

Same Kind of Different as Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Tog... Study Guide

Same Kind of Different as Me: A Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Tog... by Ron Hall (author)

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Plot Summary

Same Kind of Different as Me is a non-fiction autobiographical account of two unlikely friends and published in 2006. This story is about their lives from childhood almost seventy years earlier to their attendance at the 2005 presidential inauguration. Denver Moore is born in Red River Parish, Louisiana and grows up to become a poor, illiterate homeless yet intensely spiritual black man skilled at surviving alone on the street or in jail. Ron Hall is born in Haltom City, Texas and grows up to be a rich, well-educated propertied white man skilled at succeeding in the international world of fine art. Their story is told in their own words and dialect which presents a lively, interesting dialogue between a Southern black man and white Texan getting to know each other through the persistent encouragement of Ron's wife Deborah who brings them together and then dies.

Denver writes in an iconic style that reveals his candor. There is little question about what Denver means by what he says. Denver's confusion about cultural differences is clear in his innocent wondering why rich people call sushi what poor people call bait. The writing is simply put and straightforward, sensitive, lighthearted, heartbreaking and heartwarming. Suspense builds as the young Li'l Buddy watches Big Mama in her burning house trying to escape just like the grown up Denver prays Miss Debbie escapes her cancer. Their style of writing in sixty-seven short vignettes captures a mood or thought apart from distraction to create a powerful impact in its simplicity. Ron and Deborah smile and ask a lot of questions getting to know the homeless at the mission. To Denver the reason is obvious, "Why would anybody be wantin to know a homeless man's name and birthday, if they ain't the CIA?"

Chapters are grouped into nine sections based on Denver and Ron's time of life and experiences. The first two chapters through chapter seventeen introduce the childhood days and background of Denver and Ron. Later sections describe their meeting and developing friendship at the mission and then announces Deborah's cancer. When Denver drives to Denver, Colorado over the highways and into the mountains still unable to read highway signs the suspense builds until Regan announces "He's here" while Deborah prays for his safety. Miss Debbie's dying days are spread over nineteen months and thirteen chapters. When she dies and through the end of the book. Ron and Denver adapt to a new lifestyle and friendship by visiting Li'l Buddy's past in Red River Parish and plan future projects to memorialize Deborah's memory and carry forward her ministry to the homeless.



Chapter 1 Denver

Chapter 1 Denver Summary and Analysis

Same Kind of Different as Me is a non-fiction autobiographical account of two unlikely friends and published in 2006. This story is about their lives from childhood almost seventy years earlier to their attendance at the 2005 presidential inauguration. Denver never speaks to a white woman before Miss Debbie except for the time he is almost killed at the age of fifteen. That time he is fixing a flat tire. He lives in Red River Parish, Louisiana on a big, flat plantation. There are many different fields, a total of one and two hundred acres, bounded by hardwood, pecan trees. Denver is walking down a red dirt road running in front of the plantation returning from his auntie's house. He sees a white lady wearing a hat and skirt standing by a blue Ford with a tire problem so Denver asks, "You need some help, ma'am?"

She thanks him for offering so Denver gets her jack to begin fixing the tire. Denver is behind the car on the side fixing the flat tire. Red dust floats up around him from horses' hooves. Three white boys are trotting up the road on their horses. Denver stays where he is hoping they'll just ride by. He has second thoughts and doesn't want them to think he is hiding so he stands up. One of the riders asks the lady whether she needs any help. A red-headed rider sees Denver and says, "She's got a nigger helping her!" Another rider, a boy the same age as Denver, says "Boy, what you doin botherin this nice lady?"

The white lady that Denver helps says nothing. One of the riders throws a rope around Denver's neck and jerks it tight like roping a calf. The roper says they're going to teach Denver a lesson about bothering white ladies. Denver recalls other stories besides his own about how colored people are treated by "good ole boys" in Louisiana. Folks in the area claim the bayou is filled with the bones of black men fed to gators for looking at a white woman. Legends say the threat of this fate hangs over the cotton fields like a ghost.

Denver slaves in the cotton fields for thirty years, long after the formal end of slavery. He has a shack he doesn't own, two overalls he owes for, a pig and an outhouse from the Man he works for instead of a paycheck. He works like this from the time he is a child through the time of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. When the train goes by the highway, Denver dreams he might go places on it. When he finally gets tired of being poor he jumps on the train when it slows down. He gets off when the boxcar doors open again. Denver is a black man who can't read, can't write and can't do figures but lives to his middle age picking cotton. Now he finds himself homeless in Fort Worth, Texas where he spends many years before he meets Miss Debbie. Denver thinks she is the skinniest, nosiest, pushiest white or black woman he ever met. Miss Debbie gets Denver to tell her things about his life that he shares in this book.



Chapter 2 Ron

Chapter 2 Ron Summary and Analysis

Ron remembers a moment in 1952 as a second-grade child at Fort Worth Elementary in Fort Worth, Texas. The children are asked to bring a urine sample for testing to school. Ron mistakenly delivers his in a Dixie cup to his mean and ugly teacher Miss Poe, rather than the school nurse. Miss Poe punishes him by marching all the students outside to the playground for an announcement. Ronnie Hall must spend the thirty minute recess with his nose in the circle that she draws on the schoolhouse wall. Miss Poe announces that she punishes him for being stupid by giving her his Dixie cup full of pee. He stands on his tiptoes to reach the circle that she draws. His legs ache and his tears wash off half the circle. He thinks of the shame she causes him 26 years earlier as he drives his Mercedes convertible in 1978 onto the private tarmac of Meacham Airfield like a rock star.

Ron dreams he would show Miss Poe, old girlfriends and his 1963 Haltom High School graduating class how well he is overcoming his lower-middle-class background. The pilot greets him and asks if he needs help getting the paintings in his client's private Falcon jet. They carefully move three Georgia O'Keeffe paintings from Ron's Mercedes into the Falcon to bring to New York. The O'Keeffes sell for nearly a million dollars. Ron earns one hundred thousand dollars, a trip to Madison Avenue and lunch in his honor with his client and her wealthy socialite friends for the day's work.

As the Falcon takes off and gains altitude, Ron relaxes and looks down on the changes local billionaires are making on his hometown Fort Worth. He sees the giant holes dug to make room for towers of glass and steel to turn the sleepy cow-town into an urban center. The construction project is planned to relocate the city homeless. Ron is secretly pleased to see bums being pushed to the other side of the tracks. Ron doesn't want them begging from him on his way to the Fort Worth Club for his daily workout. He agrees with the developers' goal to make "our city a nicer place to live."

Ron's wife Debbie doesn't know how strong his feelings are. His rocketing career begins with soup, then investment banking and is now at the top of the art world. Ron believes he bootstraps himself from a lower-middle-class country boy to Forbes 400 lifestyle. Debbie forgives him for using her stock when he gives her a gold Piaget watch and mink jacket. Ron sells a Charles Russell painting for \$10,000 in 1975 and a Renoir in 1977 which supports a month in Europe for them to socialize with his multimillionaire clients on their yachts and in their old-money mansions. Ron's lifestyle back home turns to Armani suits. Ron opens an art gallery in a Fort Worth neighborhood called Sundance Square. He shows several hundred thousand dollar paintings by Monet, Picasso and others like them. They do not post prices since greasy, smelly, often black alcoholic and addicted derelicts still wander the area. Ron's negative image of the homeless is confirmed when two bums smash and grab some cash and jewelry from his store.



Chapters 3 to 17

Chapters 3 to 17 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 3 through 17 describe the early days and childhood of Denver and Ron in alternating chapters. Denver is called Li'l Buddy since grandfather PawPaw carries him in a pocket of his overalls. Big Mama and PawPaw raise older brother Thurman, Li'l Buddy and a grown sister Hershalee who lives down the road. Big Mama is big around and makes her own dresses from seven or eight sacks with flowers or birds on them. PawPaw works fields and she cares for grandbabies. Li'l Buddy does not play much since Big Mama gives him chores. Cousin Chook stays there. Li'l Buddy's cat wakes him one night. He sees smoke and chases the cat out. He tells Thurman and Chook to go but can't wake Big Mama and Chook won't go. The roof traps them and they both die.

