

The Runaway Pastor's Wife Study Guide

The Runaway Pastor's Wife by Diane Moody

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Plot Summary

The story begins with Annie Franklin and her boyfriend Michael Dean who have been dating for three and a half years. They are in love with each other, and imagine spending the rest of their lives together.

Then the story moves forward to 17 years in the future where a distraught Annie is on her way to her friend Christine's cabin in Colorado. She is unhappy with her husband, David McGregor, a pastor. He does not have time for her or their children, Max, Jeremy, and Jessie, because the church and its members consume his life.

Meanwhile, Michael is married to Amelia Thomas, the socialite daughter of Elliot Thomas, a billionaire and Congressman. Elliot found out that Michael wants to divorce his daughter and threatens to take away the business he helped Michael to establish.

In Colorado, Annie meets Bob and MJ at their store, along with Doc Wilkins. They are kind and helpful, but Annie keeps her guard up with them. At Christine's cabin, she cries out to God but does not feel peaceful so she decides to go for a walk. She accidentally falls and twists her ankle. Doc comes up to the cabin to attend to her ankle and her wounded heart.

Michael contacts Grady, a trusted college friend, but hesitates to get him involved with incriminating information about Elliot. However, Michael tells Elliot about the information and Elliot surprisingly proceeds to shoot him twice. Michael cries out to God for help and is able to drive to Christine's cabin. Annie finds him in the snow and seeks help from Doc, who is able to keep Michael alive.

Max finds out where his mother called from and heads out to find her. Unfortunately, his borrowed van breaks down.

Michael opens up to Annie, but she remains guarded. Annie listens to God explain her purpose to lead Michael to Him. Michael accepts Christ and explains his abrupt breakup with her after college. He fathered a son with Christine, who gave him up for adoption.

Drama unfolds at the church as Chet tries to have David step down from his position. Brawling takes place just as Annie's mother Darlene and a TV crew burst into the church and start filming.

Max takes a ride with the Sheriff and meets Doc who takes him to see his surprised mother. Annie and Michael try to explain why they are there at the cabin together and that Michael is his birth father, but Max cannot handle it. He stomps out of the cabin and is grabbed by Elliot's men. Michael pleads with them to let him go, but Doc is the one who saves them by firing a rifle at their vehicle. Elliot and his men pursue as Michael, Annie, Max, and Doc head to the hidden old mine tunnel. They escape into a cavern, but Grady finds them. After getting angry and firing his gun, an avalanche carries off

Elliot and his men. Annie points out that God provided another miracle by saving them. Max and Michael are able to catch up as Christine arrives at Williamson's store.



Prologue - Chapter 10

Prologue - Chapter 10 Summary

In the Prologue, the setting is in Stillwater, Oklahoma, 17 years ago, at a pizza joint called Hideaway Pizza. Michael Dean and Annie Franklin have been dating for three and a half years. They are at a pizza joint eating and talking with each other. Michael and Annie are seniors at Oklahoma State University. They are talking about how their friend Grady has not played in the past five games and there have been many scouts at each game vying for players. Along comes Annie's best friend from middle school, Christine, who asks to borrow her black dress. Her date Seth has two extra tickets to James Taylor, which Michael and Annie are excited to go and see in concert.

In Chapter 1, the setting has changed to Tampa, Florida and it takes place in the present day. Annie's last name has changed to McGregor. She is driving and intolerantly talking to her assistant, Fran. Annie is on her way to the airport and does not want to answer any of Fran's inquisitive questions. She is going to Christine's cabin in Colorado Springs, Colorado. After she boards the plane, she realizes that she is clenching her jaw and tries to loosen it. Annie bought a book in the airport bookstore and starts to read it. After not being able to concentrate on the novel, she starts reading her journal. She reads an entry from when she got engaged and remembers how happy she was at that time. Her finance's name was David McGregor. Reading about David's first time preaching along with the following entries about adopting their son Max and being pregnant with Jeremy was interrupted by the flight attendant serving lunch.

After eating, she read about when her husband was late to their daughter Jessica's birth because he was out of town away at a conference. Annie felt bitterness about her marriage and her fragmented family. She reflected on the entry where she planned her trip a week ago. Christine is away overseas, so Annie is going to stay in her cabin to figure out who she is and what she wants to do in her life.

For Chapter 2, the setting is Seminole, Florida, where Grandma Caroline is picking up Jeremy and Jessie from their school called Tall Pines Christian School. She is anxious in the car line, but becomes relaxed when the kids are in the car with her. Max is 16 years old and drives himself. It's raining and the kids want to get a snack at PJ's. The kids question her to where their mother is, but Caroline does not know. PJ Ludwinski, the owner of the charming donut shop, welcomes the McGregor's and they eat donuts.

Back at the McGregor's home, David comes home early for once and finds his mother and all three children there. He is not sure where his wife, Annie, is and thinks she must be away at some meeting. Annie had previously made dinner, so Caroline was heating the food. David embraces his mom with a lasting hug, but tells her that nothing is wrong. On his way up to change, David stops by Max's room and learns that he scored an A+ on his physics exam. As he rests on the bed, he finds a note from Annie. Remembering previous notes from her, he eagerly reads this one but it is without her usual cologne.



Annie states that she used to be able to talk to him openly, but now she is off on a plane and will not tell him where she is going. She needs time to be apart, even though she still loves him. Annie feels like a widow, just like her mother-in-law and will call him when she is ready.

In Chapter 3, the scene is Houston, Texas. Long-time friends Michael Dean and Jimmy are playing golf at a private country club. They are going to eat lunch at the club. After college, Michael had played first base man for the Houston Astros and became a baseball celebrity. Thirteen years ago, he met Amelia Thomas and her father at the club. She is the daughter of Congressman and billionaire Elliot Thomas. Michael had invited Amelia and her father to have a drink with him, but they had previous plans.

Later, Michael and Amelia got married with all the fanfare of a celebrity wedding. However, Michael became uninterested in his wife but stayed married due to the financial benefits and beneficial connections with her family. His father-in-law helped him create "The Sports Page," a chain of sports equipment stores with athletic gyms. The thriving chain expanded all over the country.

Michael's friend Jimmy is a sports broadcaster and they enjoy playing golf whenever they can get together. He is concerned for Michael and asks him what is going on. Jimmy even prods Michael about his marriage, but Michael is not being open and honest. Michael sees one of his father-in-law's bodyguards and tells Jimmy that he will call him because he needed to go. Elliot jabs Michael for playing golf and not working. Then Elliot brings up Michael's intentions to divorce his daughter, which surprises Michael, as he has not even talked with Amelia about it. Elliot tells Michael that he had been tailing him since he started dating Amelia and threatened to take away "The Sports Page" business from him. Michael freezes up and tries to think of ways to keep it. He tries to blame Amelia for their troubles, especially since she cannot get pregnant. Michael admits to spending time with other women and Elliot lists their names. Michael however does not want to comply with Elliot's demands and mysteriously tells him that he has one card left to play in the game.

In Chapter 4, the setting changes to Williamson's store in Weber Creek, Colorado. Bob and Mary Jean Williamson are the owners and Mary Jean sends Bob out to take soup to Emma. Dr. George Wilkins interrupts their friendly spat in his daily visit to the store. Doc and MJ enjoy a cup of coffee by the fireplace where they talk about their distinctive quirky relationships with their spouses.

Annie enters the store and is welcomed by MJ, Doc, and a fresh cup of coffee to warm her up from being out in the snow. Annie tells them that she is headed to Christine's cabin. Doc refers to the cabin as the Eagle's Nest and tells her that Christine has renovated it. He alerts her about the upcoming storm but tells Annie that Christine probably has the cabin well stocked. MJ is worried about Annie being by herself and wants to help her get extra supplies from the store.



Bob comes back and meets Annie, who tells them that Christine is in Israel for several months. He helps Annie make a list of the supplies she needs after Annie tells them she does not know how long she will stay at the cabin. She feels at ease with their kindness.

In Chapter 5, back at the McGregor's home, distraught David started to pray. Caroline came up to get him for dinner and comforts him when she saw that he was upset. David tried to have her read Annie's note while he noticed that their family portrait and Annie's Bible were missing. Caroline averts David from trying to find Annie and is amazed that Annie was able to hide her feelings from her family. David tries to figure out what to tell the kids and Caroline worries about preventing rumors at church.

For Chapter 6, the setting is Tulsa, Oklahoma. Grady Brewster is about to go home from a busy day. Michael calls him and they briefly chat. Grady is happy with his life, he has a loving wife and two fantastic children. Michael feels slightly jealous and says that he really needs to talk to him. Grady agrees to pick him up from the airport and get dinner together.

Michael flies first class and starts typing a letter to Grady on his computer. He is worried that something could happen to him and wants Grady to take the letter immediately to the United States Attorney General if something does happen. Michael describes his business with Elliot's financial backing, his desire to get a divorce, and Elliot's threats to take away the business.

Everything seems dim for Michael. However, he remembers an evening he spent with Elliot and Duke at a hunting cabin where Elliot and Duke got extremely drunk. They talked about Senator Christopher Jordan, who was killed in a boating accident. Elliot and Christopher loathed each other, especially because Christopher was appointed to a committee that Elliot wanted to head. A final straw for Elliot was that Christopher was working on a NASA project that Elliot wanted to be built in Houston.

Michael remembered overhearing Elliot and Duke talking about a guy whose code name was "Bo." Elliot and Duke were celebrating and singing about Christopher's death as they thought Michael was sleeping. Michael realized what had happened to Christopher Jordan as soon as Elliot took over Christopher's position. He did not want to tell anyone because he was concerned about his reputation of being a famous baseball player but he did hire a private investigator to find out more. "Bo's" real name was Mitch Creason and Michael had evidence that proved Elliot was involved in the murder of Christopher. Michael adds a note to the letter as to where the evidence can be found, which is in a locker at The Page. He saved the letter on his flash drive and felt a little bit relieved.

Grady picked him up from the airport and took him to a packed and lively Mexican restaurant called Ricardo's. The waitress Maria seats them in Grady's usual place and they order dinner. Surprisingly Michael asks Grady about his family. Grady beams as he talks about his wife and 2 kids. Michael is unwilling to open up about his troubles even after Grady prods him. He asks Grady to be available for the next 24 hours and Grady gives him his personal cell phone number.



In Chapter 7, Annie drives through snowy weather to get to the cabin. Her windshield keeps fogging up and she is nervous about the drive. Suddenly, she loses control of the Jeep as it starts to go over the side of the road. Awoken to the phone ringing, Annie realizes it was only a dream, but her heart is racing. It was MJ checking on her, which Annie appreciates.

