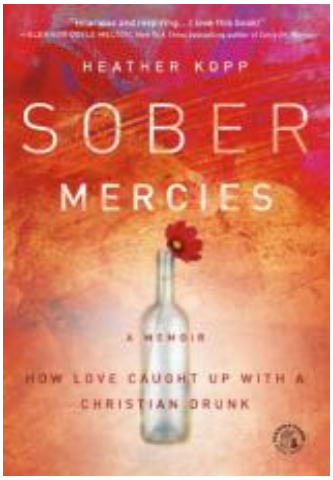
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Sober Mercies: How Love Caught Up with a Christian Drunk

by Heather Kopp



About the Book

Where do you turn for hope when you already have the answer --- but the answer isn't working?

As a long-time Christian, Heather Kopp never expected to become an out-of-control alcoholic who kept private stashes of booze all over the place --- tucked behind books in her study, zipped into a special compartment in her oversized purse, at the back of her closet stuffed inside her boots.

Even as her career and marriage teetered on the brink, Kopp couldn't get a grip, desperately hiding the true extent of her drinking from the rest of the world --- her husband included. During the day she wrote books about God and prayer and family. At night she'd locked herself in her bathroom to guzzle chardonnay.

For her, as for many Christians who struggle with addiction, overwhelming shame and confusion only made things worse. Why wasn't her faith enough to save her? Why didn't repentance, Bible reading and prayer work? Where was God?

Discussion Guide

1. In what way did Heather?s story affect you most, and why?

2. A major theme in SOBER MERCIES is shame and secrecy. Can you relate to Heather?s desperate fear of having the truth of her life exposed? What role does shame play in Heather?s addiction?

3. Heather reveals in SOBER MERCIES that her son was spiraling into alcoholism at the same time that she was hiding her excessive drinking. Why do you think she behaved so hypocritically? Have you ever done something similar, if on a lesser scale?

4. Heather suggests that her husband didn?t suspect she was a secret drunkbecause he was already aware that she was a regular one. Plus, it would be beneath Dave?s dignity to snoop. What do you think? Was her husband in denial? Why do you think loved ones are so often the last to recognize an addiction?

5. Heather enters rehab with some common stereotypes in her head. She?s pretty sure that she?s fundamentally different from her fellow addicted patients. How does she come to understand that they are exactly alike? Have you ever had a similar experience?

6. After becoming involved in a recovery community, Heather realizes that she has never before experienced such a powerful sense of connection, not even in church. She writes, ?Many months would pass before I understood that people bond more deeply over shared brokenness than they do over shared beliefs.? Do you think this is true? If so, why or why not?

7. Six months after Heather gets sober, she has a relapse. What did her setback accomplish in terms of her spiritual journey? Can you think of a time in your own past when a personal failure was --- as surprising as it might sound --- just what the doctor ordered?

8. Heather writes, ?Regardless of when or where it started, I had mistaken a belief-based faith for an experience-based faith. I?d been on a prideful intellectual journey aimed at being right about God instead of on a desperate soul journey aimed at being real with God.? Have you ever experienced a similar spiritual realization? What happened? With her new insight in hand, how does Heather go about changing?

9. Even after Noah takes steps toward recovery, Heather finds herself afraid to hope that it will last. After a tearful wrestling match with God she concludes: ?Either I trusted God with Noah?s entire life and death in a way that surpassed my limited understanding of what good would look like, or I didn?t trust Him at all.? What do you think she meant by this? Have you ever had a similar experience? Talk about it.

10. In SOBER MERCIES, Heather concludes that addiction is a disease that involves both ?sin? and ?sickness.? Do you agree? Why or why not?

11. In your opinion, what is the most important message of Heather?s book for someone who suffers from an addiction of any kind? For the person who knows and loves that addict?

12. And finally, what might be the most important message for churches?

Author Bio

Heather Kopp is an author, editor, and blogger. Among her books are a critically acclaimed memoir, I WENT TO THE ANIMAL FAIR and THE DIETER'S PRAYER BLOOK. With her husband, David, she wrote ROAR! A Christian Family Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia, the *Praying the Bible* series, and other books. Heather blogs about addiction, grace and recovery at HeatherKopp.com. She and her husband have five grown children, and live in Colorado.

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