Chapter 4 describes Ron's upbringing in a lower-middle-class part of Fort Worth called Haltom City where shabby-looking house trailers and cars stripped for parts sit in yards. His father Earl becomes alcoholic when Ron is a child. His mother Tommye is a Texas farm girl who sews and bakes cookies. Her father and grandfather own a blackland farm by Corsicana seventy-five miles from Fort Worth. Ron and older brother, John, spend summers with Granddaddy and MawMaw. Granddaddy hires day work and feeds colored workers at the grocery store and white workers at the farmhouse but pays the same. Chapter 5 describes Denver's stay with Uncle James. Denver and Thurman's father BB is found stabbed to death. Uncle James takes them to a farm where they sharecrop. The Man owns the land and store and the sharecropper is paid in credit to fill his needs at the store. The Man wants sharecroppers to grow more cash crops like cotton but never harvest enough to pay off his credit. Three years of hard work in debt makes Uncle James move to a plantation. Uncle James is a Christian man who quotes Scripture.

Ron spends summer at Granddaddy and MawMaw's in Chapter 6 until he enrolls at East Texas State in 1963. Ron's mother Tommye sews clothes from feed sacks so Ron's wardrobe is not khaki pants and madras shirts like his college friends. Tommye makes a matching new outfit for him out of madras-like plaid from Hancock Fabrics to wear on his blind date. The girls look like "movie stars" never seen in Haltom City and Ron looks like no one they ever see either with clothes like Bozo the clown. Chapter 7 introduces Denver's friend whose aunt saves his life. Denver is seven or eight when he gets his first white flour sack to pick cotton. He spends tokens at the store for candy where he meets a white boy his age named Bobby who wants to ride bikes. They become friends since the white boy doesn't know he's not supposed to be friends with a black boy. Bobby's uncle, who is the Man, gives Denver a bike for Christmas which is the first new thing he has.

Chapter 8 describes a memorable trip to Dallas on November 22, 1963 on the day President Kennedy visits. They are slowed by the Kennedy motorcade until an opening



and Ron follows the Kennedy limo to Parkland Hospital when a radio announcer says "The president is dead." Chapters 9 and 10 portray significant events for Denver. He attends Sunday services at New Glory of Zion Baptist Church for plantation families. Denver is twelve when they do baptisms at the river and dinner on the ground where "white folks call it a picnic." Brother Brown loses his grip on Denver who pops up downriver. Denver asks why God takes all the people he loves after Big Mama and BB when Uncle James dies. Aunt Etha leaves and he is separated from Thurman to live with Hershalee at thirteen. His memory flashes back to horses trotting when he runs with a rope around his neck. Then he stumbles and grabs the noose to stop choking until they gallop and he crashes to the dirt. Shirtsleeves and pants knees tear to expose skin peeling away in the dirt. Suddenly they stop. Bobby's aunt points a shotgun and yells to the boys to cut him loose. Bobby and his aunt take him home to heal.

Chapters 11 and 12 describe Ron and Deborah's early days together. They meet in 1965 as sophomores at Texas Christian. Ron is drafted into the army until 1968 when he sells Campbell's Soup to finish a degree. He calls Deborah to find she is graduated, gorgeous, educated and a single, fun-loving woman. They marry in October 1969. Deborah teaches and Ron enters investment banking and earns an MBA in night school. He sells paintings on the side in 1971. They have a child, Regan two years later. Ron makes twice as much selling paintings as banking in 1975 so he freelances. His first five-figure sale is brokered by Mr. Goldberg who calls Ron "Poopsie" and himself "Snookems." Ron worries when Goldberg's phone rings unanswered forty-three days and Crowfoot calls to get \$28,000 for the painting he sells but finds the money is already wired. Ron and Deborah attend meetings on Christian life and evangelicalism that convince Ron but not Deborah.

Chapter 13 is about Denver's escape from Red River Parish. At eighteen the Man gives Denver a two-room shack under a sycamore tree, with a bed, table, chairs, stove and his own outhouse that makes him feel like he lives "high on the hog." Denver works three hundred acres for that little shack, clothes on his back, one hog a year and five or six times a few dollars. He gets no school, no trade and no news till twenty-eight-year old Denver decides to hop that train he hears. In Chapter 14 Ron and Deborah have a successful social and business life that is challenged by his affair. Thirty-two year old Ron pays \$275,000 for a house in upscale 1977 Fort Worth. They live a society-page life with art-dealing and \$1,000-a-plate charity balls. Ron flies to New York regularly and travels first-class to Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Florence. Ron buys and sells for recognition and success while Deborah seeks spiritual ministry and God. Ron dates a blue-eyed blond painter twice before confessing to Deborah. She flies into a rage and they reconcile in counseling. Deborah commits to be the best wife Ron could ever want.

Chapter 15 describes Denver arriving in Dallas when the train stops on his first time out of Red River Parish. He rides the rails several years from Dallas, lives in Fort Worth and Los Angeles with a woman for awhile, keeps getting in trouble with the law and returns to Fort Worth. Denver works day labor for \$20 to buy food and a six-pack or drugs to help forget. In Chapter 16, Ron drops his affair to spend more time with his family at Rocky Top. They return to Fort Worth and Deborah reads about Union Gospel Mission on Lancaster Street and asks Ron to join. He agrees but hopes she will get over it. In



Chapter 17 Denver discovers the hobo "code of honor" to share goods. A hobo leaves Denver a Ford Galaxy that is big enough to sleep two until police haul it away and send him to Union Gospel Mission. He sleeps across the street and then accepts Don Shisler's bed to clean around the mission.



Chapters 18 to 28

Chapters 18 to 28 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 18 through 28 describe the meeting and developing friendship of Ron and Denver. Deborah feels God's call to serve at the Union Gospel Mission and Ron wants to be a good husband by helping. Deborah tells Ron she sees the face of a man who changes the city in her dream. Don Shisler is a fifty-some year-old director and Pam is a volunteer coordinator. A chapel and kitchen tour lead to chain-smoking Chef Jim, a TCU graduate recuperating from his addictions by trading cooking for room and board. Deborah serves Tuesday dinners with Ron. Meals are free after Brother Bill's "hellfire and brimstone" sermon in the chapel. A big black man rages that someone steals his shoes, and Deborah says he is the man she sees in her dream that she wants Ron to befriend. The black man in his sixties is a loner dressed in rags, does not smile, rarely speaks and keeps others at a distance like a pit bull. They hear his name is Dallas, and Deborah thinks he's the poor man whose wisdom saves the city. Ron wants to ignore him but Deborah insists Ron and he be friends. He greets Dallas but is ignored till someone says his name is Denver. Ron greets Denver with his correct name but is still ignored.

Chapters 19 through 21 describe changes at the mission. Denver likes the mission until a smiling white woman attacks him asking his name and how he is doing. Denver wants to be left alone and wonders what volunteers want by helping them. He tries to get his meals on Tuesdays without talking to them. In the next chapter Ron feels a change in his heart when he wakes on Mission Day Tuesday mornings. Some days he drops by in his truck to look for Denver. Ironically, now that Ron knows his real name, Denver seems irritated or mad if Ron calls him by that name. Deborah starts "Beauty Shop Night" with Mary Ellen and "movie night" on Wednesdays and a monthly "birthday night" with frosted sheet cake. An evangelist friend Tim Taylor runs a smoky Jazz and blues lounge named "Caravan of Dreams" where they take carloads to a free concert. Denver waits until Ron's Suburban is full except the front seat next to him that Denver finally sits in but says nothing. Ron invites him in and tells Denver he's glad he came and touches his knee. Denver jumps up to sit alone in the back row. As they leave Denver says sorry for avoiding them. They plan to meet for coffee and Ron can't wait to tell Deborah. Denver comments in the next chapter he watches them several weeks before deciding they try to do good not just to feel better about being rich. Denver thinks God saves a seat since no one else sits next to Ron. Denver thinks saying sorry to Ron "open up a can a' worms."