Annie recalls her nightmare and thinks of her other ones she has had recently. She looks around the cabin after peering outside and taking in the majestic view. Christine's award-winning photographs adorn the peaceful cabin. She eats breakfast and sits contently by the roaring fire.

Back at the McGregor's house, David is agitated and restless from not getting enough sleep. Caroline is back from running errands and packing things to stay with her son. She tries to think of what to tell others about Annie's absence and tells David to speak the truth that she needed a break. David says that he cannot do it and Caroline tells him to depend on God for strength to make it through. She tells him that it is time to pray.

Caroline answers the phone and Darlene is on the other line. Darlene is Annie's mother who likes to stir up trouble. She tells Caroline about her magnificent trip to Australia and wants to come over to tell Annie all about it. Darlene senses something is wrong with Caroline and Caroline tells her that she is weary. She plans to spend the next day with Caroline going shopping and eating out. However, Darlene manages to upset Caroline by not letting her speak and talking about her watching her weight. Caroline hangs up on her. When Darlene calls back, Caroline quickly tells her that she has to go and she will leave a note for Annie.

During Chapter 8, Annie makes homemade chili and as she searches for background music, she remembers a concert from 1981 at college. Happy Christine was dancing in the aisles and then she was swept on stage with an attractive guy. Annie found a CD from The Police concert and played it. After cleaning up the kitchen, she thinks about going for a walk outside. Twinges of selfish thoughts run through her head as she thinks of her family and how much they would enjoy it there. Then she hears a voice telling her that it was all right to take a break without feeling guilty. Annie recalls Bible verses that comfort her and knows that God will help her.

It is time for Annie to face her past and what has made her so bitter. She feels free to express herself since no one is there. Annie is angry about being a pastor's wife because the church members are not upfront and honest when they felt slighted. The members would inappropriately indirectly aim their displeasure on their family.

Annie stops in her tracks and apologizes to God for complaining. She has hidden and guarded her emotions and thoughts and she longs for a trusted friend. Annie is tired of it all and wants real unguarded friendships. Her attention turns toward her husband as she questioned what had happened between them. She feels neglected by David. Annie also feels that she lost her relationship with God. After getting it all out, she does not feel peace even after she waits patiently. Annie is puzzled and frustrated.



In Chapter 9, the setting is at the McGregor house, then with Annie in Colorado, and finally back to the house. A surprised Max comes home to find his dad at home as David is never at home this early. Max is upset with his economics teacher Mr. Harrison who digs at him about his father. David tells Max that he must show respect to Mr. Harrison and not call him names. Background information is supplied about Chet Harrison and how he helped lead the church when they did not have a pastor. Chet became upset with David when David did not choose Chet's son to build the new sanctuary. David states that if Max feels like Chet grades him unjustly that he will go and settle the matter.

Max asks about his mother's disappearance. David is honest and tells him that she needed to take a break. Max is taken aback that his father did not know where she was or that she was leaving. David readily admits that he has not been there for her or the kids, but promises that she will be back. They head out to play some basketball together.

Annie realizes that it was 6:30 already and that the day flew by. Annie heats up a bowl of chili and thinks about calling home so that they will not worry. After calming down, she calls and left a brief message on the machine.

Caroline was taking out the recycling while Annie calls. The younger kids did not answer because they thought some one else would get it. Max and David came in and heard the last bit of the message that Caroline was playing. Max and David head to their bedrooms.

Chapter 10 takes place in Houston Texas. Amelia calls Jane, Michael's executive secretary, looking for Michael because he is not answering his cell phone. She had heard him come home around 4:00 a.m., but he was gone again when she awoke three hours later. Amelia tries to busy herself to not feel dejected. She needs his help with the fundraiser that she is planning. Amelia questions what is happening between them.

Michael calls Elliot and tells him to meet him outside in 10 minutes. He swerves through traffic to get rid of Elliot's trailing men. Elliot threatens Michael that the police will find them as he drives into an isolated area. Michael tells Elliot that he has evidence such as phone records and photographs linking him to the murder of Christopher Jordan. Elliot denies the claim. Michael starts to sing the song they sang at the hunting cabin, which causes Elliot to get angry and continues denying his involvement. Tension between the two men is high and continues to grow as Elliot shot Michael in the shoulder. The two struggle to gain control over the gun. Another shot is fired, but it missed Michael's head. Elliot escapes out of the SUV but not before firing another shot at Michael. Michael manages to drive away while feeling pain below his ribs. He tries to make sense of what just happened as he thinks of where to go to get help. Michael cries out to God to help him.

At 8:00 p.m., Elliot returns to his office, calls Duke, and begins drinking bourbon. Duke becomes concerned after Elliot told him that Michael has blackmail evidence. Elliot sends two men to find Michael and secretly trail him in order to get the evidence. He



tells Duke to fly Bo to a remote foreign place and that he shot Michael. Elliot gives him the handgun and tells him to get rid of it.

Prologue - Chapter 10 Analysis

During the Prologue, Michael and Annie enjoy each other's company and are comfortable talking about any and every thing. They are having a nice meal together and they are playful with each other. Annie is concerned about Michael's best friend Grady. Unfortunately, Grady has been benched for the past 5 games even though the scouts are out. Christine interrupts their conversation and starts eating their food without asking. She wants to borrow Annie's black dress, which she has done before but returned it soiled. Annie is upfront and tells her that she can borrow it, however she must get it dry-cleaned. The clincher to the borrowing the dress deal is that Christine's date, Seth, has 2 extra tickets to see James Taylor in concert. Both Michael and Annie adore James Taylor. "Their song" is one of his, called "Something in the Way She Moves."

In Chapter 1, the first sentence cues the reader about Annie's name change. She did not marry Michael Dean from the prologue. While talking with Fran, Annie wants to keep her life private and does not want to share what she is doing. Later on the plane when she has time to reflect, Annie is dismayed that she got so frustrated and irritated with Fran. She feels that she has to put on a front of holding herself together until she gets to Christine's cabin. Annie is surprised by her reflection in her rearview mirror that shows she is tired and angry. Nothing is going her way as she realizes her cell phone is not in her purse, but she thinks it might just be all right that it is not with her. On the plane, Annie tries to read the book she got, but she is unable to concentrate and reread the first sentence 4 times. She turns to her journal, which has details from her life. Reading the entry about getting engaged to David McGregor adds interest because the reader wants to find out what happened to Michael Dean from the prologue.

Annie goes through a roller coaster of emotions while reading her journal. The reader finds out that the happy couple adopted their son Max after being married for a year. Bitterness grew when Annie was critical of her husband not being there for her when Jessica was born. Annie felt the sting of her own resentment when her daughter was disappointed that Annie was attending to others during the Mother-Daughter Banquet. Annie was so wrapped up in helping others during the Banquet that she did not have time to enjoy it with her daughter.

Annie is fleeing to Christine's cabin in Colorado to figure out her next step. Her husband has not been there for her because he is so wrapped up in the church and ministering to his congregation. On the plane, she holds herself together until she can figure out who she is and what she is doing. In the prologue, Annie knew who she was and what she was doing. She was in love with Michael Dean and wanted to spend the rest of her life with him.



During Chapter 2, Grandma Caroline is anxious. It could be from the rain, or from picking up her grandchildren, or something else; she does not know what is causing it. She is able to feel calmer when her grandchildren are in the car with her. Caroline is unsure what Annie is doing and only knows that she was needed to pick up the kids from school. They go to a favorite place, a comfortable donut shop where they are friends with the owner.

There is sibling rivalry between Jeremy and Jessie. Jeremy likes to try new things and thinks Jessie is so boring because she wants her usual chocolate donut with sprinkles. He teasingly throws her backpack on the ground.

The donut shop is owned by PJ, who is Polish. His loyal patrons have brought him souvenirs from around the world and they are proudly displayed. Jessie is excited that her father will be home early tonight. She wants to indulge him to lift his spirits, even though she does not know what is coming his way.

David finally has a night free and is concerned that his wife is not home. He thinks she must be at a committee meeting or something. David is unaware of how his absence has affected her and their family. Even Max jabs that it's too early for his dad to be home and playfully jokes that he does not recognize him. David recalls how he has not heard Annie's laugh in a while and is tired from trying to fit too many things into his life.

Annie's note stings as she can not openly talk to David about her feelings. She is bitter that her husband does not have time for her and she blames the church, God, and him. She feels like she is losing her mind and she must get away. Annie points out that it's almost the anniversary of David's father's death and that Caroline will depend on David and the kids to get through this cheerless time. She will contact him when she is ready, but when she wrote the note, she had intended to take her cell phone with her. She left it in the car at the airport instead of putting it in her purse.

In Chapter 3, Michael had success in his career as a baseball player for the Houston Astros. His success continued when he wed Amelia Thomas, who had connections and ties as her father was a billionaire and Congressman Elliot Thomas. He started a successful business with Elliot called "The Sports Page." Everything was going well for him, except he is "bored" with his trophy wife.

Michael is not able to be honest with his long-time friend Jimmy. He hides his troubles from Jimmy, but tells him that he would call him later as he has to go see his father-in-law. Elliot quickly gets down to business about Michael wanting to divorce Amelia. Elliot has influence and used his power to trail Michael's moves and found out about his affairs with other women. Michael is surprised that his father-in-law knew about his desired divorce because he has not even told his wife yet and was confident that his lawyer would not have betrayed him. Elliot threatens Michael to take away his business, but Michael is able to think of one card he has not played. Interest peaks as the chapter abruptly ends with Michael's come back.



Chapter 4 shows 2 couples that have had 2 great marriages, even though they enjoy friendly spats with each other. Unfortunately, Doc's wife died about 8 years ago. He still enjoys talking about her and their relationship. Annie mentions that Christine was married, but that she is not married anymore. It is difficult to determine if Christine and her husband got divorced or if he died.

Annie is guarded about why she is going to Christine's cabin alone and how long she will stay. She finds comfort in Bob, MJ, and Doc's kindness and generosity.

In Chapter 5, David is distraught after reading Annie's letter. He tries to make sense of what has happened and prays. Caroline comforts her devastated son and plans to stay with them until Annie returns. She is quick to point out that Annie has kept her feelings from her family, but has thought out her plan to get away. Caroline is touched by Annie's thoughtfulness about the anniversary of Wade's death approaching and how Annie suggests that the family be there for Caroline during this time. Caroline's protective instincts kick in when David wants to find Annie and she tells him that he needs to let her go for a brief time. Both Caroline and David show concern about how others will react when they find out that Annie is away unexpectedly.

