



Burnt Toast & Jam

Book Club Discussion Guide

The purpose of the author in writing this book was to provide an 'easy read' that would help others to lighten up, reduce personal stress and find the joy in everyday blessings. As readers get familiar with the author's humorous yet heartfelt style, it is hoped they will be able to identify things that happened in their own lives that were meaningful to them. These Book Club Sessions are designed to generate lively discussions, build camaraderie, and enhance daily positive attitudes. Participants should be made to feel relaxed and comfortable in what will be a time of sharing and fun. As participants find parallels in their own lives *Burnt Toast and Jam* will be memorable.

As the Club leader you will be formatting your discussion according to the size of your group and the meeting(s) you will be devoting to it. Note: Because of the type of book, there is a wealth of discussion topics contained herein. Depending on number of meetings, what's going on in participant's lives, or other variables, you may design your discussions in a more customized, interactive and fun way than a traditional novel would allow.

A suggested format: Rather than discussing each story, you may want to ask the participants to pick out several of the stories that they enjoyed the most, which were most meaningful to them, or otherwise memorable, and have them share with the group why they liked it and what it meant to them. Once a participant shares why a particular story was important to them, ask others in the group if they can relate to this or have an experience to share. What did they enjoy the best? The least? Was it a good title? Do you think others would benefit from this story? Why? These will make up the bulk of your discussion. (For those wanting biblical references, asterisks indicate those that are included in the biblical reference section provided at the end.)

PREFACE

CHAPTER I: JUST LIFE

Leader: In this Chapter, the author shares personal stories and life lessons that cover a wide range of every day happenings and life lessons. We are going to be discussing which ones may have stuck a personal cord with you, which ones you liked best and why.

I would first be interested in: How you like the author's style, the format of the book and overall "feel" of the book? Did you laugh? Did you cry? Was there anything you did not like about it?

What stories/poems/insights did you like best? Why?

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 7, *Sunrise Service*: Personal embarrassment can cause us to be humiliated and even, at times, cause us to withdraw from others, particularly when it involves our participation in a group. Can you think of a time when you were embarrassed by some thing that happened or even by someone else's actions? Share the situation. How did you feel? How did you respond?

Page 14, *The 4th of July Parade*: Often we have good memories of things we did in our youth. Have you started any traditions from the past that you would like to share? What impact has it had for others?

Page 16, *Be Slow to Criticize*: What message does this story leave you with? (Look for replies such as: As humans, we're all pretty much the same; we have the same feelings and needs.) We have a lot of diversity today; can anyone share a story of how you maybe bridged a gap with another person; or something you recently learned about another ethnic group? Any time you wish you "would have bit your tongue" and not said what you said? *

Note: There are two pages in this Chapter that provide a question format:

Page 33: *Be a Change Survivor* — helps participants to deal with change

Page 37: *What Is Your Life's Mission?* — provides steps for creating a creed for life.

CHAPTER 2: WEDDED BLISS

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 49, *Holy, Holy, Holy*: What last minute repairs, camouflages or alterations to an outfit did you have to make before leaving for a special event? Did you complete them or ‘make do’? How did you feel about it?

Page 52, *Marital Bliss*: How many of you could relate to the saying “opposites attract”? Would you be willing to share a story with us on your “Marital Bliss”? How important do you feel is a sense of humor in relationships? Do you remember a time when you used humor to avert a conflict, make a point, or to better express yourself?

Page 61, *Merry Christmas, Dear*: What did you enjoy most about this story? The author points out that her husband’s personality is one of being task focused and results-oriented. How does this help you to understand his actions? In what types of situation does this personality shine? Are there certain personalities that you have more of a challenge working with? *

CHAPTER 3: PARENTING

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 81, *Making Points*: What did you enjoy about this story? The author used the analogy of “points.” Was this effective for you? Have you experienced similar experiences with your kids or grandchildren? Can you think of a time when your good intention backfired?

Page 87, *The Hair Cut*: The author’s quote for this was, “*Things aren’t always what they seem, look beyond.*” Do you think this is appropriate? Have you used similar strategies or distractions in order to hold a conversation or get a child’s attention? *

Page 96, *Out of the Mouths of Babes*: Which did you like best? Can you think of a good story you’d like to share on something your preschooler said?

CHAPTER 4: WOMANHOOD

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 112, *Building a Glorious You*: Zig Zigfield gave French Lingerie to new dancers to build their confidence. The author tells of her joy in wearing large earrings and how they used to give her a feeling of empowerment. What gives you the feeling that you could do anything? Eleanor Roosevelt said: *No one can intimate you without your permission.*” How do we sometimes allow others to cut at our self-esteem?

Page 113, *The Glow from Within*: Author talks about her love of her middle-eastern costuming and how its sparkle lights a glow within her. What ignites a ‘glow’ within you? What makes you feel good?