Chapter 22 shows Ron excited to tell Deborah that Denver talks to him and they have plans for breakfast. When they meet in the morning Ron talks and asks questions about his past. Denver asks Ron his name. Denver calls them "Mr. Ron" and "Miss Debbie." Denver asks what Mr. Ron wants and thinks about being his friend. Denver tells Mr. Ron folks at the mission think they are CIA. Why else would they ask a homeless man's name and birthday? A week later Ron takes Denver to Starbucks where Denver fears



the lines and café lingo are signs of a "rumble" brewing. Ron defines art dealing on the patio till Denver asks his name again. Denver tells Mr. Ron he hears when "white folks go fishin they do something called 'catch and release'" but colored folks "use it to sustain us." If Mr. Ron is fishing to catch and release he's not interested but he will be a real friend forever.

In the next chapter Denver wonders why Mr. Ron wants to be his friend. Being friends to a homeless man is like being a soldier. Friendship means commitment to fight together or to die together. Denver decides friendship might mean different things. He concludes Mr. Ron protects Denver in the country club and Denver protects Mr. Ron in the hood. Chapter 24 shows Ron moved by Denver's words and promises not to catch and release him. Ron learns twentieth century slavery is practiced as sharecropping from Denver. Denver says "the Man" who owns land and runs "croppers" is not such a bad person. Ron hates the Man till he sees his Granddaddy is like the Man. Denver says ways of life are not better or worse, just different, like rich people call sushi what poor people call bait.

In Chapter 25 Denver talks to Miss Debbie and helps Sister Bettie and Miss Mary Ellen. Sister Bettie lives at the mission and is called "Sister" since she is spiritual. She supplies the mission from restaurants and other donations. Denver helps her feed homeless at the Lot on Annie Street. Deborah believes Sister Bettie can help her spirituality that she shares with her friend Mary Ellen in the next chapter. Sister Bettie wants them to sing and teach at the chapel service. Deborah wants to help at the Lot, which is a small area with trees, benches and a wood cross where she first sees Denver. She asks a street veteran why he smiles and he says he wakes up and that's enough to be happy.

Denver agrees to sing spirituals from the plantation in Chapter 27 but then Miss Debbie wants him to come on a retreat. Ron asks and Denver says he's not going on any retreat with any white lady that's someone else's wife. Deborah insists. Denver looks in the car to see four white women and remembers his trouble with just one white woman long ago. He gets in the car anxiously. In Chapter 28 Denver and Ron meet when he tells Ron Miss Debbie's work at the mission is very important and she is becoming precious to God and important to Satan and something bad is going to happen to her.



Chapter 29 to 34

Chapter 29 to 34 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 29 through 34 describe the period when Deborah is first diagnosed with cancer. Ron and Deborah have coffee in the kitchen April 1, 1999 before her routine annual physical exam and Ron has lunch plans with Regan their daughter. Regan studies art history but does not like the art business and is discussing it with Ron when Deborah calls on his cell phone. Her physician Craig Dearden finds something in her abdomen. She asks Ron to meet her at the hospital for more tests. When Ron arrives he finds Deborah, the Davenports and Doctor John Burk. Deborah has an X-ray and CAT scan and is scheduled for a colonoscopy the next morning to analyze shadows on her liver. At home that night she admits her fear to Ron and they pray together. Denver finds out about Miss Debbie from Miss Mary Ellen when she appears for Bible study without her in Chapter 30. Miss Debbie looks perfectly well despite her cancer. Denver is anxious that another person close to him is going to die like his Big Mama, Uncle James and Aunt Etha.

Chapter 31 sees Ron, Deborah and their children Carson and Regan retreat to Rocky Top to pray before her surgery in three days. Ron agrees with his partners to close the gallery so he can spend his time in their war on cancer. Ron resolves to help her through this like she's helped him unconditionally over their thirty years together. After five hours of surgery the doctors find the cancer invaded her entire abdomen and wraps itself around her liver. Ron sits with her in recovery, prays and recalls Denver's fear bad things are going to happen to her.

The next chapters describe events at the mission. Deborah's room is covered with flowers so Ron and Carson take two truckloads to the mission where they find a circle of six or seven men praying for Miss Debbie. They join the circle of prayer before scattering flowers through the mission. Ron is aggravated that Denver is sleeping until Chef Jim tells him Denver spends nights praying for Miss Debbie. Denver doesn't want to be disturbed while he keeps vigil so he prays by the dumpster where no one comes around at night. Denver talks to God about Miss Debbie and healing her and asking why since she does so much good. Deborah is in the hospital for a week in Chapter 34. Less than a month after lumps are discovered she begins living with raging pain. They visit Baylor University where a liver specialist Dr. Robert Goldstein has no recommendations for treatment since it is too far advanced. Regardless Deborah starts chemotherapy treatments in Fort Worth.



Chapters 35 to 38

Chapters 35 to 38 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 35 through 38 describe Denver's trip to Denver, Colorado, which is a turning point in their relationship. Ron and Deborah decide in 1998 that Denver could become a greater part of their lives by driving. Denver agrees but warns Ron he has a record with charges for disorderly conduct, unpaid tickets and marijuana possession in Louisiana that blocks a license. Ron calls a friend in Baton Rouge to get Denver's charges dismissed. Denver can't read so he is tutored to pass the written test by his mission friends. Ron lends Denver his new car to practice parking. In September 1999 he passes the road test to get a license. Regan's new job in Colorado makes Ron joke that Denver might drive her things there with his new license. Denver replies seriously that he wants to see the city he is named after. Ron maps the route with marking pen since Denver can't read highway signs. As they load the truck Ron wonders why he sends Denver two thousand miles round trip through mountains with \$700 cash, a \$30,000 truck, Regan's things, a hand-drawn map and new driver's license. Ron trusts this homeless black man while fearing he'll never return.

Denver is confused in Chapter 36 why this rich white man gives him a truck, \$700 cash, his daughter's things and expects him to drive a thousand miles to where he's never been and bring the truck back. Denver decides it makes no sense so it must be faith Ron has in him, and he can't let the man down. Denver sleeps in the truck because he's never been trusted with all those possessions and worries they might be stolen. He asks a lady at a Colorado gas station the way to Winter Park and Crooked Creek Ranch. She points to the top of a snow-covered mountain and tells him the road is narrow so he can't turn around. He stops on the mountain to look around but when he looks down at the edge of the road he sees no bottom. He drives five miles an hour the rest of the way. Ron worries when Denver fails to meet Regan on time in Chapter 37. He considers calling the highway patrol but is too embarrassed to say he gives a homeless black man cash and a truck full of goods. Ron and Regan talk by phone for two days without word from Denver. Deborah says let's pray for his safety and Regan calls to say, "He's here."

Denver returns late the next day in Chapter 38 wearing a smile with a washed and waxed truck. He and Ron discuss the trip and Denver returns \$400 cash, which remains since he sleeps in the truck and eats at McDonald's and 7-Eleven. Denver tells Ron he has more faith than anyone and couldn't disappoint him. Denver refuses Ron's offer of the \$400 saying he takes the trip to bless him and his family and that money can't buy blessings. Ron gives him the money to do good for someone else with it. The trip is life-changing for Denver who proves he is trustworthy and Ron who learns to trust.