During Chapter 6, Michael finds relief when he calls his good friend Grady even though the two are not as close as they were in college. Michael knows that he can trust Grady and has a twinge of jealousy when Grady happily tells him about his wife and children. Due to his uncertainty of how to tell Grady what has happened, Michael decides to type him a letter on his computer on the airplane ride to Tulsa. Michael informs Grady of the seriousness of the situation and tells him to take the letter to the United States Attorney General if something happens to him.

The rivalry between Elliot and Christopher Jordan had intensified with the NASA project. The two men have a history of competition from law school.

Surprisingly Michael asks about Grady's family at dinner. Grady has a devoted and loving family, something Michael feels he lacks.

In Chapter 7, Annie's nightmare about the Jeep being out of control mirrors her life being out of control. She finds comfort in MJ's call and being inside such a cozy cabin. Annie enjoys looking around the cabin at Christine's stunning decorating.

Caroline is upfront with her son when she tells him to be honest when others ask about Annie's absence. He states that he cannot manage on his own and Caroline agrees. She reminds him of his sermons where he tells the congregation to depend on God's strength. Caroline is a wise and supportive mother. She concludes talking with him in prayer.

Darlene's phone call challenges Caroline to think of a way not to tell her that Annie has left the house. Caroline does not want Darlene to make matters worse and she will tell her later. Darlene is so very excited about her recent trip and wants to share the details with her daughter. Fortunately, Caroline is able to hold off on telling her about Annie.



Annie goes through a roller coaster of emotions in Chapter 8. She starts out happily making homemade chili and remembers good times in college. Then feels guilty about leaving her family. She hears God's voice telling her that it is all right for her to take a break. She is finally able to communicate what has been locked up and hidden from others. Annie is unhappy being married to a busy pastor. She resents the church members and how they behave inappropriately. Annie feels distant from her husband and God and wants a closer relationship with both. At the end of her revealing her heart, she is saddened and bewildered by not feeling peaceful.

In Chapter 9, his dad being home early again surprises Max, along with his mom's disappearance, and not knowing that his dad was clueless about her trip until reading her note. He wants to understand what is happening with the family dynamics and does not want to be treated like a little kid. Max is upset with the digs he receives from his economic teacher and is protective of his dad. David explains why Mr. Chet Harrison might be acting the way he is toward Max because of David's plan not to have Chet's son build the new sanctuary along with other decisions. Max and David are able to talk honestly with each other and bond over a game of basketball.

Annie's day flew by as she realizes it was already evening. She leaves a brief message so that she will not worry her family.

The author provides information as to why no one answered the phone at the McGregor house. Caroline steps outside to recycle an empty milk carton while David and Max were still outside playing basketball. The younger two kids did not answer the phone because they were watching TV and think some one else will get it.

In Chapter 10, Michael is being mysterious and Amelia cannot get in touch with him. He comes back to the house in the middle of the night, but leaves early in the morning before Amelia awakes. Amelia wants his help with a fundraiser, but Michael is unable to follow through on helping her. She tries to fight a bout of depression by keeping busy and questions their relationship.

Michael's motivation to tell Elliot about the evidence he has is to keep his business. He takes Elliot to a remote place after he loses Elliot's men. At first Elliot denies any wrongdoing, which irritates Michael. Elliot pretends to give in right before he surprisingly shoots Michael. Elliot's wrath and impulsiveness make him miss the second time he fires the gun. The third shot hits Michael's torso, which traumatizes him. In desperation, Michael cries out to God not even knowing if God is present.

Elliot and Duke make plans to control the blackmailing situation. Duke is fearful of Elliot and cowers to him.



Chapters 11 - 20

Chapters 11 - 20 Summary

The setting in Chapter 11 is Huntsville, Texas where Michael stops after driving for an hour. He looks at his wounds in the restroom and feels dizzy. Michael buys medical supplies in the gas station, bandages his wounds, and gets gas before he notices the attendant's name, "Christine." He gets coffee at McDonald's before heading out of town and watching out for cops. Rolling down the window and having fresh air remind him of his college days. He plans the ideal escape to Christine's cabin.

Elliot's men check in with him, they have been tailing Michael's moves. He calls his daughter after midnight looking for Michael. Amelia tells him that Michael is not there and complains that Michael is being distant. Elliot tries to comfort her.

The next setting in this chapter is Plainview, Texas, where Michael finds a small motel, Kincaid's Cottages, to get some sleep. His wounds pain and dizzy him. Michael falls into a deep sleep once he makes it to his room.

During Chapter 12, Annie takes in the fresh cold air and thinks about her family as she takes a walk. Each member is special to her. She thinks about how she met David after her frustrating car accident when she was in the hospital. Annie and Michael had a bitter breakup and she built up a wall of distrust towards men. She was teaching second grade and working on her Master's degree when the accident happened. David was the hospital chaplain and visited her. Annie was attracted to his smile and his relationship with the Lord. After being in the hospital for a month, Annie was released. David awkwardly asked to date her and soon they fell in love. They were married on New Year's Eve. Annie became a Christian.

Annie wants God to mend and rekindle their relationship and marriage. Unexpectedly, she falls off a steep edge and hurts her ankle. Fortunately she is able to make it back to the cabin where she calls Doc. He comes and assesses her ankle and her emotional heart as he tells her that he can help with both. After determining she sprained her ankle, Doc makes her hot tea and throws logs in the fireplace.

Chapter 13 focuses on Michael and his difficulty answering the wake up call after the phone fell. A hot shower revives him along with a fast food breakfast. Michael goes to the bus station and puts the flash drive in a locker. As he drives away, he remembers that he stored pain medicine for his knee in his gym bag. After spilling some hot coffee on himself and hurting his wound, Michael feels relief from the meds.

Gus checks in with Elliot about Michael heading toward Colorado. He follows orders not to be seen by Michael and awaits a reward from Elliot.

During Chapter 14, Jessie runs away from the cafeteria in tears. Mr. Harrison stops her and asks what is wrong. Jessie was telling her friend that her mom was away and the



friend blurted out that maybe they were getting divorced. Mr. Harrison tries to comfort her but she runs down the hall crying.

Mr. Harrison gets after Max for not paying attention and Max needs to stay after school. Megan waits for him outside. Although Max tries to remain calm, he gets upset when Mr. Harrison digs at Max about his father. Mr. Harrison continues with his taunting about his mother running away after Max slams the door closed and the glass shatters.

Max and Megan head to Sonic Drive-In as Max peels out of the school parking lot. He scares her with his driving and tries to explain what has happened to his mom. Megan is supportive but Max starts a fight with her. Instead of getting their drinks, Max peels out and drives her home. He peels out once more after dropping her off and is not polite to his brother Jeremy when he gets home. Going up to his room, he thinks about how Mr. Harrison could know about his mother and does not want to burden his father.

Chapter 15 is about Michael driving, obtaining state maps to get off the highway, and thinking about Christine. He calls Grady to tell him about the locker in Plainview and that Elliot shot him. After taking more muscle relaxers, he is able to keep driving. Background information about what happened between Annie and Michael is supplied. Christine's father died unexpectedly while Annie was away in Hawaii and Michael comforted her. One night, they got drunk and got carried away with an intimate relationship. Michael broke Annie's heart because he did not want to tell her what happened.

As Michael is daydreaming about the situation, an on-coming tractor-trailer's horn wakes him and he spins off the road into a snowdrift. After puking, he gets angry and curses. A stranger helps pull his SUV out and tries to get him to seek medical attention. Fortunately he is only 5 miles away from Weber Creek.

In Chapter 16, Darlene calls looking for Annie. Jessie tells her that she is away and David tries to explain the situation. Two police officers, Todd Kelly and Phil Brantley come to the McGregor's house to question Max about the school incident. Max explains and they come to the conclusion that it was an accident. Unfortunately, Mr. Harrison wants to press charges but the police allow David some time to talk to Chet before Max is arrested.

Jessie answers the phone and tells Annie that 2 policemen are there. David and Annie talk. David wants to have a phone number where he can reach Annie, but she does not want to give it to him. Annie promises to keep calling and David tells her about Darlene's call.

Annie recalls the last conversation she had with Chet Harrison in the grocery store parking lot. She was trying to put away the groceries and he harassed her about her husband. Annie got fed up and slapped his face when he was inappropriate. She called him on being a hypocrite. Angrily, he grabbed a cart and pushed it at another car making its alarm go off. Annie left a note on the car but saw no visible damage. She did not tell her husband as he was away attending to a grieving couple that had just lost



their child. Annie began thinking about spiritual warfare. She tells God that she needs to hear from Him.

In Chapter 17, Michael drives to Christine's cabin. He had been there once before, but Christine was not there. He drives into the driveway but faints on the way to the cabin. Annie hears the car engine and goes to see whom it is. She calls on God to calm her and He does. She spots a body lying in the snow and helps bring him inside. He is in and out of consciousness and tries to tell Christine not to call the police or get help. Annie tries to explain who she is and tries to stop his bleeding wounds. She is shocked to discover that it is Michael.

During Chapter 18, Annie calls Doc to come over and help with Michael. She tries to bring his fever down by putting cold cloths on his head. Doc assesses him and tells Annie that he needs blood. She happens to know his blood type and she tells Doc that they were once engaged. Doc tells her to eat a muffin and then transfers her blood to Michael. Doc tells of a hunting accident where he was able to take bullets out of Ol' Jeb's son Cooper. He recognizes Michael after Annie tells him that Michael played baseball. Doc removes the bullet in Michael's shoulder and stays with him during the night. Annie goes back to bed. Doc plans to pull Michael's SUV into the garage for their safety and get more supplies in the morning.

In Chapter 19, Doc wakes Annie up because he needs to go get the supplies. Annie persuades Doc not to tell the Sheriff right away about Michael. She sits with Michael and remembers when he played in the conference title game. He expressed his desire to go in the baseball draft and marry Annie.

Suddenly, the electricity goes out and she receives a call from Doc. He will not be able to get back to the cabin because the main road is blocked. Annie gets overwhelmed but Doc calms her and tells her that God will keep them safe. Annie thinks that God left her and Doc points out that God lets things happen to get our attention. He instructs her to organize her thoughts and get supplies and food ready. She needs to make sure Michael is comfortable so he can heal.

Elliot and his daughter talk about Michael's disappearance. Elliot reassures her that he will help locate him and she leaves. Duke and Elliot's discussion is interrupted by a mysterious phone call. Elliot is relieved when he hangs up the phone.

