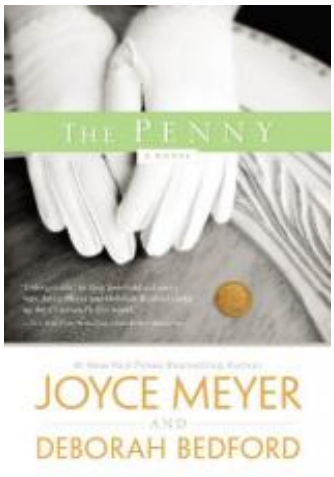
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The Penny: A Novel

by Joyce Meyer and Deborah Bedford



About the Book

Jenny Blake has a theory about life: big decisions often don't amount to much, but little decisions sometimes transform everything. Her theory proves true the summer she's 14, when she makes the decision to pick up a penny embedded in asphalt and consequently ends up stopping a robbery, getting a job, and meeting someone who changes her life forever?Miss Shaw. Together they form a friendship that dares both of them to confront secrets in their pasts?secrets that threaten to destroy them.

Jenny helps Miss Shaw open up to the community around her, while Miss Shaw teaches Jenny to meet even life's most painful challenges with confidence and faith. This unexpected relationship transforms them both in ways neither could have anticipated, and the ripple effect that begins that summer goes on to bring new life to the people around them, revealing how God works in the smallest details?even in something as small as THE PENNY.

Discussion Guide

1. Jenny prayed two heartfelt prayers even when she didn't understand much about prayer or about God. When Jenny prayed the "prayer of salvation," nothing magical happened. She wondered if being saved by Jesus would change anything at home. Again when Jenny prayed for Aurelia, she wasn't sure of the results. Talk about God's faithfulness to answer our prayers, and the answers that may or may not look like what we expect or want.

2. When Jenny decided to pick up the penny, her action began a series of life-changing events. "Then the noise of Grand Avenue went silent. Go back, something inside me insisted. *Don't miss this chance*" (p. 9). "I wasn't going to let him use me to hurt somebody I love" (p. 114). Discuss the difference between deciding on our own to do something, and being drawn by the Holy Spirit into something beyond ourselves. John 6:44 sheds some light on this: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (NIV).

3. Throughout the story, Grace Kelly was an idol for Jean while Jenny put Miss Shaw on a pedestal. For Jean, going "bonkers over Grace Kelly" was a way to escape to a different world. On the other hand, Miss Shaw slowly became a trusted friend to Jenny. Discuss the pros and cons of having an "idol" versus a true friend who has problems of his or her own.

4. 1 Peter 3:1 speaks of a relationship between a husband and wife when it says, "they may be won without words by the behavior of their wives" (NIV). Apply this Scripture beyond the confines of marriage and point out ways Miss Shaw, Aurelia, and Aurelia's family lived out the gospel in front of Jenny.

5. Miss Shaw gives a great example of extending grace to others. "But here's the thing with Miss Shaw: she surprised me. When I took my anger out in the jewelry shop, she didn't react the way I thought she would. . . . I waited all day for her to chastise me, only she didn't" (p. 137). Miss Shaw acknowledges Jesus as the source of this grace: "That's one of the things about Jesus. Once you know how to receive the love he's pouring into your heart, then all of a sudden, out of the blue, you start knowing whom to give it to" (p. 71). To whom do you feel God's prompting to extend grace? What is holding you back?

6. The need for forgiveness is huge in this story; the most obvious is Jenny's need to forgive her father. Discuss what it means to forgive someone of such atrocities. C. S. Lewis states, "Christianity does not want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery" (Mere Christianity). How do you think Jenny would react to that? What does the Bible say about it?

7. As Jenny pushed Aurelia and Miss Shaw away, she was fighting an inner battle. Inside she was crying for help, for someone to see her pain, yet outside she spewed fury toward her friends. Jean acted similarly toward Jenny. Jenny seemed to realize something was going on with her father when she said, "You probably hurt Jean and me, Daddy, because somebody hurt you" (p. 227). Have you ever been tempted to hurt someone to cover up your own hurt? Explain.

8. Discuss the role of sacrifice in authenticating the sincerity in a relationship, using Jean's sacrifice for Jenny and Jenny's sacrifice for Aurelia as examples. How does Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice of his life confirm his love for us?

9. Jenny asks, *"Is it different when life gets taken from you moment by moment than when it gets taken all at one time?"* (p. 134). Discuss the difference Jenny was talking about, comparing Eddie Crockett's circumstances and his outlook on life to Jenny's daddy's attitude.

10. Similarly, does a slow revelation of truth have a different impact than a sudden understanding? Jenny's transformation took place over the entire summer through a series of small glimmers of hope?pennypennies. How do you think she would have responded if she had found a fortune all at once?

11. Jenny says, "I saw the pain behind Jean's words, and I couldn't have felt more betrayed. Mama was supposed to take care of us" (p. 141-2). How did Mama's lack of intervention increase Jenny's feeling of abandonment?

12. Jenny experienced a shift in her understanding of reality as she began to spend time with Aurelia's family. We measure things by what we know. Do you ever measure God by your meager earthly understanding? How can we come to a complete and accurate understanding of God?

13. A question that comes to mind in light of any abuse is, "How could a loving God allow this horrible thing to happen?" Can you see ways that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28 NIV)? Can you see ways that God took what man had meant for evil and turned it "to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20 NIV)? Discuss how Miss Shaw was uniquely able to minister to Jenny because of her similar experiences.

14. The way her father treated her left Jenny with a damaged and diminished sense of self worth. She said, "I suffered Daddy's reminders in my head. I knew everyone looked at me and did not like what they saw. . . . When wrong happened, it would always somehow be my fault" (p. 97). How did Miss Shaw point Jenny to Jesus as the foundation for her self-esteem? If we are confident in Jesus' unconditional love for us, how will that affect our relationships with others?

Author Bio

Joyce Meyer is one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. A #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, her books have helped millions of people find hope and restoration. Through Joyce Meyer Ministries, she teaches on a number of topics with a particular focus on the mind, mouth, moods and attitudes. Her candid communication style allows her to share openly and practically about her experiences so others can apply what she has learned to their lives.

Joyce has authored nearly 100 books, which have been translated into 100 languages. More than 30 million copies of her books have been sold.

Joyce hosts a daily TV and radio show, "Enjoying Everyday Life," which broadcasts worldwide to a potential audience of 4.5 billion people.

Joyce conducts approximately a dozen domestic and international conferences every year, teaching people to enjoy their everyday lives. Her annual women's conference has attracted well over 200,000 women to St. Louis for specifically themed teachings by her and guest speakers.

Joyce also sponsors Hand of Hope, which provides feeding programs, medical care, homes for orphans, and programs combating human trafficking.

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