Chapter 39 to 51

Chapter 39 to 51 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 39 through 51 describe the final months of Deborah's life. For two weeks around Thanksgiving Deborah's chemotherapy treatments stop and she seems to get better. By December she is healthy enough to have liver surgery and is declared "cancer-free." The family thanks God for their Christmas present. By the end of January however, she has a reversal described in Chapter 40. By March chemotherapy seems to feed tumors and more surgery is too risky. Denver drives around in the car he names "manna" like a gift falling from heaven that Alan Davenport gives him. They go to Rocky Top where Ron takes Denver to the annual Cowboy Spring Gathering at the ranch across the river. Denver has his picture taken on horseback. Ron is thankful to see him overcome his fear of white men on horseback with ropes in their hands. Back in town Deborah goes shopping but returns without any packages. She is crying because an old college friend says she is sorry to hear she is terminal. She has another surgery in April. After church they visit Janina Walker who has surgery, too. Denver checks on Mr. Ballantine with Scott Walker who joins him.

Ron meets Mr. Ballantine when he is abandoned and pushed out of a car at the mission. Denver helps him despite being cursed and called "nigger." Mr. Ballantine is later beat severely by a thief, and Shisler places him in a public nursing center. Denver cares for him by walking there to visit and bring cigarettes and food. Ron drives him there once but is so sickened by stench of urine and rotting foods in his room that Denver excuses Ron. Scott is courteous, polite and offers to bless him by bringing anything he wants. Mr. Ballantine asks for cigarettes and Ensure. Scott tells Denver he doesn't feel right bringing cigarettes that can kill him. Denver tells Mr. Scott he offers to bless him not judge him. Scott buys him a carton of cigarettes. Ballantine asks Denver how he can pay Scott. Denver says he's Christian and doesn't do it for pay. Ballantine says he hates Christians and Denver says he's Christian, too. Ballantine apologizes and Denver says he helps because God loves him. He asks him to confess his sins and accept the love of Jesus. Ballantine says he's too old to do much sinning. The eighty-five year old goes to church with Denver.

Chapters 42 through 44 describe how Deborah and Ron spend a year growing together since her cancer is discovered. After her second surgery, she is declared cancer free again so they fly to New York to be with Carson on Mother's Day. She doubles over in pain on the streets of New York. Ron and Deborah travel to San Antonio to try a new chemotherapy drug without success. She celebrates her fifty-fifth birthday July 14, 2000, and asks Pastor Ken to meet about her memorial service. Carson flies to Colorado where he and Regan drive to Texas so they can all be at home together. Ron takes Deborah to the hospital and sees Dr. Senter. He confides she may have only days to live and Ron should call family and friends that she wants to see. Carson tells Denver. While praying at the hospital Denver tells Ron Miss Debbie "ain't goin nowhere" till she finishes the work God gives her to do here on earth.



Chapters 45 through 47 describe Deborah's last days of life at home. The doctors try a last colonoscopy but return with grim faces to tell Ron the results. Deborah smiles at Dr. Redrow and asks when she can eat because she's so hungry. Dr. Redrow tells her she can't eat because the tumors seal her colon. She can have ice chips and sips of water and may live for days or a couple weeks. Ron brings Deborah home eleven days before their thirty-first wedding anniversary. They spend that day with Carson and Regan looking over family albums and reminiscing about the times they share. Another day she tells them she wants Ron to find someone to date and even marry. Privately she tells Ron "even her" meaning the girlfriend that comes between them years ago. On their anniversary October 25, Ron whispers they wake up together. She has not been able to speak in five days but blinks to show she hears. The hospice doctor says she will not make it through the day but Ron hopes God is not that cruel to take her on their anniversary. The next day Deborah cries "Ron! Get me some wings!" She can't move for two weeks but now she reaches her hands to the ceiling like climbing a ladder. Days later she points and calls out to the angels she sees for twenty-three hours before going silent. Then she says "Jesus! How are you?" before saying "No, I think I'll stay here!" Denver arrives the next morning to tell Ron he sees Jesus, angels and lightning at the same time as Deborah at home.

Chapters 48 through 51 tell of Deborah's last days. She is still alive November 1, a week after their anniversary. At noon Deborah convulses with violent seizures. The doctor administers phenobarbital for her pain. Denver brings a message from the Lord that Miss Debbie cries out for paradise but saints on earth have a chain around her the Lord sends him to break. Thirty friends link hands overnight around their home to pray God heals Deborah. Denver tells Mr. Ron he comes to take up Miss Debbie's ministry on earth. Tears spill from his eyes in grief as he goes to her room. He stands alone looking at her then holds her head in his hand so she hears him. Her eyes open as he says Miss Debbie and fill with tears when he promises to keep her ministry. Denver says farewell. Ron holds Deborah all night awaiting the angels. Daphene calls Ron when she stops breathing just after he leaves. She is pronounced dead by the doctor.



Chapters 52 to 62

Chapters 52 to 62 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 52 through 62 describes days of adjustment after Deborah's death and burial. Deborah is buried in a plain pine casket three days after her death in Chapter 52 and 53. It is stormy at the highest point on Rocky Top where she is buried. The ominous dark hole in the earth for her lifeless body makes Ron heartsick. Miraculously the skies clear and ground dries from the warm southern breeze. Friends and family gather to honor and share stories. Rocky, her palomino pony is saddled up and tied nearby awaiting its fallen rider. Ron and the kids lead a procession to the house. Denver stays to help lower her into the ground. Red dirt marks the hole like a big red scar. Denver stays to talk to God and Miss Debbie, prays and cries out loud till night. Deborah's memorial service at church the next morning is described in Chapter 54 and 55. A thousand people gather to honor and share memories. Normally soft-spoken Denver speaks in a rousing voice about courage, hope and the beloved Miss Debbie. He says God gives him her torch to pick up and carry on. Ron realizes the miracle they all pray for the last nineteen months is right there in Denver's face that no longer hides, is no longer angry and beams with a joyful smile. Deborah wants her family to leave the memorial service for a week away with no sadness. Bob Crow tells Ron they plan to build "Deborah Hall Memorial Chapel."

Denver prays for Mr. Ron, Regan and Carson that God brings them healing. He is invited by Don Shisler in the next chapter to attend a ceremony to honor Miss Debbie. Mr. Ron takes him to the ceremony in the Worthington Hotel ballroom. Many strangers shake his hand and congratulate him for turning around his life. Denver recalls living on the street looking at this hotel from the outside and slipping behind it to find shelter from cold on the fan grates. A security guard lets him alone if he makes a "bed" after midnight and leaves before six. Today his name is on Worthington Hotel's "Invited Guests" list. Ron tells Denver that Deborah wouldn't want to draw attention to herself with her name on the chapel. Denver says it's about God and to get out of God's way to do his thing.

Chapter 57 and 58 describe Ron and Denver after Miss Debbie's death. The "Deborah Hall Memorial Chapel" is officially named. Ron reads Deborah's Bible with her notes scribbled in the margins. They reminisce in front of the fireplace before Ron shows Denver his room and wants him to feel welcome like a brother. Denver is happy to help Mr. Ron but is not as comfortable around him as Miss Debbie. Denver pulls a blanket around his head and lies awake till she appears healthy and beautiful as before. He hears Miss Debbie say "Denver, you are welcome in our home." The next chapters describe building a memorial to Miss Debbie. Denver tells Mr. Ron he sees Miss Debbie and calls her appearance a visitation. The new cemetery is dedicated in May on a blue sky day with fifty friends and family and yellow flowers as far as the eye can see. Ron and Denver talk about writing their story. They plan a trip in early September 2001 to Red River Parish. Chapters 61 and 62 describe their trip. Denver wakes when they reach bayou country and tells Mr. Ron to turn off at the Man's house. Denver points out

"Boss Nigger's" house and his run-down two-room shack. Ron says it's worse than he thinks. Denver is proud as a young man to have his own place and smiles only for the camera.