Annie gathers food and supplies. She promises Michael that she will not leave him when he cries out from his nightmares.

During Chapter 20, upset Darlene comes to the McGregor house searching for David to find answers about her daughter. Jessie overhears her grandmother in her furious tirade and becomes upset. David tries to comfort her. Caroline swooshes Darlene out the door and tells her that she is not welcomed at the house.

Max goes over to Megan's house and apologizes for his behavior. Megan does not want to be his verbal punching bag and tells him to get a hold of his temper. She is very loyal and faithful. Megan has a plan to figure out where Annie is staying. Her mother's friend



Denton works for the phone company and is going to look up the phone numbers that have called the McGregor's house.

Chapters 11 - 20 Analysis

In Chapter 11, Michael is able to get medical supplies, food, and gas. He is dizzy from his wounds, but he is able to come up with a plan to go to Christine's cabin. Elliot's men have been tailing him and reporting to Elliot. Michael inquires about bus transportation at the motel, which is foreshadowing his plans. Elliot cares for his daughter, but strangely calls her after midnight looking for Michael. He knows Michael's every move from the reports.

In Chapter 12, Annie becomes guarded after the breakup with her college sweetheart and has trust issues. She believes that men would not stick around for a lifetime and this thought grew and became strong in her mind because her father died when she was young. Annie focuses on her career and pushes men out of her life. A car accident throws her off her career path and she resents it. David however is able to break through her barriers and win her affection slowly.

Annie wants her marriage to be restored. Her fall shows her physical damage, but Doc was able to see right through that she also has emotional damage swollen inside. Annie is comforted because he is so kind and attentive. He mentions that the Lord does not want us to be burdened with stress; our bodies cannot handle it. Annie knows that God had planned for them to talk.

In Chapter 13, Michael has difficulty answering the phone, spills hot coffee on his self, and hurts his bullet wounds. He is able to revive himself with a shower and food. Gus keeps Elliot informed but Elliot is not confident in his men.

During Chapter 14, Mr. Harrison pretends to be a friend of Jessie's dad when he tries to comfort her. Jessie is wary of him after he tells her that her mother is overworked and burnt out and her father is never home. He uses this information to dig at Max. Unfortunately Max is not able to remain calm and slams the door when he leaves. Max acts too quickly and the shattering glass is a result of the door slam, as are the tire marks as he peels out of the parking lot. He does not want to burden his father and ponders how Mr. Harrison knows about his absent mother.

In Chapter 15, Michael recalls the summer after he graduated. Annie was away in Hawaii and he comforted Christine after her father passed away. He wanted to take care of Christine, at least that is how it started, but then they became intimate. Christine moved away before Annie came back and Michael broke Annie's heart.

A kind stranger helps Michael as he thinks he is going to die after driving off the road into a snow bank. Michael wants to pay the stranger, but the stranger tells him to pass on the favor.



Chapter 16 shows the McGregor family dynamics. Jessie innocently tells her Grandma Darlene about her mother's absence. David tries to explain the situation to Darlene who is impatient and overbearing.

The policemen come to the house to question Max. It seems like a bit too dramatic for Chet Harrison to call the police on a shattered window, but he wants to press charges, which is over the top.

This chapter brings background information about Annie's difficulty with Chet Harrison. He overstepped his physical and personal boundaries with her. Chet is not able to properly communicate and harasses Annie. She slapped him when he pushes too far into her personal life. She confronted him about being a hypocrite. His response was to push a grocery basket into another car. Annie took responsibility by leaving a note on the car even though she did nothing to it and there was no visible damage.

Annie is concerned about spiritual warfare and wants God to answer her. She feels everything is wrong there in Colorado and at home.

Chapter 17 shows both Michael and Annie's determination. Michael is not coherent and he has lost a lot of blood. He knew he could count on Christine to help him once he made it to the cabin. Annie's fear of a stranger coming to the cabin and her sprained ankle did not make it easy for her to help him get inside. She is shocked when she discovers that the stranger is Michael.

In Chapter 18, Annie seeks Doc's help once again. Doc provides valuable assistance to both Annie and Michael. Michael is very fortunate that Annie is there and is able to give him blood. Both Annie and Doc wonder what happened to Michael.

During Chapter 19, Annie's confidence to take care of Michael wavers when the electricity goes out and Doc cannot make it back. There is inconsistency about Christine having a generator. Back in Chapter 4, Doc told Annie that Christine had a back-up generator, but then in Chapter 19, he tells her that he'll bring one up because she did not have one. The power goes out and Annie does not have a generator to supply the power. Doc tries to explain to Annie that God is taking care of her by allowing certain things to happen. Annie thinks that God has deserted her and that she needs time to herself.

In Chapter 20, Darlene causes Jessie to become upset and miss her mother. Darlene is not sensitive to the feelings of others and is not sympathetic to David. She is angry that he hung up on her and that he is resting when she visits the house. Caroline throws Darlene out of the house as she tries to protect David and the kids against whirlwind Darlene.

Megan is upfront with Max about his anger issues. She addresses his problem directly and makes plans to figure out where Annie is located.



Chapters 21 - 30

Chapters 21 - 30 Summary

In Chapter 21, a confused Michael wakes up and realizes that it is Annie instead of Christine at the cabin. Annie fills him in on what happened and then he starts to remember why he is there. Doc calls to check on Michael and Annie realizes that she has not called home. She hesitates as she dials the number and comes to the conclusion that she cannot tell David what has happened with Michael. He tells her what happened with Elliot and his past, but Annie is unwilling to open up about her past.

During Chapter 22, Max listens to the phone message from his dad's secretary, Sally, about the newspaper article his grandma helped to write. It is about Annie's disappearance and how Darlene fears foul play. The article upsets David, Max, and Caroline.

Max heads to PJ's where PJ tries to console him. Max recalls that his parents have not been very affectionate toward each other lately. He makes a plan to find his mom, because according to Megan and Denton, she is in Colorado. Max calls the phone number for C. Benson and Annie answers, but Max hangs up. Annie asked if it was Doc Wilkins and fear sets in after the phone hangs up.

In Chapter 23, Max shows PJ's Volkswagen bus to Megan. He plans to drive to Colorado to find his mom. PJ provides polka music tapes, too. Max is excited even though it will take about 3 days to drive.

Chapter 24 is about Jessie going to her grandma's room early in the morning and telling her that Max is missing. After checking Max's room, they discover that he is gone, but Jeremy and David are still at home sleeping. David comes down sleepily and learns that Max is gone from Jessica divulging it out. David gets upset but tells them that he will find out where Max went.

During Chapter 25, Michael is looking better and gets hungry. Annie makes them sandwiches and hot tea because it is cold in the cabin without the electricity on. After Annie leaves the room to attend to the fire, Michael calls Grady, who wants to know where he is. Michael gives him a hint by saying he is at "Tumbleweed's cabin," which is a relief to Grady.

Doc visits Williamson's store and is concerned about Michael and who had shot him. It bothers him that he cannot tell his friends about what happened. MJ tells them that the phone lines are down.

Back at the cabin, Michael calls Annie to help him use the restroom. He starts to bring up their past when they lived together, but Annie does not want to hear any of it. She tells him that she's a pastor's wife, which shocks him. Michael was wordless when she reminds him that he walked out of her life without telling him why.



Switching locations to Houston, Elliot gets angry as Gus and Marcus lost Michael's trail.

In Chapter 26, Max has driven 300 miles to near Little Rock, Arkansas. He stops to check in with Megan and prays before he calls home. Both David and Max apologize and forgive each other for their behavior. David understands why Max must go alone but tells him to call twice a day at least.

In Chapter 27, Elliot gets angry with Gus and Marcus when they call to check in. He tells them that Michael is in Weber Creek and he will up their reward to \$10,000 each when they bring him in tomorrow.

At home, Amelia drinks wine and is upset because she knows that Michael is not coming back and he is with another woman. She threw the wine bottle, a glass, and a flower vase. Watching them explode and drinking Michael's beloved bourbon helped ease her broken heart.

Chapter 28 brings David's friend and police officer Pete over to the McGregor house. Pete offers to help David and tells him that he visited Darlene after the newspaper article ran to tell her that she was out of place. David is relieved with Pete's actions and told him about Max going to search for Annie. Pete is going to investigate Max's whereabouts.

In Chapter 29, Michael plays music from "Fiddler on the Roof" on the guitar after commenting that Annie looks like one of Tevye's daughters under the warm blankets. He continues to play other familiar songs until he comes to their song, James Taylor's "Something in the Way She Moves." They reminisce about the happy times when they dated and lived together. Michael feels that his life is over and that he has nothing, including no marriage, no business, and no career. He wants a friend. Annie puts her guard up, but gradually reaches out to him. Michael thinks there is a reason why they are both there together.

Chapter 30 takes place in the McGregor household where David is talking with his secretary on the phone. She tells him that the church has called a special business meeting. Officer Pete visits a crowded PJ's early in the morning. PJ is flabbergasted at the sight of Pete but tries to cover it up by saying that he was concentrating on the truck driver's order. Pete resolves to keep an eye on PJ as he is acting mysteriously.

Max continues to drive through the Texas Panhandle. He makes a scheduled call home and prays that the Lord will help him to make it.

David heads into church and is thankful to be busy with paperwork. Sally makes coffee for them and tells David that his mother-in-law came by the church yesterday looking for him. She informs him that Chet and his wife Geneva had a prayer meeting at their house a few nights and thinks that he is up to something. David wants to face Chet in a meeting along with the other deacons. He tells Sally that he is learning from God how to wait, since he has not heard from Annie. Chet Harrison arrives just as the chapter concludes.



Chapters 21 - 30 Analysis

During Chapter 21, Michael is open and honest about what has happened in his life. Annie, on the other hand, is unable to be open and honest. She is guarded and tries to protect her heart from telling him what has happened. Annie does not call her family as she promised because she forgot to call them the night Michael showed up and then she could not bring herself to call them in front of Michael. She does not want her family to know that she is at the cabin with her old fiancée.

In Chapter 22, Darlene has taken things into her own hands and has helped to write a newspaper article about her missing daughter. She draws attention to herself in the article. Additional background history is provided about PJ and his donut shop. His wife Pearl had died from Alzheimer's when David became friends with him and shared Jesus' love.

Max is confused when his mother answers the phone as she asks if the caller is Doc Wilkins. Annie and Michael show concern when the caller hangs up without identifying who he or she is.

In Chapter 23, PJ plans to lend his Volkswagen bus to Max to drive to Colorado in search of his mom. PJ and Max let Megan in on the plan.

