decision? Discuss the various emotional ramifications of making such a decision--or having it made for you.

6. Eden knew she was adopted. Was it right that she had to keep it a secret? Was Eden right in her assessment that her mother wished she'd never adopted her? Discuss their relationship. How and why was it different from Eden's relationship with her dad?

7. For eleven years Joseph held bitterness against David and Sarah for their act of betrayal. How did this change him? Why was it so difficult for him to forgive them? Do you know anyone who is still holding a grudge for an offense committed years ago? If so, discuss how it has affected that person's life.

8. The reader is given hints all is not well in Grady Adair's life, but Eden took him at face value and became his friend. Discuss what it must have been like for this young boy to pretend everything was all right when he knew his dad was scamming gullible old folks. Have you ever been loyal to someone you knew was involved in wrongdoing? Either by choice or by force?

9. Ruth Williams had suffered the loss of her husband and then the heartbreak of her two sons' estrangement, yet she was a strong Christian. She put on the armor of God in prayer daily. Why, then, was she vulnerable to Johnny Adair? What does that teach us?

10. Miranda decided not to tell Eden that she was her biological mother. Was that the right decision? Imagine yourself in her position. Could you have done what she did after finally finding your child? Can you think of any better solution?

11. For Miranda, the literal meaning of the title In Search of Eden means a search for her child. What deeper meaning might it have for her? For Joseph? For Sarah? For other characters? What does Eden mean to you? Are you in search of Eden?

12. Noreen is an example of someone who is a nominal Christian yet lives in misery. She reflects with pride at one point that she has been scrupulous all her life about obeying the law. Joseph is also dedicated to the law. Do you see any applications here in a spiritual sense? What are the consequences of living by the law instead of by grace?

13. Miranda's counselor encourages her to enjoy God's good gifts in His presence. Miranda realizes some people are like the frightened dog who fearfully protected its food. What causes this distortion of God's character? Do you struggle with

the concept of God as a giver rather than a taker? What does John 10:10 say about this?

14. Was life on planet Earth more like Eden in days gone by? Were times then better or easier? Are there certain places more like Eden? How about Christian communities or sects that withdraw from the world and live separately? Do you feel they are legitimate or false? Why?

Author Bio

Linda Nichols, a graduate of the University of Washington, is a novelist with a unique gift of touching readers' hearts with her stories. NOT A SPARROW FALLS, her bestselling debut novel for the Christian fiction market, was a 2003 Christy Award finalist in the contemporary category. Linda and her family make their home in Tacoma, Washington.

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