Chapters 63 to 67

Chapters 63 to 67 Summary and Analysis

Chapters 63 through 67 confirm, mature and strengthen Ron and Denver as co-equal friends in an adult relationship. Ron is shocked in Chapter 63 at Denver's place that would fit in the long-bed of a pickup truck. Hershalee's house is overgrown and falling down abandoned and hidden in the weeds. While exploring, Denver hears footsteps and says to go. Outside they hear more sounds and both say let's go. They never see anyone but Ron and Denver are scared and the car won't easily start. Denver reminisces about Auntie and visits Pearlie Mae's in the next two chapters. His Auntie is a spiritual healer like a female medicine man who has mysterious roots and herbs to use for cures. They drive down the road on their way to Pearlie Mae's house. As Denver walks up she calls "Li'l Buddy." They chat about her hogs and new indoor toilet she pays for by bootlegging Natural Light beer. The toilet is not all fixed so she still uses the outhouse. Ron hardly believes places like that still exist. Denver says they live better than he did there.

Chapters 66 and 67 describe Ron and Denver in Texas after their Louisiana adventure. Mary Ellen tells Ron that Deborah is like a kernel of wheat in the Bible when over a half million dollars pour into the mission. They plan to break ground on "New Beginning" mission September 13. Ron and Denver go to New Mount Calvary Baptist Church in southeast Fort Worth where Denver speaks Sunday morning. Ron recalls the saying ". . . a certain poor man who was wise and by his wisdom he saved the city" and is sure Deborah dances for joy. Ron is asked to live on the Murchison Estate in Dallas to sell their art. He asks Denver to join him and be the night watchman. Ron takes Denver to the 2005 presidential inauguration on his first plane ride. Denver says we're all homeless on our way down the road God set in front of us.



Characters

Denver Moore

Denver Moore is born and raised in Red River Parish, Louisiana. His nickname while growing up as a boy is Li'l Buddy. Denver is raised by his grandmother Big Mama and grandfather PawPaw because his mother is too young to raise him and his father BB abandons him to his mother, Big Mama. He is a black man who never speaks to a white woman as an equal before he meets Miss Debbie. He helps a stranded white woman motorist to change her tire that almost causes his death by dragging when he is sixteen. He works the cotton fields over thirty years as a sharecropper. He owns nothing and decides to hop a freight train just to escape the poverty he knows into a new world of homelessness on the streets of Fort Worth, Texas and sees this as an improvement in his life.

Denver is a black man who can't read, can't write and can't figure who finds himself homeless in Fort Worth and other cities for many years before he sees Miss Debbie on the Union Gospel Mission serving line. Denver is in his sixties and a loner dressed in rags, does not smile and rarely speaks from years on the street. Deborah Hall dreams she sees a poor man whose wisdom saves the city that she thinks is Denver. She encourages her husband Ron to make friends with him at the mission where he sleeps and eats in trade for cleaning up around the place. Her vision and belief in him is the driving force in his growth and development because she's the only one who believes in him.

Denver loses many people from his life after Big Mama who raises him and who he sees die in flames unable to help as a child until Miss Debbie who he sees suffering with cancer for nineteen months but whose ministry he can help. Along the way he helps make life more bearable for Mr. Ballantine, helps Sister Bettie at the Lot, keeps a nineteen month prayer vigil for Miss Debbie, carries on her ministry when she dies and reaches out to Mr. Ron in despair. Denver changes from a withdrawn, hostile, unfriendly street person sleeping on hotel grating to guest of honor on exclusive Worthington Hotel's "Invited Guests" list.

Ron Hall

Ron Hall is born and raised in a lower-middle-class city near Fort Worth, Texas. Ron is a white man who is shamed in the second grade by a mean and ugly white woman teacher, Miss Poe for making an honest mistake. He is made an object of embarrassment in front of his young classmates by being forced to spend his thirty minute recess with his nose in the chalk circle she draws on a wall high enough that he must be on tiptoe. Ron escapes a lower-middle-class background to become an art dealer with multimillion dollar clients who honor, respect and pay him well.



Ron's lower-middle-class birthplace is Haltom City where shabby-looking house trailers and cars stripped for parts sit in yards. His father Earl is an alcoholic who spends time at the Tailless Monkey Lounge, and his mother Tommye is a Texas farm girl who sews and bakes cookies. Ron's older brother John and he both spend summers with Granddaddy and MawMaw on their blackland farm. Granddaddy hires black and white workers for day work at the same pay. Ron wonders why he feeds colored workers at a grocery store and white workers at the farmhouse. Ron attends East Texas State in 1963 but prefers Texas Christian University where rich girls go. His mother sews clothes from feed sacks so Ron dresses unlike his friends. Ron and Deborah meet in 1965 at Texas Christian.

They marry in October 1969. Ron is an investment banker, earns an MBA and sells paintings on the side in 1971. He makes twice as much selling painting as banking in 1975. He brokers his first five-figure profit and money starts rolling in. Ron attends discussions on Christian life and evangelicalism and is convinced. They buy a house in upscale Fort Worth to live a society-page life from art-dealing, charity balls and regular travel to New York, Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Florence. Ron seeks recognition and success till his affair with a blue-eyed, blond painter when Deborah changes his life. She feels God's call to serve at Union Gospel Mission and Ron wants to stay married.

Deborah tells Ron she dreams the face of a poor man who changes the city and points out Denver as the one she sees for him to befriend. Ron wants to ignore Denver, but she insists till one day Denver apologizes for avoiding Ron and his wife. Ron takes Denver around town and they become friends. Ron hears something bad may happen to Deborah from Denver that makes sense to him when she is diagnosed with cancer in 1999. Ron takes a leave of absence from his business and dedicates his time to take care of Deborah. Ron's initial opinion of the homeless is challenged by Denver who proves to be hardworking, trustworthy, caring, responsible and honest. Ron takes a leap of faith by giving Denver his truck, cash and Regan's goods to deliver in Colorado just weeks after Denver gets a drivers license. Ron is devastated by Deborah's sickness and death. He begins to loose whatever faith he has in God until he realizes that Denver is the miracle for which they pray.

Deborah Hall

Deborah Hall is the name of Ron's wife and the connection between Denver and Ron Hall. They meet in 1965 at Texas Christian University. Deborah has a twin sister named Daphene and another sister named Gretchen. Their first date is to a "woody" where they drink beer but do not make out like the other couples. Deborah marries Ron in October 1969. She teaches elementary school and has their first child, Regan in 1973. Deborah attends discussion groups where Kirby Coleman asks if she is Christian and saved. They meet five weeks to discuss life and evangelicalism and Deborah reads C.S. Lewis and Josh McDowell before she is convinced they are "saved."

Ron and Deborah share a successful social and business life with their \$275,000 house in 1977 upscale Fort Worth, Texas. They live a society-page life with black-tie charity



balls, but Deborah wonders why a \$4,000 check to the charity isn't better than dinner and her gown. When Ron confesses having an affair, Deborah flies into a rage. She agrees to reconcile if Ron lets her call his girlfriend and they go to counseling together. Deborah commits to be the best wife Ron could ever want so the girlfriend will never hear from Ron again. Deborah reads about a Union Gospel Mission on Lancaster Street and asks Ron to join her volunteering there. Deborah sees the mission as a beautiful place with flowers but no trash or vagrants; the face of a man who changes the city in her dream she recognizes as Denver. She insists Ron make friends with him. Deborah starts "Beauty Shop Night" with Mary Ellen, "movie night" Wednesdays and a monthly "birthday night" with frosted sheet cake. They take carloads of homeless to a free concert at a smoky jazz and blues lounge named "Caravan of Dreams." Deborah also helps Sister Bettie at the Lot, which is a small area with trees, benches and wood cross where she first sees Denver. She asks the street veteran why he smiles and he says he wakes up and that's enough to be happy.