During Chapter 24, the family finds out that Max is missing. Caroline comforts and calms Jessica and David. David apologizes for getting upset the day before in front of Jessica and she quickly forgives him.

Chapter 25 is about communication breakdowns. The chapter brings insight as to what happened between Annie and Michael when they broke up. He left without telling her what happened and there was a failure in their communication. Doc cannot tell his friends about Michael. He is concerned because the phone lines are down and cannot call Annie. Elliot's men lost Michael and have not called in for 3 days. They did not want to tell their boss that they lost him so they took their batteries out of their phones.

However, there is one note worthy piece of communication in this chapter. Michael tells Grady where he is headed, to "Tumbleweed's cabin." This brings relief to Grady, who appears to be a concerned friend.

In Chapter 26, communication is improving as Max calls Megan to check in. He also calls home and talks with his father. Both David and Max apologize for their behavior and forgive each other. David wants Max to check in at least 2 times a day and more if he can.

During Chapter 27, Elliot informs Marcus and Gus the location of Michael's whereabouts. This might throw the reader off guard because the details of how Elliot finds out where Michael is located has been mysteriously left out of the book. Elliot offers an incentive of a cash reward if they are able to bring him in by tomorrow. Amelia turns to drinking alcohol and throwing things to relieve her broken heart.



In Chapter 28 Pete brings comfort to David by telling him that he told Darlene it was not her place to talk to reporters and that he will inquire Max's whereabouts through Max's friends.

Chapter 29 contrasts happy times in the past and unhappy times in the present for Michael and Annie. Michael feels that his life is over and that he has nothing. He has failed at his marriage, business, and career. Michael wants a friend. This is similar to when Annie wanted a friend in Chapter 8. He does not know why they are at the cabin together, but he thinks there is a reason. Annie lets down part of her guard temporarily.

In Chapter 30, David is given a heads-up about the church special meeting. David's secretary, Sally, thinks that Chet called the meeting. PJ is acting suspiciously when he sees Officer Pete, who takes notice of the behavior.

Max's goal to find his mother kept him going throughout the long drive through the Texas Panhandle. Fortunately the roads are not icy because he is not used to driving in snow as he grew up driving in temperate Florida. He depends on God to help him reach his mother.

Sally is a helpful worker as she makes coffee and does not betray David's confidence when answering phone questions. David tells Sally that God is teaching him how to wait. At the end of the chapter, Chet Harrison arrives which adds to the intensity of David's situation.



Chapters 31 - Epilogue

Chapters 31 - Epilogue Summary

In Chapter 31, the setting is Williamson's where Gus and Marcus stop to get supplies. The men glance at each other when MJ asks where they are from and they give a nondescript answer. The men ask if there's a place to stay after MJ tells them the power and phone lines are out. Bob returns while MJ helps the men find a cell phone charger. As Gus and Marcus were leaving, they ask MJ if they have seen their tall, athletic friend.

Chapter 32 sheds light back at the church. David gets ready to speak to his congregation. The audience applauds when he steps out heading to the pulpit. He is caught off guard by their support and stumbles over his words. He is interrupted by Chet, who wants to speak to the congregation. David pleads with him to stop talking. He notices his mother and can feel her prayers. Chet feels that David should step down from his position. He states that David is emotionally unsound and that Annie was unfaithful. David reacted by hitting him in the face. Drama takes place as Chet's wife Geneva runs over to him and the crowd reacts by fighting with each other.

Just as it seems it cannot get any worse, Darlene and a TV crew enter the church. They film the drama unfolding with the congregation in an uproar. Escorted home by Officer Pete, David and Caroline decompress about the church uproar. David admits to overreacting when Jessica asks what happened. When the phone rang, Pete answers it and discovers it was Max with unfortunate news. PJ's vehicle broke down and Max was trying to have it fixed. David asks Pete how to find out where Max was and he replies to use *69. The area code is for Colorado and David realizes that Annie is at Christine's cabin.

During Chapter 33, Max heads over to a diner to get a cooked meal. He worries about paying the van repair bill and asks God for assistance. In the next booth, a sheriff, Brett Patterson, was inquiring about when the phone lines will be repaired. Max overhears him saying that he is going to Weber Creek and asks him for a ride. He finishes eating and plans to make a phone call before they leave.

Back at PJ's, Officer Pete overhears Megan asking PJ about Max. Pete confronts PJ and Megan about Max's whereabouts in Colorado. They try to act surprised, but Pete continues to tell them that the van broke down. PJ and Megan confess that Max took PJ's VW van. Pete tells them that Max is in a blizzard and no one has heard from Annie in days. He wants their help.

In Chapter 34, Max wakes up from snoozing in Sheriff Patterson's car. They are traveling slowly due to the blizzard. The sheriff finds out that power will be returned by morning.



The setting is switched to Houston, Texas, where Elliot is furious with Gus and Marcus. He wants them to get to the cabin right away; they should walk if they cannot drive there.

The chapter turns to Williamson's store where Gus and Marcus return to buy warmer clothes. MJ is wary of them and points them out to unconcerned Doc. Once MJ mentions they are looking for their friend, Doc becomes concerned. The men left in a hurry after they paid with crisp hundred dollar bills. Doc left shortly, spotted the men heading toward the inn, and followed them. He spotted their black car and saw the Texas plates.

In Chapter 35, the setting is Houston, Texas, where Elliot is fuming about the men's inability to locate Michael. He makes plans to fly to Colorado. Looking at photos in his office causes him to reminisce about his deceased wife and when Amelia was hospitalized for trying to commit suicide. He boards a plane heading to Colorado in the wee morning hours.

During Chapter 36, Annie awakens and is cold because the power has not returned yet. She is surprised when she hears a voice telling her to wake up and listen. She recognizes God's voice and falls to her knees. He reminds her that He has been there when she questions Him. Realizing this truth brings peace to her soul and tears to her eyes. She listened as He told her His plan and wakes up Michael. Annie bewilders Michael by telling him that she ran away from her home and shares how frustrated she was before she got to the cabin. She was searching for the truth and realizes that she needs to share God's truth with Michael. Annie points out that it was not coincidence that they are there together, but that it was God's plan to set Michael free from his sinful bondage. Michael was looking for a miracle to change his life and Annie tells him that God provides the miracles. She tells him that she was not bitter about their breakup because God changed her life. For years, Annie wanted to tell Michael about God's love and now she is able.

In Chapter 37, Elliot and another man arrive at Pueblo Memorial Airport despite the snowstorm and are whisked away in a Hummer.

Back at Williamson's, Doc tells MJ and Bob that he's headed to take supplies to Annie when Max interrupts him. Wary of Sheriff Patterson, Doc tells Max that he will bring Annie down to see him at the store. He later agrees to take a persistent Max to see his mom.

During Chapter 38, both Annie recalls all the frustrating events and recognizes that God causes situations to turn out well for those that believe in Him. Michael feels that he needs to tell her what happened in the past with Christine while Annie was away. Christine turned to Michael for support after her father died and they became intimately involved. He did not tell Annie because he did not want to hurt her, but she was hurt anyway. Michael tells her why Christine went to New York because she was pregnant with his unwanted baby. After Christine gave birth, she gave her son up for adoption to a couple and Christine's attorney sent photos to Michael. There was an old photo of him



in Christine's cabin and when Annie went to get it, she was shocked to discover it was a photo of Max. Michael is stunned when Annie declares that Max is her son who was adopted. Interrupted by hearing a car door slam, they decide to hide in case it is Elliot's men outside the cabin.

Chapter 39 brings about a startling visit from Max. Doc checks the breakers as the town's electricity was already back on. Annie prayed a silent prayer asking God to help her explain who was at the cabin with her when Max saw the blankets and pillows in the living room. She explains that she could not turn away a friend that needed help, especially after finding out that he had been shot. Max is wary when Annie tells him that she dated Michael in the past. Doc is able to get the power back on. Max fills Annie in on what has happened back at home, such as Darlene reporting her daughter missing in the newspaper and David being upset that Annie left. With Doc's help, Michael joins them and introduces himself. Max becomes upset, as he is not sure what to think about Annie and Michael being at the cabin together. A dazed Max does not want to converse anymore when Michael announces that he is Max's birth father.

As he heads out the door, Marcus grabs him. Annie yells out to let her son go. Michael hobbles to the door with Doc's help and tells Elliot to let Max go. Elliot makes a deal: if Michael gets inside the car then he will let Max go. Michael informs Elliot that the Attorney General has evidence to put Elliot and Duke in prison. To Michael's surprise, Grady holds up the evidence papers and explains that Elliot has been his helpful adviser. Grady admits to resenting Michael and mortifies Annie in front of her son.

Suddenly, Doc shoots the Hummer windshield and orders Michael, Annie, and Max to get into the cabin. Doc takes them to the garage where they find a trap door to an old mine tunnel. Elliot yells at his men to get Michael as they arm themselves with guns. They searched the cabin but could not find them.

Annie prays for protection as they travel through the tunnel and out into a cavern. Suddenly, Grady is upon them with a loaded rifle and orders Doc to drop his rifle. Doc complies as Michael tries to bargain with Grady, even after Elliot joins them. Grady fires a shot into the air out of frustration that Michael keeps trying to tell Grady to free them. An overwhelming avalanche is caused by the gunshot and it carries off Marcus, Gus, Elliot, and Grady. Annie states that God provided another miracle for Michael, as Annie, Michael, Max, and Doc are spared from the avalanche. The four became besieged with emotion. Michael concludes the chapter by stating there have been three miracles as he looks at Max.

In the Epilogue, the setting is Williamson's store where lots of customers are enjoying cinnamon rolls and warm beverages. David tells Annie that they are taking a sabbatical year off. Annie is thankful for God's provisions and protection. Background information on how David got to Colorado is explained. Officer Pete's friend flew them to Colorado. Elliot and Grady died in the avalanche while Gus and Marcus went to the hospital heavily guarded by patrolmen.



Michael is able to share with Max about being his birth father. Christine enters the store, but she is shocked when she spots Michael and Max chatting together. Annie states that she needs a vacation and the chapter is concluded with David lovingly telling her that she cannot go without him.

Chapters 31 - Epilogue Analysis

In Chapter 31, MJ is surprised when Gus and Marcus arrive at the store because they usually do not get visitors in stormy weather. She is friendly, offers coffee, and tells them that the Weber Creek Inn is close by. After helping them find a cell phone charger, they inquire about their missing friend. They give a description of Michael, but MJ and Bob have not seen Michael and do not know that he is at Christine's cabin.

