

ANYONE BUT HIM

by Theresa Linden

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. With no memory of the past few years, Caitlyn is shocked to find herself married to Jarret West. She had always kept to the straight and narrow path, avoiding drugs, sex, and bad language, and obeying her parents and God. Jarret had followed the wide and easy road of sin and disobedience. **What factors could lead to a person straying from the path that leads to life? What factors could lead to a person leaving the wide road to destruction? Which path is likely easier to leave?**
2. Caitlyn remembers how important finding the perfect husband had been to her; she had a whole list of desired traits and Jarret possessed none of them, as far as she knew with the amnesia. **How can a list of qualities to look for in a spouse guide one in dating and relationships? What qualities should be on that list? Can this list stand in the way of finding the one God has prepared for a person?**
3. At some point during her teen years, Caitlyn started wearing a purity or chastity ring. These rings represent a promise to reserve physical intimacy for marriage and are often inscribed with phrases such as “True love waits” or “I will wait for my beloved.” **How can a ring like this can help a young man or woman to remain pure? What other strategies might a person use to get through the difficult young adult years without compromising with the world—especially in the area of chastity?**
4. While trying to understand how she ended up married to Jarret West, Caitlyn’s most important question becomes “Who changed?” She can’t believe that she changed, discarding the values she’s always cherished, but she also struggles to

see him in a new light. **What lesson can we find for how we often tend to see others, particularly those we've known a long time? Do we truly believe that God can change a person? Is it easy or hard to recognize that someone close to us has changed for the better?**

5. Jarret made some serious mistakes in high school, but by the grace of God he turned away from sin and changed his life. We all make mistakes and sometimes those mistakes are big. After truly repenting and working to get back on the right track, one might long for the impossible—the opportunity to go back in time and change things. But that isn't necessary. God is bigger than our mistakes and He lifts up the repentant and sets them on a new and beautiful path. **How important is it that we understand that God is bigger than our mistakes? Have you ever felt so bad about your sins that you didn't feel worthy of forgiveness? What advice can you offer someone struggling with this?**

6. When suspicious circumstances surround Jarret, Caitlyn doesn't even want to talk about it—she wants to leave but settles for establishing a few rules. She remembers the person he used to be and doesn't give him the chance to prove what kind of person he is now. **While she doesn't necessarily handle the situation well, how does her Catholic faith inspire her to remain with her husband and work on their relationship? (See chapter 8.) Can mutually agreed-upon rules help a troubled relationship? How important is humility and the ability to listen to others? How important is it to avoid judging someone based on their past mistakes? What are some first steps spouses can take when doubts creep into a marriage?**

7. The little neighborhood boy, Bobby, shows just how gossipy their neighbors are. The neighbors have even discussed Jarret and Caitlyn's private business, including speculating as to why she's not pregnant yet. **How can gossip put pressure on a young couple? What can neighbors do to support new families without interfering in their private business?**

8. For a short time in the story, Caitlyn assumes the appointment she discovers with the abortion provider was to terminate her own pregnancy. She assumes she was so miserable that she wasn't thinking straight and that with the amnesia, God allowed her and her unborn baby a second chance. **Have you considered what reasons a woman might have in order to make such a drastic decision as to end her unborn child's life through abortion? Discuss the possibilities. Then discuss what could change in a woman's life to help her choose life: education about the unborn baby, support from others, resources, a new outlook, etc.**

9. Caitlyn finds comfort in Roland's arrival, but Jarret wishes he'd leave. Whenever Caitlyn speaks negatively about Jarret, Roland encourages her to give him a chance. **How does Roland prove to be a worthy friend and a good brother? How willing would you be to help a friend or sibling with their marriage problems? Is it better to allow a person to freely vent their frustrations or to encourage charity even in explaining one's feelings about another?**

10. Roland tries to help Caitlyn see that she and Jarret were made for each other because Jarret needs her and she needs someone who needs her. The old emails show Jarret a bit bossy and arrogant but also that Caitlyn began to feel compassion toward him. **How can two people with such different pasts and challenges be made for each other? Do opposites really attract? Do you think it makes more sense to find someone with similar life experiences, virtues, and challenges?**

11. At the end of Chapter 13, Roland asks Caitlyn a question that is good for each of us to consider. **"Have you ever formed an opinion of someone because of one little thing, then you get to know them and you realize you were wrong about them?" What can we do to avoid this?**