On April 1, 1999 Deborah has a routine annual physical where physician Craig Dearden finds something in her abdomen requiring an X-ray, CAT scan and colonoscopy to analyze shadows on her liver. She has five hours of surgery to find the cancer has invaded her entire abdomen and wraps itself around her liver despite a healthy lifestyle and no risk factors. Baylor University liver specialist Dr. Robert Goldstein has no recommendations since the cancer is too far advanced. In faith Deborah starts chemotherapy, later is healthy enough to have liver surgery and is declared "cancer-free." She continues recuperating, surgery, chemotherapy and failing through the year until her last colonoscopy when Dr. Redrow determines she is no longer able to eat since tumors have closed her colon. She spends her last days at home eleven days before their thirty-first wedding anniversary with Carson and Regan looking at family albums and reminiscing. She calls them all together to say she wants Ron to find someone to date and even marry. Privately she tells Ron even the girlfriend that came between them long ago. They wake together on their anniversary, but Deborah does not speak for five days. During her last days she is in agonizing pain, sometimes hallucinating and sometimes lucid, peaceful and strengthening until she finally dies.

The Man

The Man is a generic term that refers to sharecropping bosses or other authority figures to which black or other disadvantaged races or people defer. Typically used in this book to mean a landowner who owns land and house in which the worker lives. "The Man" puts sharecroppers to work in cotton or other crops without fair compensation. The Man also usually owns or has interest in the store where the sharecropper gets credit for the crops he picks to buy what he needs, i.e. "company store." For example, the Man weighs cotton picked and tracks credit sale of goods at his store. The worker can never pay off his account since the Man controls all records and often workers can't read, write or figure. They have no choice but to accept the Man's word for his account. Ron asks Denver his experience with the Man. Ron realizes his Granddaddy is like the Man to his workers. Ron thinks the system is evil even though the Man's paternalism can help workers. Examples are a Man lets his sister, Hershalee stay long after she is



useful, another gets a new Schwinn bike for Li'l Buddy and a third keeps Denver ignorant and dependent but provides for him, although a tractor is faster. Ron Hall is shocked by mid-twentieth century "slavery."

Denver's family

Denver's family is an extended family of sharecroppers that includes a brother and sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles and a father. He is called Li'l Buddy when a boy because his grandfather, PawPaw carries him around in a pocket of his overalls and raises him with Big Mama, his grandmother since his mother is too young to raise him. BB is the father who also abandons him. His older brother is Thurman and a grown sister Hershalee lives down the road. Big Mama is big all around and PawPaw is small and puny next to her. He works in the fields for her so she cares for the grandbabies at home. Li'l Buddy helps with her medication, takes out the slop jar and catches chickens for supper. Li'l Buddy does not play much as a child. Big Mama trusts him more than PawPaw or uncles with her money. Chook is a cousin staying with them. PawPaw is working when a chimney fire starts. Denver and Thurman see the roof fall trapping Big Mama and Chook. Denver sees Big Mama burn. He can't understand why God takes the person he loves most.

Denver and Thurman live with BB a short time until he is killed in a stabbing. Their uncle, James Stickman takes them to live with him and Aunt Etha on a farm where they sharecrop and to a plantation where Aunt Etha works in the field until she makes dinner. Uncle James is a Christian man who quotes Scripture and doesn't "spare the rod." Uncle James dies and Aunt Etha leaves. Denver wonders why God takes all the people he loves. Denver is separated from Thurman to live with Hershalee at thirteen or so. She lives on adjoining plantations where three or four different men are called the Man.

Bobby and his Aunt

Bobby and his aunt are the nephew and wife of the Man who befriends Li'l Buddy on the plantation. He learns to shoot BB guns and ride bicycles with Bobby. Later when they are fifteen or sixteen, Bobby's aunt saves Denver from death by dragging. Three riders rope and drag Denver from their horses for helping a white lady change her tire. Bobby's aunt aims a shotgun at the riders and demands they stop and cut him loose.

Ron Hall's family

Ron Hall's family is an extended family of cotton farmers. His father Earl is raised by a single mother and two aunts. Earl becomes alcoholic when Ron is a child. His mother Tommye is a Texas farm girl who sews and bakes cookies. Her brother Buddy and sisters Elvice and Vida May pick cotton on a blackland farm her father owns near Corsicana. Ron and his brother John spend summers with Granddaddy and MawMaw. Granddaddy is a redneck whose clothes cover his all-white body except his neck which sunburns red from the sun. Granddaddy hires many black and white workers to work in



his field for a day. He feeds "colored" workers lunch at the grocery store but feeds white workers dinner at the farmhouse. Granddaddy pays them all the same and lends to them on a handshake. The adult Ron realizes that his Granddaddy is a version of the Man, too.

Mr. Crowfoot and Snookems

Mr. Crowfoot and Snookems are the names of the seller and buyer/broker of Ron's first five-figure profit art sale. Crowfoot sells Russell's painting "The Signal" for \$28,000 to Ron that he in turn "sells" to Snookems for \$40,000.

The Union Gospel Mission Staff

The Union Gospel Mission Staff includes several workers and volunteers. Some are recuperating and provide services in return for a bed and meals. Others are just dedicated to helping the homeless like Sister Bettie. Don Shisler manages Union Gospel Mission and offers a bed to Denver in return for cleaning up around the mission. Chef Jim is the chain-smoking cook who trades making meals for his room and board. He is a Texas Christian University graduate who recuperates from his addictions at the mission. Chef Jim tells Ron that Denver spends nights praying for Miss Debbie since she has lots of friends praying for her all day. Brother Bill preaches hellfire and brimstone sermons which the homeless have to attend to get a free meal at the mission. Bob Crow is one of the volunteers like the Halls, Davenports and Walkers. Bob Crow calls Ron to announce their plan to build a chapel for the mission that they want to name "Deborah Hall Memorial Chapel."

Sister Bettie

Sister Bettie is a widow and lives at the mission to serve the homeless. Denver calls her "Sister" because she is spiritual. Sister Bettie uses her truck to get supplies for the mission from restaurants and other places that donate food and goods. Denver helps with her truck and feeding homeless at the Lot on Annie Street. Sister Bettie asks him to sing and he agrees because she asks. Sister Bettie asks Deborah and Mary Ellen to sing and teach at the women's and children chapel service. Sister Bettie feeds homeless drunks and drug users free lunch at the Lot where they hang out after they leave Lois's Lounge.

Mary Ellen and Alan Davenport

Mary Ellen and Alan Davenport are volunteers at the mission. Alan is a doctor from Galveston who moves to Fort Worth. When they meet for the first time Mary Ellen is fretful because the Halls live in a millionaire's house. Deborah offers to babysit Mary Ellen's triplets and starts a decades-long family friendship. The Davenports offer their



home to the Halls when their new house is late in construction. Denver drives around town in the car he names "manna" like a gift falling from heaven that Alan gives him.

Carson and Regan Hall

Carson and Regan Hall are children of Ron and Deborah. Carson flies to Colorado where he and Regan drive together to Texas so they can all be at home together. Regan is the oldest. Regan studies art history but does not like the business. She has lunch with Ron when Deborah calls about her cancer tests. The children welcome Denver in the family.

Deborah's Doctors

Deborah's Doctors include her personal friend and physician Craig Dearden who initially finds something in her abdomen that requires further testing. Dr. Goldstein is a Baylor University liver specialist who makes no recommendations for Deborah's treatment since it is too far advanced. Dr. Redrow administers a last colonoscopy but returns with grim results. Dr. Redrow tells her she can't eat because the tumors seal her colon to make eating biologically impossible. She can have ice chips and sips of water and may live for days or a couple weeks. Dr Senter administers phenobarbital for her pain.

Mr. Ballantine

Mr. Ballantine is abandoned and pushed out of a car at the mission. Denver helps him despite being cursed and called "nigger." Mr. Ballantine is later beaten so severely by a thief taking his social security check that Don Shisler puts him in a public nursing center. Denver cares for him by walking there to visit and bring cigarettes and food despite the stench of urine and rotting food in his room. Ballantine says he hates Christians. Denver admits to being Christian. Ballantine apologizes for the three years of calling him names while Denver cares for him. Denver says he does it because God loves him and asks Ballantine to confess his sins and accept love of Jesus. Ballantine says he's too old to do much sinning. Eighty-five year old Ballantine attends church the first time with Denver.