In Chapter 32, the congregation is supportive of David and his family in their crisis. Chet interrupts David, but David is comforted by seeing his mother and feeling her protective prayers. Unfortunately, David loses his self-control and assaults Chet after Chet accused Annie of being unfaithful. The church members come undone and start fighting with each other. Darlene and a TV crew filming the upset church members further compound the problems.

Pete is a helpful friend to David and even tells him that he would do the same if he were in David's shoes. David discovers Annie's location after receiving Max's phone call.

In Chapter 33, Max asks God for help and God provides a way for him to safely get to Weber Creek. He is going with Sheriff Brett Patterson. Pete enlists help from PJ and Megan because Max is in dangerous weather and no one has heard from Annie in days.

Chapter 34 is the first time that the reader is aware that Elliot knows where Michael is located, in the cabin. Doc perks up when MJ mentions the men were looking for their friend. MJ gave Michael's description to Doc, but Doc did not say anything to her about Michael being at Christine's cabin. He finds out they are from Texas by locating their car in the inn's parking lot.

Chapter 35 points out that Elliot does not have self-control. He is angry with the men he sent to locate Michael and thinks that he is the only one that can get the job done. Sadly he finds nothing to console him in his office and starts to break down before looking at photos of his family. The reader finds out how serious Amelia was about trying to commit suicide as Elliot remembers her being hospitalized.

In Chapter 36, God reminds Annie that He has been there with her during her life struggles. She finds peace and joy when God speaks to her. Knowing her purpose to share God's love with Michael enables her to become unguarded and share what has been going on in her life. Michael is hesitant but listens to what Annie is sharing.

Chapter 37 explains that Elliot's wealth paid for the jet pilot to land during a snowstorm in spite of radio warnings. Elliot is determined to find Michael regardless of cost. Max is excited to find out that his mother is nearby and that Doc will take him to see her.



In Chapter 38, Michael tries to conceal his relationship with Christine so that he would not hurt Annie, but she is heartbroken already. He wants Christine to have an abortion because he is concerned about his career and does not want to start a family. Both Annie and Michael are shocked to discover that Max is Annie's son.

In Chapter 39, Annie prays silently to God asking for help and protection. She needs help in explaining to her son why she is at the cabin with a former boyfriend. Annie needs protection when they escape from Elliot and his men.

Max finds out who his birth father is and is unsure what to think about his mother being in the cabin with a former boyfriend.

Grady comes back into the story, but he is not a supportive friend to Michael. Instead, he explains that Elliot helped him get out of trouble in the past and he is returning the favor now.

Annie reminds Michael that earlier he had expressed hope in a miracle that would improve his life. God protected them from the avalanche. Michael points out that there have been three miracles after looking at his birth son.

In the Epilogue, David joins his wife and son along with the merriment of the store. Max learns the truth about his biological parents and is able to spend time with Michael. The book concludes with the McGregors sharing their love for each other.



Characters

Michael Dean

Michael Dean is a college senior at Oklahoma State University. He has been dating Annie for the past three and a half years. Michael is a football player. His best friend is Grady who has not played in the past five games. Michael is in love with Annie and has shaggy brown hair. His warm brown eyes and golden tan are attractive to Annie. Michael is a good singer and enjoys listening to James Taylor. He gets excited when he finds out that Christine has 2 extra tickets to see James Taylor in concert. Annie and Michael's song is "Something in the Way She Moves" by James Taylor.

In Chapter 3, Michael is playing golf with his friend Jimmy in Houston, Texas. Even though Jimmy asked him what was happening, Michael was guarded and did not share. He is married to Amelia, the daughter of Elliot Thomas. Michael is surprised when Elliot tells him that he knows that he wants to divorce Amelia. Michael had not brought it up with his wife yet. Elliot threatens his "The Sports Page" business if Michael goes through with the divorce. Michael, however, has a mysterious card to play. He tells Elliot that he has evidence that links Duke and him to the murder of Christopher Jordan. Elliot shoots him in the shoulder and another bullet grazes his torso.

Out of desperation, Michael goes to Christine's cabin. He has lost a lot of blood and confuses Annie for Christine. At the cabin, Annie shares God's truth with him and he becomes a Christian.

Annie Franklin

Annie Franklin is a college senior at Oklahoma State University. She has been dating Michael for the past three and a half years. Her best friend is Christine and they have been friends since middle school, even though they are very different from each other. Annie is in love with Michael and has long brown hair. Her honesty and openness are attractive to Michael. She gets excited when she finds out that Christine has 2 extra tickets to see James Taylor in concert. Annie and Michael's song is "Something in the Way She Moves" by James Taylor. Annie allows Christine to borrow her black dress, but tells her that she must have it cleaned before it is returned.

In Chapter 1, Annie is married to David McGregor and is not happy in her life. She runs away from her family to Christine's cabin in Colorado. Over the years, Annie has become bitter toward her absent husband because he has not been there for her or her children. She left dinner and instructions for her mother-in-law to pick up the kids from school. Caroline is impressed with Annie's thoughtfulness but she is saddened to know that Annie kept her feelings to herself about her family and unhappy marriage.



In Chapter 7, Annie's mother Darlene calls and talks to Caroline. Annie is not like her mother, but she was known as "daddy's girl." Unfortunately, her father died when she was 10 years old.

Annie taught second grade when she met David after her car accident landed her in the hospital. She was attracted to his smile and striking blue eyes. Annie was born and raised in Tennessee. According to Chapter 22, she is 39 years old.

Christine Benson-Hamilton

Christine is Annie's best friend. They have been best friends since middle school, although they are very different from each other. Christine asks Annie if she can borrow Annie's black dress for a date with Seth. Seth has 2 extra tickets to see James Taylor in concert. Christine would rather go see another performer instead of James Taylor. Michael calls her "Tumbleweed," which annoys her. Grady also calls her that and she does not like it either. She has blonde hair.

In Chapter 4, Annie mentions that she is headed to Christine's cabin. The cabin is near Weber Creek, Colorado and is beautiful. It has been in her family for years. Christine has remodeled it and it was featured in a magazine. Annie is not sure which last name Christine goes by because Christine is divorced. Originally, Christine's last name was Benson, but she might also go by Benson-Hamilton. Annie says that Christine is in Israel for several months for a photo shoot. Christine likes to travel, according to Bob in chapter 4.

Christine's father died right after they graduated from college. She did not go on the Hawaiian trip with Annie. During her grieving for her beloved father, she and Michael ended up having an intimate relationship. Christine left town before Annie got back. She was not there when Michael broke up with Annie as she went to New York.

Christine gave birth to a baby boy, who she gave up for adoption. She chose Annie and David as the foster parents, but they did not know it.

Grady

Grady is Michael's best friend in college. Annie is concerned about him in the Prologue. Grady has not played in the past 5 games and there have been many scouts at each game vying for players. After college, Grady and his family live in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

During Chapter 6, Michael finds relief when he calls his good friend Grady even though the two are not as close as they were in college. Michael knows that he can trust Grady and has a twinge of jealousy when Grady happily tells him about his wife and children. Due to his uncertainty of how to tell Grady what has happened, Michael decides to type him a letter on his computer on the airplane ride to Tulsa. Michael informs Grady of the seriousness of the situation and tells him to take the letter to the United States Attorney General if something happens to him.



In Chapter 15, Michael calls Grady to tell him about the locker in Plainview and that Elliot shot him. Grady reappears with Michael's evidence in Chapter 39. He finds Michael, Annie, Max, and Doc after they escape through the mine tunnel. Unfortunately, the avalanche kills him.

David McGregor

David McGregor is Annie's husband. He is a preacher. When he was younger, his hair was sandy brown, but over time it has become grayer. In Chapter 2, he is 41 years old. His mother's name is Caroline and his deceased father's name is Wade. In Chapter 12, he visited Annie when she was in the hospital after her car accident. His black hair, compelling blue eyes, and smile attracted Annie to him.

Max McGregor

Max is Annie and David's adopted son. He was 8 months old when he was adopted. Annie and David had been married for a year when Max came into their lives. They thought welcoming Max to their family was the best Christmas present they had ever received. In chapter 2, he is 16 years old. He has his driver's license and a girlfriend. He got an A+ on his physics exam in chapter 2. David tells Max that he must have inherited his academic genius from his mother. Max has dark hair.

Max's birth parents are Christine and David. He does not find out until Chapter 39.

Jeremy McGregor

Jeremy is Annie and David's son. In Chapter 2, he is 8 years old. He is Caroline's youngest grandson. He has light brown shaggy hair and a cowlick inherited from his grandpa. He likes to tease his sister and say that she is boring. In Chapter 12, Jeremy looks like his father and makes Annie laugh.

Jessie McGregor

Jessie is Annie and David's daughter. She has long blonde curly hair. Jessie was disappointed in her mom at the Mother-Daughter Banquet because Annie was off helping others instead of enjoying it with her. In Chapter 2, she is five years old. At PJ's, she always gets sprinkles on her donuts. In Chapter 12, Annie thinks about how Jessica is a reminder of all the marvels of life. Jessie has blue eyes.

Caroline McGregor

Caroline McGregor is David's mother and is in Seminole, Florida. She has a French braid in her hair when she goes to pick up her grandchildren from their school. She has



hazel eyes. Her late husband had a cowlick that was passed down to her grandson Jeremy.

PJ Ludwinski

PJ Ludwinski is the Polish owner of the charming donut shop. He is 80 years old and knows the McGregor family well. His wife's name was Pearl and she died from Alzheimer's. PJ was bitter before David became his friend and introduced him to Jesus.

Jimmy Peterson

Jimmy Peterson is playing golf with his friend, Michael Dean, in chapter 3. He is a sports broadcaster. Jimmy is worried about Michael who does not seem like himself.

Amelia Thomas

Amelia Thomas became Michael's wife. They met at a Houston country club. She has blonde hair, pleasant green eyes, and attractive legs. Amelia was sophisticated and attended an expensive private college. After her mother died, Amelia stepped in as her father's attendant. She loved Michael very much and was his #1 fan. Unfortunately Michael finds her boring after being married to her.

Elliot Thomas

Elliot Thomas is a Congressman and a billionaire. He met Michael at a Houston country club and invited him to his house. Elliot became Michael's father-in-law and had him trailed to know Michael's every move. Elliot found out that Michael wanted to get a divorce before his daughter found out. He threatened to take away Michael's business that he helped start if Michael divorces his daughter. Elliot shot Michael two times before Michael fled the scene. He pursues Michael during the rest of the book. Unfortunately, according to the Epilogue, Elliot died from the avalanche.