Page 118, *It’s Just a Little Thing, Or Is It?* This story is about how people don’t take time to “listen” to others; yet so many desperately need someone to talk to. Are you a listener or a talker? Can you think of a time when you should have listened more and talked less? Do you know someone you could give the gift of listening to? *

CHAPTER 5: HEARTSTRINGS

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 139, *Gifts from the Heart Christmas*: Author describes what she did to try to make Christmas’s a more meaningful family event that put the ‘heart’ back into their Christmas. Do you have a special tradition that you do? Are there changes that you wish you could make in your holidays? What is keeping you from doing it?*

Page 142, *Hugs*: Author talks about a time that she and her sister started family hugs. Can you think of something you

Page 153, *To Go Back for Just One Day*: In this story the author describes the memories she has of the different seasons being raised on a dairy farm. Which season did you like best? Why? Which descriptors did you feel were most effective? Did this story bring back any memories for you

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CHAPTER 6: SPREADING THE JAM

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 172, *Spreading the Joy of the Tambourine*: Author explains the symbolism of her tambourine—the shape representing the circle of life and ribbons representing achievements and good that a person does. Why do you think she chose the tambourine? How did you feel when you read her poem?*

Page 181, *Giving the Gift of Forgiveness*: Forgiving someone is a gift you can give others; but according to the author forgiveness is also a gift you can give yourself. Did you think the author gave a clear explanation of why one shouldn't hold onto grudges? (Ex. Generate more negativity, create stress, make us unpleasant to be around,) Can you think of any other reasons? The author gives some ways to forgive others. Which ones have you used? Which ones have you not used? How do you see this story helping a situation you've experienced?

Page 19, *Random Acts of Kindness*: Being kind can lift your spirits and make you feel better. Can you give more examples of random acts of kindness? Has anyone ever bestowed one on you?

CHAPTER 7: DREAMS

Leader reference: Some examples of follow-up questions are given in the three examples below:

Page 191, *Signs*: What you enjoyed doing as a child has a profound affect on your happiness as an adult. Are we all doing something today that is in some way connected to what we enjoyed doing as a child? Can you give us some examples?

Page 195, *Four Little Words*: How important do you feel having an “I can do it” attitude is when trying to achieve a goal? Do you know of instances when it was more comfortable to stay in your comfort zone? Is there something you wish you could do, but somehow just haven't done?*

Page 198, *Words to Live By*. Saying positive affirmations to oneself can play a big role in giving one the courage to move on to new things and achieve personal fulfillment. Did you feel this poem affectively demonstrated this concept?

BONUS FUN INTERACTIVE EXERCISE: (Allow 20 minutes)

Page 184, *Grow Your Funny Bone* – We have read this author's examples of how humor can help create a positive attitude and help us through bad times. We are going to try her exercise to help us use humor in our own lives. INSTRUCTIONS: Have participants pair up into group of 2 or 3 (depending on how many are present). Assign each group a humor technique and give the example of each so they understand what they have to do. Be sure to emphasize they need to “think funny”—being silly is good! When they all have their technique assigned, give them 5 minutes or so create their own examples and write them down. Then have a spokesperson for each share their results with all. Laughter is guaranteed.

“Humor is a tool given to help us in our life journey.”

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BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Every story and insight in *Burnt Toast & Jam* could fall in line with a biblical reference. We have provided a few samples for you. Note: There is one sample from each chapter.

Chapter 1, page 16: *Be Slow to Criticize* – Biblical Reference *Genesis 20:13*

This is concerning brotherly love. Discuss how we demonstrate brotherly love to others. What could we be doing better? How does diversity sometimes get in the way? Cite examples.

Chapter 2, page 61: *Merry Christmas Dear* – Biblical Reference: *Joshua 1, Genesis 16:1.*

Positive biblical role models would be Joshua & Sarah. Results oriented people generally take command of a situation. After Moses' death, Joshua was put in charge and led the people to the promise land. The word "command" is used 49 times in the book of Joshua. What types of challenges do you think Joshua might have faced? In what types of situations does this personality shine? Can you think of a time when you've been in conflict with this person? How were you able to resolve the situation?

Chapter 3, page 87: *The Hair Cut* – Biblical Reference: *Proverbs 19:27*

What parallels do you see between the hair cut story and how we as adults are not always ready to receive God's word? When do you feel we are most open to God's word?

Chapter 4, page 118. *It's Just a Little Thing or Is It?* – Biblical Reference: *Job 15:7*

"...let me tell you what I've seen" Why do you think it is important for us as human beings to be heard? (Look for answers like: Self-worth, value) What can we gain from listening to others? What usually gets in our way of listening? (Look for answers like: preoccupied with own agenda, feel it is not important, no time; would rather be talking myself.)

Chapter 5, page 139: *A Gift from the Heart Christmas* – Biblical Reference: *1 King 8:66*

"joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the Lord did send." The author shared with us the way she tried to make her family gatherings more meaningful and full of more joy and people being glad in heart. (Free invitation is downloadable at www.kinza.net). How can we better promote this feeling at our family gatherings? What are some things you have done? What are some things you would like to do? What do you need to do to move ahead with your ideas?

Chapter 6, page 172, *Spreading the Joy of the Tambourine.* - Biblical Reference: *Psalms 149:3; Exodus 15:20*

How does the author's use of the tambourine correlate to these passages? Do you think a tambourine is an effective reflection of her message that coincides with her writing style? Tambourines (tambrels) and dancing were used in celebrations, if you were to choose a way in which you celebrate your life, what would it be? Is there a 'symbol' that you hold dear to your heart?

Chapter 7, page 195: *Four Little Words* – Biblical Reference: *Psalms 34:4*

Fears are what usually hold us back from believing we can accomplish a goal. What might be some fears that you might have experienced that kept you from doing something you wanted to do? – OR – What kinds of fears keep us from having an "I can do it" attitude when faced with a challenge? (Answers might be: fear of looking foolish, being wrong, fear of failure, etc.) How can our faith in God help banish those fears?

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