Scott and Janina Walker

Scott and Janina Walker are visited by the Halls and Denver when Janina is recovering from surgery, too. Denver visits but leaves to check on Mr. Ballantine when Scott asks to join him. Denver fears Mr. Scott is going to react to Mr. Ballantine like Mr. Ron. Scott is courteous and polite to Mr. Ballantine and tells him he wants to bless him by bringing him anything he wants. Mr. Ballantine asks for cigarettes and Ensure. Scott tells Denver he doesn't feel right bringing cigarettes that can kill him. Denver tells Scott he offers to bless him not judge him. Scott buys Mr. Ballantine a carton of cigarettes. Mr. Ballantine

asks how he can pay for them and Denver tells him he's a Christian and doesn't do it for pay.

Pearlie Mae

Pearlie Mae lives in a house at the end of the row of houses. Ron and Denver visit her on the trip to Denver's birthplace in Louisiana. When they walk up to her house she calls out "Li'l Buddy." They visit awhile and chat about her hogs and new indoor toilet paid for by bootlegging Natural Light beer for a buck a can. The toilet is installed in 2001, but it's not all fixed yet so she still uses the outhouse. Ron can hardly believe places like that still exist. Denver tells him she lives better than he does when he grows up there.



Objects/Places

Red River Parish, Louisiana

Red River Parish, Louisiana is the name of Denver's birthplace and location of the sharecropping plantations that form his early life and personality

Haltom City

Haltom City is the name of Ron's birthplace in a lower-middle-class part of Fort Worth where shabby-looking house trailers and cars stripped for parts sit in yards

Riverside Elementary

Riverside Elementary in Fort Worth, Texas is the name of the grade school Ron Hall attends. He is unjustly humiliated and punished there by an ugly female teacher for making an honest mistake.

Georgia O'Keefe

Georgia O'Keefe is the name of the artist whose paintings get Ron his start in selling artwork. The client who buys them sends a plane down to pick him up along with the paintings for delivery to her home in New York City. She holds a luncheon in his honor for her wealthy friends.

Meacham Airfield

Meacham Airfield is the name of the airport where Ron carries three paintings in his Mercedes. Ron and the paintings are picked up by the client's Falcon jet that she sends for his flight to New York City. Driving to the airport lets Ron reflect on humiliating experiences as a student. Being treated like a "rock star" by the client sending her Falcon and pilot boosts his self-esteem. His view from the jet reveals the Fort Worth improvement plan to eradicate the homeless. He expresses negative feelings about the homeless looking down at them from the air.

Sharecropping

Sharecropping is the name of Denver's family occupation that Ron considers "mid-twentieth century slavery." Sharecropping is a system whereby "The Man" owns the land and sells cotton seeds, fertilizer, mule and clothes to his tenants on credit to make it through the year. Sharecroppers work the land with cash and food crops till picking



time when they settle up with what the Man says they still owe. The Man wants all cash crops like cotton to sell that sharecroppers can't eat

Texas Blackland Farm

Texas blackland farm is a generic name of the farmland Ron's Granddaddy owns near Corsicana TX. His farm is comparable to plantations in Red River Parish, LA where Denver grows up in the sharecropping system. Ron's Granddaddy is the owner, i.e. the Man who treats his workers better by paying them daily and feeding them lunch or dinner, although he does not provide housing for them.

Rocky Top

Rocky Top is the name of the 350 acre ranch the Halls own that is a favorite among all their other homes in Fort Worth and Dallas. They buy Rocky Top in 1990. This is where they celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and is the location of Deborah's grave. Rocky is Deborah's palomino horse that stands at her grave for the funeral saddled up symbolically awaiting the fallen rider.

Union Gospel Mission

Union Gospel Mission is the name of the mission on Lancaster Street in Fort Worth, Texas where Deborah and Ron Hall are volunteers and meet Denver.

Gold Ford Galaxy 500

Gold Ford Galaxy 500 is the name of a car left in Denver's care by one of his hobo friends. Denver turns it into a moving motel by subletting nightly to other homeless to sleep in until he gets busted for parking tickets and no insurance.

Beauty Shop Night

"Beauty Shop Night" is the name given to one of the activities started by Deborah and Mary Ellen Davenport for women at the mission. Other activities they start include "movie night" on Wednesdays, "birthday night" once a month serving frosted sheet cake and the Caravan where they take the homeless for free music. Ron and Deborah each take a car full of homeless to enjoy a free concert. Denver first speaks to Ron here and meets with him in the morning for coffee.



Cactus Flower Café

Cactus Flower Café is the name of the restaurant where Ron takes Denver for breakfast the first time. Ron talks and asks questions about Denver's past and Denver asks Ron his name. Denver decides to call them "Mr. Ron" and "Miss Debbie."

Starbucks

Starbucks is the name of a coffee shop where Denver thinks the lingo used by the servers is a sign of a street rumble beginning. Denver tells Mr. Ron he hears when "white folks go fishin they do something called 'catch and release'" but colored folks "use it to sustain us." Denver tells Mr. Ron if he wants a friend to catch and release he's not interested, but he'll be a real friend forever.

Lot on Annie Street

Lot on Annie Street is the name of a small area with trees, benches and a wood cross surrounded by boarded buildings, rusty chain link fence and a tall grassy area where the homeless drunks and drug users hang out after leaving Lois's Lounge. Sister Bettie's feeds them free lunch. The Lot is where Deborah first sees Denver. On another day she comes across a street veteran with a smile on his face to whom she gives a plate of food with a prayer and asks why he smiles. He replies he wakes up and that's enough to be happy

Chain of Prayer

Chain of Prayer is the name given to a circle of several people praying while holding hands at the mission and other places. Denver appears one morning to deliver a message from the Lord. Miss Debbie cries out for paradise but the saints on earth have a chain around her the Lord wants him to break. Ron is unaware of the chain of prayer when thirty friends link hands around their home that night to pray for Deborah's healing. Denver comes to take up Miss Debbie's ministry.

Visitation

Visitation is the term Denver uses to refer to the physical appearance of Miss Debbie in spiritual form. Denver claims to see her call out "Jesus! How are you?" before saying "No, I think I'll stay here!" Denver arrives early the next morning to tell Ron he sees Jesus and angels and lightning at the same time it happens with Deborah at home. On another occasion Denver wraps the blanket up around his head and lies awake on the bed until she appears healthy and beautiful as before. He hears Miss Debbie say "Denver, you are welcome in our home." Just as suddenly her visitation disappears and Denver falls into a deep sleep.



Deborah Hall Memorial Chapel

"Deborah Hall Memorial Chapel" is the name chosen for the chapel they plan to build for the new mission. Ron tells Denver Deborah wouldn't want to draw attention to herself with her name on the chapel. Denver replies firmly that this isn't about Miss Debbie but it's about God. Denver tells Mr. Ron he should get out of God's way to do his thing

Worthington Hotel Ballroom

Worthington Hotel ballroom is the name of a location where Denver has many fans shake his hand and congratulate him for turning around his life. Denver recalls living on the street looking at this hotel from the outside and slipping behind it to find shelter from the cold by sleeping on the fan grates. A security guard leaves him alone if he makes his "bed" after midnight and leaves before six. Today he sees his name on the Worthington Hotel's "Invited Guests" list.

New Mount Calvary Baptist Church

New Mount Calvary Baptist Church is the name of a church in a depressed area of southeast Fort Worth where Denver speaks Sunday morning. The longer he talks the more people enter church. By the time he finishes church pews are full. Ron recalls words of Solomon that ". . . a certain poor man who was wise and by his wisdom he saved the city."