Bob Williamson

Bob Williamson was the owner of Williamson's store in Weber Creek, Colorado. His wife is Mary Jane and they have been married over 50 years. He is elderly and has white hair. Bob runs errands for his store and is very helpful.

Mary Jane Williamson

Mary Jane Williamson is married to Bob Williamson. They have been married over 50 years. MJ works at Williamson's store in Weber Creek, Colorado. She enjoys Doc



George Wilkins' daily visits. The good friends grew up near each other in Remington, Colorado. She is elderly and wants to make sure Emma gets a kettle of soup.

Emma

Emma is "Weber Creek's resident hypochondriac" according to Doc (Kindle Locations 1040-1041). MJ sends Bob to take her a kettle of soup.

Doc George Wilkins

Doc George Wilkins has a sympathetic face. He has a coffee mug with his name on it at Williamson's store as he stops in for a daily visit. Doc grew up near MJ in Remington, Colorado. He is very helpful to Annie when she gets hurt and later when she requests his assistance with Michael's wounds. Doc is courageous and is a Christian. He shares his wise words with Annie.

Ina Wilkins

Ina Wilkins was married to Doc George Wilkins, but she died about eight years ago. Ina and Doc loved each other and would rib each other about eating the last bits of food.

Wade

Wade is Caroline's deceased husband. He is David's father and has been dead almost a year. Wade had a heart attack and Caroline misses him dearly.

Duke Willis

Duke Willis is Elliot Thomas's chief of staff. He went on a trip with Elliot and Michael to a hunting cabin. Duke got very drunk with Elliot at the hunting cabin and was singing about the death of Congressman Christopher Jordan.

Christopher Jordan

Christopher Jordan was a Senator and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. Elliot and Christopher loathed each other and Elliot wanted his job. Christopher wanted NASA to build their program in Florida while Elliot wanted to build it in Houston.



Bo

"Bo" aka "Beauregard" has connections to Elliot and his real name is Mitch Creason. Michael hire a private detective to find out more information on Mitch and has proof that Mitch was involved with the murder of Congressman Christopher Jordan.

Darlene

Darlene is Annie's mother and calls the McGregor's house and talks to Caroline in chapter 7. She is Annie's mother and likes to stir up trouble. In chapter 20, she is called a "blonde tornado" (Kindle Location 4110). She is very impatient and likes to draw attention to herself.

Annie's dad

Annie's dad died when she was ten years old. In Chapter 12, the reader finds out that he died of a cerebral hemorrhage during a family vacation.

Chet Harrison

Chet Harrison is Max's economic teacher who digs at Max about his father. Chet is upset with David because David did not hire Chet's son to build the new sanctuary.

Jane

Jane is Michael's executive secretary. Amelia calls Jane in Chapter 10 looking for Michael.

Eva

Eva is Amelia and Michael's housekeeper.

Gus Rainey and Marcus Simmons

Gus Rainey and Marcus Simmons are two of Elliot's men that trail Michael. They follow orders and report back to Elliot about Michael's moves. They survive the avalanche as stated in the Epilogue. The Colorado State Patrolmen guard them at the hospital.



Megan Tanner

Megan Tanner is Max's girlfriend. She waits for Max outside when he got into trouble with Mr. Harrison. She is kind, gentle, and supportive of Max when he tells her that his mom left. Megan is honest with Max and tells him that she does not want to be his verbal punching bag when he loses his temper. She is loyal and faithful. Max appreciates her and feels comfortable with her. In Chapter 34, she asks PJ about Max without realizing that Officer Pete was in the shop.

Pete Nardozzi

Pete Nardozzi is a police officer and David's friend. He comes over to the McGregor house in Chapter 28 to talk with David. After the newspaper article ran, Pete went over to Darlene's house and told her that she was out of line.

Sally Hampton

Sally Hampton is David's secretary. In Chapter 22, she calls the McGregor's house to let them know about the newspaper headline that Darlene helped write. She thinks that Chet is behind the special church meeting in Chapter 30.

Geneva

Geneva is Chet's wife. The Harrisons had a prayer meeting at their house for Annie, says Sally in Chapter 30.

The Carters

The Carters run the Weber Creek Inn, according to MJ in Chapter 31.

Brett Patterson

Brett Patterson is the Weber Creek County Sheriff. Max meets him in a diner in Chapter 33 and asks him for a ride to Weber Creek as the van is being repaired.



Objects/Places

Stillwater, Oklahoma

Stillwater, Oklahoma is the setting for the prologue. The main characters Annie and Michael are at their favorite pizza joint, called Hideaway Pizza.

Tampa, Florida

In Chapter 1, Tampa, Florida is the setting where Annie is going to the Tampa International Airport to travel to Christine's cabin in Colorado.

Eagle's Nest

Colorado Springs is the location of Christine's cabin. Doc referred to the cabin as the Eagle's Nest and told Annie that Christine has remodeled it. It is located near Weber Creek, Colorado.

PJ's in Seminole, Florida

Seminole, Florida is the setting in Chapter 2 where Grandma Caroline is picking up Annie and David's kids Jeremy and Jessie. They go to PJ's donut shop, which is owned by PJ, who is Polish. His loyal patrons have brought him souvenirs from around the world and they are proudly displayed. There are jingling bells on the glass door and an old radio playing music. Polaroid pictures of faithful customers adorn a wall.

The McGregor's home

The McGregor's home is located in Seminole, Florida. There are 2 garages for the house and a basketball hoop in the driveway. Max's bedroom is upstairs, as is Annie and David's. Annie and David have a king-size bed. Caroline says that she can stay in the guest room in the house.

Houston, Texas

Houston, Texas is the setting for Chapter 3 where Michael and Jimmy are playing golf at a private country club. Michael played baseball for the Houston Astros. Michael met his wife Amelia and father-in-law Elliot at the private country club.



Williamson's store

In Chapter 4, Williamson's store is located in Weber Creek, Colorado. It is an old country store that has everything such as rocking chairs, a fireplace, and coffee for customers, along with groceries. Bob and Mary Jean Williamson own it. Dr. George Wilkins stops by every day for a visit.

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Tulsa, Oklahoma is where Grady Brewster lives in Chapter 6. Michael flies into the airport there and Grady picks him up curbside. They go to a Mexican restaurant.

Nacogdoches, Texas

Nacogdoches, Texas is where Elliot, Duke, and Michael go to a big hunting cabin in the woods.

Ricardo's

Ricardo's is a packed and lively Mexican restaurant where Grady takes Michael after he picked him up from the airport. The waitress's name is Maria, who takes Grady and Michael to Grady's usual table. It is located in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Huntsville, Texas

Huntsville, Texas is where Michael stopped at a gas station to get medical supplies, snacks, and gas. The attendant's name is Christine, which helped him determine where he was going to go.

Plainview, Texas

Plainview, Texas is where Michael found a small motel, Kincaid's Cottages to stay over for the night.

Near Little Rock, Arkansas

Near Little Rock, Arkansas is where Max calls Megan to tell him that he's doing ok. It is about 300 miles from the McGregor home.

Weber Creek Inn

Weber Creek Inn is where MJ tells Gus and Marcus to stay until the storm passes. The Carters run the inn.



Themes

Praying for God's protection

Throughout the book, many characters pray for God's protection in their lives. Michael prayed that he would arrive at Christine's cabin despite being shot and taking pain medication. He was seriously hurt and ran off the road. God provided a friendly helper that pulled his vehicle out of the snow bank.

Annie prays when she is fearful of an unknown visitor arriving at the cabin. She does not know whom it is and the person did not make it to the door of the cabin. He is out in the snow and she has a sprained ankle. With God's help, she is able to help him get inside the cabin and call Doc because of his wounds.

On his driving journey, Max prays for God to help him make it to his destination and find his mother. He had not driven in snowy weather before, but the roads had been well taken care of and he was able to drive safely. Even when PJ's van broke down, God provided transportation with the Weber Creek Sheriff. Max arrived safely to Williamson's store and then took a ride with Doc up to the Eagle's Nest to find his mother.

Annie prayed to be protected against Grady and the other men that she did not know when they were escaping from them. God provided an old mine tunnel for their escape. Even when Grady found them again, God saved them from the avalanche that took the lives of their predators. Annie pointed out that God provided another miracle for Michael by protecting them from the avalanche.

Relationships between spouses 268 words

In the book, the relationships between spouses are explored. Annie is unhappy with her marriage. Instead of letting her husband know how and why she was unhappy, she flees to her friend's cabin. David was completely off-guard and unaware that anything was troubling his wife. His absent behavior compounded Annie's problems, as he was more concerned about his church members than he was with his own family. After Annie and David are reunited at Williamson's, he promises her that their lives will change because he is taking a sabbatical for a year. They will be able to rekindle their relationship if they both agree to have more open and honest communication.

Michael wants to divorce his wife because he is bored with her. He has not even told her of his plans, but his father-in-law has found out. Sadly, in the past, Amelia has had to be hospitalized for her depression. In the book, she tries to keep herself busy to keep her depression from returning. Michael does not communicate well with his wife and she does not know where he is or when she will see him next. Due to his wondering eye, she knows that Michael is with another woman. Their relationship is doomed to fail unless major changes take place.



MJ and Bob enjoy bantering with each other. However, MJ feels like sometimes others might not see it as bantering and might mistakenly think they cannot get along. Doc reassures MJ that that is what goes on between married couples. He explains that he enjoyed bantering with his wife, but unfortunately, she has passed away.

Friendship

When Annie was in college, she her best friend was Christine. Throughout the years, they stayed in touch but have not been as close as they were when they were in college. While Annie is flying to Colorado, she is very tense and guarded. She does not want anyone to know that she is having difficulty in her life, especially with her husband and her family. However, in Chapter 8, she desires a loyal friend and she takes her concerns to God. "And I'm so tired of having to stay on constant guard against potential friendships that might prove traitorous, when all I wanted was someone to be my friend. I need a true friend. Is that so much to ask" (Kindle Locations 1750-1751).

Michael wants to turn to a friend in his time of need after he is confronted by Elliot about his desired wish to divorce his wife. He turns to Grady, a trusted college friend. "Michael visualized the wide grin of his old buddy and was strangely comforted by the warm feelings of camaraderie that swept over him. He wanted to believe it was like old times. And tonight he urgently needed a friend he could trust. In the urgency of this hour, Grady Brewster was the only person Michael had even considered calling. There was no one else" Kindle Locations 1188-1192).