12. Caitlyn discovers she is a private investigator, working on a case against the local abortion provider. Actual undercover work several years ago revealed Planned Parenthood's gruesome practice of trafficking aborted baby parts. Other undercover work showed abortion provider workers willing to cover up sex trafficking and pregnancies of minors. Organizations like this claim to support women, but their actions show the opposite. **When a person or organization fails to recognize the value of human life in the womb, how might this desensitize the person or organization and open the door to other violations against human dignity?**
13. Jarret is opposed to Caitlyn going undercover at the abortion clinic. He doesn't express his reason well, but Caitlyn knows the Catholic teaching that the end does not justify the means. Still, she tries to justify her actions by thinking of how Pope Pius XII forged documents and hid thousands of Jews during Hitler's reign of terror. **Should Caitlyn have gone undercover for the sake of her case, pretending to be an underage girl seeking an abortion? Would you ever go undercover to expose evil? What other methods, if any, might bring about the same results without having to pretend you're someone you're not?**
14. The day after he sends Roland away, Jarret seems to take a closer look at the way he's been acting and he gives Caitlyn a heartfelt apology, admitting how powerless he feels to help her. When he asks what he can do to make things better between them, she begins to look deeper as well, and she tells him she wants them to go to Mass. "We won't get through this without prayer, without faith, without God." **When we have disagreements with loved ones, how often do we try to sort them out on our own, without having recourse to prayer and trust in God? How much more affective might peacemaking be if couples or family members prayed together before trying to solve problems? "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matt 18:20).**

15. On the beach, when trying to explain why he let Caitlyn go without trying to stop her, Jarret asks if she ever felt like she was standing on a cliff and God was asking her to fall off it and into His arms. God calls each of us to deeper and deeper trust. **Think over the events of your own life. Can you see some of the situations in which God was calling you to surrender the control, surrender your will, and trust Him? Were you able to do it? What happened when you trusted? What happened in situations where you failed to trust?**
16. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 418 “As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened . . . and inclined to sin.” We often notice this weakness when it comes to today’s view of love and physical intimacy. Mike Caragine’s selfish and faulty view of love allows him to feel justified in his pursuit of secret relationships with underage girls. **How can a deeper understanding of and obedience to the moral teachings of the Church on love and marriage protect one from acting on disordered passions?**
17. Caitlyn is overjoyed to learn that she and Jarret work together in the pro-life movement, helping troubled girls choose life for their unborn babies. **How has Jarret’s past mistakes—especially trying to get his high school girlfriend to get an abortion—made him a powerful instrument in reaching out to girls seeking abortion? How does it make him a more relatable pro-life speaker? What gifts and talents can you use to help bring an end to abortion and to promote a culture of life?**
18. There are many ways to help bring about a culture of life, including prayer, penance, outreach, and political activism. A fictional story with a pro-life theme can be another powerful instrument in this movement. Jesus often taught with stories because of the way people relate to them. A person can develop empathy, look deeper at oneself, and learn from characters’ choices, all in a non-confrontational manner. **Do you know a young adult who might benefit from a fictional story with a pro-life theme?**

ADDITIONAL PRO-LIFE FICTION

For Eden's Sake by T.M. Gaoutette (Catholic): Barely out of college, Isaac trades the quiet of his family ranch for the excitement of the big city with his dream job at an up-and-coming advertising agency. Until his perfect new world is shattered by bad choices, a pretty girl, a moment's temptation—and a late-night walk that quickly spirals out of control.

Breach by Corinna Turner (Catholic): Set in an alternative future where dinosaurs roam freely and humans live behind electric fences, this prequel novel is an exciting pro-life adventure with eighteen-year-old Isaiah and his older brother Zechariah, professional hunters who earn their living culling and capturing some of the most dangerous predators ever to walk the planet.

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Swimming In the Deep End by Christina Suzann Nelson (Christian): four women's lives collide in this saga. Their tangled courses and attempts to find grace in the midst of crisis combine in one heartfelt story showing the many faces of motherly love.

Shadows of Hope by Georgiana Daniels (author is Orthodox): A crisis pregnancy worker suspects her husband is cheating, but little does she know how close to home her husband's infidelity hits. A college student is floundering after a relationship with her professor leaves her pregnant. Soon she lands a job and a support system at the local pregnancy resource center and things seem to be turning around. When the two women become friends, neither one knows they share a connection.

Death Panels by Michelle Buckman: an exciting and disturbing story of a not-too-distant future in which our current political battles over life and freedom have reached an explosive crossroads, and a clarion call to all Christians and lovers of liberty.