Unfortunately for Michael, Grady does not remain a supportive friend. He admits to resenting Michael and mortifies Annie in front of her son. Grady explains that Elliot helped him get out of trouble in the past and he is returning the favor now.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is the third-person and omniscient perspective. The reader is able to compare and contrast what is going on in different states at the same time. The chapters bounce around giving glimpses into what is happening in Oklahoma, Florida, Texas, and Colorado. The book starts out introducing the main characters as seniors at Oklahoma State University. Annie and Michael are in their favorite pizza parlor and friendly Christine comes to visit them. She takes a piece of their pizza without asking but does ask for a drink to be served.

In the first chapter, Annie is leaving her home in Florida on her way to Christine's cabin in Colorado. Later, the reader discovers that Michael, his wife, and father-in-law live in Texas. Williamson's store in Weber Creek provides a setting for extra characters, such as MJ, Bob, and Doc to meet and interact with the main characters. Christine's cabin is described in Chapter 7 and provides a restful place for Annie to deal with her problems.

The book contains dialogue between the characters and personal thoughts of the characters. Some of the characters, such as Annie, Caroline, and Max pray to God. Scripture is quoted in the book as well. "The scripture came to her mind at once. Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. She clung to the words as though lost at sea, clinging to a life raft" (Kindle Locations 1687-1689).

Setting

The beginning chapters each have a different setting, such as Oklahoma, Florida, Colorado, and Texas. The prologue takes place in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The main characters Annie and Michael are at a pizza joint, called Hideaway Pizza.

In Chapter 1, Tampa, Florida is the setting where Annie is going to the airport to travel to Christine's cabin in Colorado.

Seminole, Florida is the setting in Chapters 2 and 5 where Grandma Caroline is picking up Annie and David's kids Jeremy and Jessie. It is raining and the kids are being picked up in the car line from school. After going to PJ's donut shop, they head home.

Houston, Texas is the setting for Chapter 3 where Michael and Jimmy are playing golf at a private country club. Michael played baseball for the Houston Astros. Michael met his wife Amelia and father-in-law Elliot at the private country club.

In Chapter 4, Williamson's store is located in Weber Creek, Colorado. It is an old country store that has everything such as rocking chairs, a fireplace, and coffee for



customers, along with groceries. Bob and Mary Jean Williamson own it. The store has been in Bob's family for years. Dr. George Wilkins stops by every day for a visit.

Chapter 6 takes place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Grady lives there with his family. Michael flies into Tulsa to speak with Grady in person about his troubles. The friends go to a lively and packed Mexican restaurant called Ricardo's.

In Chapter 7, Annie arrives at Christine's cabin, otherwise known as Eagle's Nest. It is located near Weber Creek. Christine has remodeled the cabin and it has been in her family for years.

Language and Meaning

The language is casual as the characters are having real life-like conversations with each other. Some of the characters pray to God, such as Annie, Caroline, and Max, when they need His help. Their prayers are recorded and God is able to calm their fears and protect them.

The reader can feel Annie's impatience in Chapter 1 when she talks to Fran. "Fran's tone iced through her veins. 'I'm not upset! But I don't think I should have to explain myself just because I can't be there. You'll do fine without me. Run the video then break them into their small groups. It's not that hard, Fran'" (Kindle Locations 251-252).

Annie's dialogue with others such as MJ and Bob are guarded. She is not open and honest with them as she tries not to divulge too much information. After Michael broke her heart, she did not trust men and tried to protect herself from future harm. Annie's protective walls were broken with David's kind and caring words. He slowly was able to warm her heart and gain her trust.

In Chapter 7, Annie's nightmare about the Jeep being out of control mirrors her life being out of control. She finds comfort in MJ's call and being inside such a cozy cabin.

In Chapter 36, God reminds Annie that He has been there with her during her life struggles. She finds peace and joy when God speaks to her. Knowing her purpose to share God's love with Michael enables her to become unguarded and share what has been going on in her life. Michael is hesitant but listens to what Annie is sharing.

Structure

The novel has 40 chapters, including a prologue and an epilogue. The chapters bounce around giving glimpses into what is happening in Oklahoma, Florida, Texas, and Colorado. The storyline begins with the back-story of the main characters that are in love with each other. They are eating dinner at a pizza joint and share concern about a friend of theirs, Grady. Another friend, Christine visits and wants to borrow Annie's black dress. All of this is taking place in Oklahoma as the friends attend Oklahoma State University.



The main character's lives have changed over time as the first chapter jumps 17 years to the present time. Chapter 1 focuses on Annie and how she is on her way to Christine's cabin in Colorado. She is leaving Tampa, Florida. Through her journal entry, the reader discovers that Annie married David McGregor. Information about what happened to Michael Dean from the prologue is not supplied, which is intriguing.

It is not until Chapter 3 when the reader reads about Michael and what has happened in his life for the past 17 years. Michael is playing golf with another friend but when he sees his father-in-law's men, he goes with them to see Elliot. Elliot presents a problem with Michael's desire to divorce his wife and threatens to take away Michael's business. The plot of the novel thickens as Michael mysteriously has one card to play against Elliot's blackmail. Michael has evidence that Elliot was involved with Congressman Christopher Jordan's murder.

Annie's purpose for being at the cabin is revealed to her from God in Chapter 36. She leads Michael, who feels his life is a disaster and wants a miracle, to God and he becomes a Christian.



Quotes

"Oblivious to Christine or the other patrons of Hideaway Pizza, Annie felt a surge wash over her like she'd never known before. In that single moment, she knew without a shadow of doubt she would spend the rest of her life with this man who meant more to her than life itself." (Kindle Locations 229-231)

"The church owned David McGregor. And he allowed them to do so. Of course, he never had enough time to stop and ponder anything so close to home. They kept him much too busy. Annie still believed he was a good decent man who loved her and loved their children. So what had happened" (Kindle Locations 362-366).

"It was a mother and daughter celebration, but this mother had spent only five minutes with her daughter. Five minutes. Suddenly, the truth pierced her heart: Jessica got crumbs that night— Annie's crumbs. The same kind of crumbs Annie got from David. What goes around comes around" (Kindle Locations 384-387).

"High above the earth in a plane arcing over the Midwest, Annie knew she must come to grips with who she was and exactly what she was doing . . . A pastor's wife, running away from home" (Kindle Locations 401-404).

"Sure, she had grown more beautiful with each passing year, but in Michael's opinion she was still— well, boring. She was too beautiful, too proper, and much too refined. He realized his disappointment early in their relationship, but refused to believe it would ever be a serious problem for him. After all, this prize had come with unlimited opportunities and connections" (Kindle Locations 742-745).

"'C'mon, Michael. What gives? You and the queen having problems?' Jimmy had never taken Michael and Amelia's marriage too seriously. He knew the old Michael Dean— the ball player with a girl in every city on the league schedule and then some" (Kindle Locations 775-777).

"He glared back at the congressman. "Yes, Elliot, I have begun divorce proceedings. Something I should have done years ago. But I'm still curious how you found out about it. I just spoke to Thad yesterday and I know he would never break our attorney/ client confidentiality. I haven't even spoken to Amelia about it. So just exactly how did you find out" (Kindle Locations 812-815).

"Elliot, you're an egotistical fool. Think you have all the answers, don't you? Think you can control everybody you meet by just snapping your pudgy little fingers. Well, I'm afraid you've pathetically miscalculated this time. "You see, I still have one card left to play" (Kindle Locations 924-927).

"At first, I thought it was hopeless. I would certainly lose my company. Then I remembered an incident that happened several years ago. An incident that implicates



Congressman Elliot Thomas of conspiracy to commit first degree murder" (Kindle Locations 1231-1233).

"Hey, I earned every single one of these white hairs and I'm mighty proud of each and every one. Now, what do you say we hit our knees and spend some time with the Lord since He's the one with all the answers" (Kindle Locations 1583-1585).

"And I'm so tired of having to stay on constant guard against potential friendships that might prove traitorous, when all I wanted was someone to be my friend. I need a true friend. Is that so much to ask" (Kindle Locations 1750-1751).

"As he turned to face his father-in-law, he heard the indisputable pop of a gunshot. 'Noooo!' he shrieked, instantly fighting back as reality rushed in. A white hot burn in his bicep screamed in pain as he struggled to seize the pistol out of Elliot's hand" (Kindle Locations 2122-2124).

"But in Annie's case, she got two for the price of one. For David gave her not only his love, he gave her a Savior as well. What started as a mere curiosity of the unique, personal relationship he shared with Christ, quickly grew to an eager yearning for a personal relationship all her own. She surrendered her life to the Lord, astonished at the difference he made in her life" (Kindle Locations 2655-2657).

"Just the same, I'd be mighty blind not to notice you're hurting pretty badly in here." He tapped his finger on his heart. He smiled at her with knowing eyes. "A sprain like this may be a nuisance, but it's not too serious. But if you keep whatever it is that's bothering you all stuffed down inside you like some turkey all dressed for Thanksgiving, you'll bring on all kinds of illnesses. Physical and emotional" (Kindle Locations 2739-2741).

"Meaning...what if I told you I was at Tumbleweed's hideaway and left it at that" (Kindle Locations 4923-4924).

"Just hand the keys over to Him. He wants so much for you to hand over those keys because He wants you. Let go, Michael. Give Him your life. He can make it whole and pure and good like it's never been before" (Kindle Locations 6078-6080).

"Michael! This is part of your miracle!" Annie turned, grabbing his arm. 'Remember how you said it would take a miracle to get out of your mess? Well, God did it— again! He gave you another miracle, don't you see?' Tears of joy streamed down her face. 'He saved you! He saved all of us'" (Kindle Locations 6745-6747).



Topics for Discussion

How does Annie solve conflicts? How does Michael solve conflicts? How do you solve conflicts?

Discuss the writing style of the book. What appealed to you? What would you change if you edited the book?

Have you ever experienced a miracle in your life? Explain. If you have not experienced a miracle, what miracle could change your life?

What prior knowledge do you have of church, church members, and pastors? What have you learned about the church, church members, and pastors? How has your view of church, church members, and pastors changed by reading this book?

How has Max's personality traits (impulsivity, recklessness, and compassion) helped or hindered his relationships? What traits, if any, do you see in yourself?

David, Megan, and PJ support Max in his dreams to find his mother. How does this affect Max? What level of support have you received from others? Who has supported your dreams? Who has not been supportive of your dreams?

How do you deal with your anger or conflict? Are you able to forgive others? What about if you were falsely accused, could you still forgive your accusers? What happens if you do not forgive others?