Murchison Estate

Murchison Estate is the name of an estate in Dallas that asks Ron to sell their art. Ron asks Denver to join him to live on the estate and be night watchman. Denver finds paint in the garage and decides he can paint as well as some of the paintings like Picasso that he guards.



Themes

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences are a major factor in *Same Kind of Different as Me* for Ron and Denver to overcome in their relationship. Understanding develops early in life. Many similarities young Ron and Li'l Buddy have as children take on greater significance as the middle-aged homeless black man and millionaire white man get to know each other. Denver comments to Ron that ways of life are not better or worse. Words make them different. Eating outside along a riverbank is what black folks call dinner on the ground but white folks call picnic. Naming the same thing adds value. Raw fish is bait if a poor man puts it on a hook to catch big fish but on a plate in a rich man's restaurant it catches even bigger fish as sushi. Black folks catch fish to eat for dinner but white folks release fish they catch and eat sushi at the restaurant. Ron takes Denver to Starbucks where he thinks the line of customers waiting and café lingo are a "rumble" brewing and gang talk. Ron lays down his ten keys ring and Denver asks if he owns something for each key.

Friendship can be an area of life or death to a homeless black man living on the street. Rescued by his friend Bobby's aunt as a teenager and receiving a knife for protection by a fellow inmate in jail makes Denver careful picking friends. Becoming friends with a homeless man is like being a soldier where they fight or die together. When Ron says he wants to be his friend Denver tells Ron he'll think about it because their friendship might mean different things to each other. Denver is sure however if Ron just wants a friend to catch and release he's not interested. If Mr. Ron wants a real friend, he'll be one forever. Denver remembers how colored people are treated by "good ole boys" in Louisiana and ". . . what it's like to get beat down for bein born with different-colored skin. And I know what it's like to walk around with my eyes down low to keep it from happenin again." Most of Mr. Ron's friends are white "good ole boys" in Texas. Denver decides Mr. Ron can protect him in the country club and he can protect Mr. Ron in the hood. Ron takes him to the annual Cowboy Spring Gathering at the ranch where Ron is thankful to see Denver overcome his fear of white men on horseback with ropes in their hands.

Another cultural difference between them is Denver's fear of white women. He comes from Red River Parish, Louisiana where the bayou is filled with the bones of black men fed to gators for looking at a white woman. Through stories and his own life or death experience he learns as a teenager it is better in Red River Parish to be quiet and just not offer to help white ladies any more. He recalls seeing a white lady standing by a car who needs help with her tire so Denver asks, "You need some help, ma'am?" He is changing her tire when three horsemen ride up. One of the riders asks the lady if she needs help but a red-headed rider says, "She's got a nigger helping her!" A boy Denver's age says "Boy, what you doin botherin this nice lady?" When the white lady says nothing one of the riders throws a rope around Denver's neck and jerks it tight like roping a calf. The roper says they're going to teach Denver a lesson about bothering



white ladies. Years later Denver tells Ron he's not going on any retreat with any white lady but when Miss Debbie insists he come along Denver sees four white women and remembering that one white woman long ago gets in the car anxiously.

Imagination, Hallucination or Visitation

Times of stress and anxiety like extended vigils, fear of death, desire and long-suffering pain of terminal illness can stimulate a mind to imagine, hallucinate or experience excess spiritual energy. The subject may feel contact with a spiritual being. Denver uses the term visitation to mean physical appearance of a spiritual form of Miss Debbie. Deborah first sees Denver in her dreams and then sees him physically at the Lot. She sees him as Solomon's "poor man speaking wisdom to save the city."

Deborah dreams Denver in the abstract and imputes her vision to a physical man that seems to match. Denver meets Miss Debbie physically and then dreams her appearance in the abstract. He calls this appearance a visitation not dream because he's not sleeping. A question remains about what is real and what is imagined. A further complication is whether physical or spiritual is more or less real or imagined. Neither physical things only nor spiritual things only are real or imagined. Criteria for reality may be shared experience. For example Denver and Ron leave frightened by the unseen presence at Hershalee's house that both feel so it must be real since each other is a witness to it.

Deborah cries out "Ron! Get me some wings!" She reaches her hands towards the ceiling like she is climbing a ladder and days later calls out to the angels she sees. Twenty-three hours later she says "Jesus! How are you?" and then "No, I think I'll stay here!" Denver arrives early the next morning to tell Ron he sees Jesus and angels and lightning exactly the same time it happens with Deborah at home. Presumably, Denver tells the truth and no one from the household tells him about Miss Debbie's last twenty-four hours. If so then Denver imagines, envisions or shares her experience in a real but mystical way.

Deborah convulses with violent seizures and Ron begs God to stop torturing her. Denver appears the next morning to deliver a message that Miss Debbie is crying out for paradise but the saints on earth have a chain around her the Lord wants him to break. Ron doesn't know that thirty friends link hands around their home that night to pray that God heals Deborah. Denver prays all night for nineteen months to deliver the word of God to Ron as the tears spill from his eyes. Chains of Prayer or a circle of men and women praying for Miss Debbie or someone else is not an unusual event at the mission. The content of Denver's specific message about the saints on earth encircling her in prayer for healing instead of releasing her to paradise is imaginative, hallucinatory or mystical. Denver promises Miss Debbie to keep her mission going, which becomes her release to paradise.

Mr. Ron insists he sleep on the bed. Denver wraps the blanket up around his head and lies awake on the bed until she appears as healthy and beautiful as before. He hears



Miss Debbie say "Denver, you are welcome in our home." Just as suddenly she disappears and Denver falls into a deep sleep. Denver tells Mr. Ron he sees Miss Debbie the other night. Since Denver is not sleeping he calls her appearance a visitation. Despite the fact Denver maintains a nineteen month vigil with some degree of sleep deprivation his claim that he is awake when she appears is similarly imaginative, hallucinatory or mystical. There is no witness to the reality of Denver's vision just as there is no reality to Deborah's vision of Solomon's "poor man speaking wisdom to save the city" until Denver appears.

Comparable Backgrounds

A major underlying theme of *Same Kind of Different as Me* is the obvious difference between Denver as poor, black, homeless and Ron as a rich, white, multi-homeowner. They are both middle-aged males within five years age of each other. Different race and economic well-being hide their comparable backgrounds of the same kind. Through their story Ron's material wealth ironically lessens in relation to Denver's increasing wealth of spiritual wisdom prophesied by Deborah the woman whose love they share. Ron and Denver both come from comparable backgrounds that make them the same kind.

They come from comparable economic circumstances. As a child Denver lives in a three-room shack with cracks in the floor. Ron is born in an area of shabby-looking house trailers and cars stripped for parts in the yard. They are both abandoned by their father. Denver's father BB leaves his son to chase other women and Ron's father Earl abandons his family to drink at the Tailless Monkey Lounge. Denver's older brother is named Thurman and Ron's older brother is John. Both sets of brothers are raised by their grandparents. Big Mama and PawPaw raise Denver because his mother is too young while Granddaddy and MawMaw raise Ron during the summers to avoid their alcoholic father. Big Mama makes her own dresses from seven or eight big flour sacks and Ron's mother Tommye sews his clothes from Hancock Fabrics material. Ron and Denver have friends of different race. Denver plays with Bobby, his white friend and Ron drinks at Fanny's with Amos and John, both his black buddies.

Some elements of the comparable background Denver and Ron share have similar and dissimilar characteristics. They are both exposed to the Man through forms of cotton farming and sharecropping. For example, the Man works Denver for no pay and a place to stay but Ron's Granddaddy works his help for pay but provides no place to stay. As a child Denver helps Big Mama with her medication and other chores while Ron throws peaches at cars. Denver has many losses with Big Mama, Chook, BB and Uncle James dying, and Aunt Etha and Thurman moving away. Denver wonders why God takes all the people he loves most by the time he lives with Hershalee at thirteen or fourteen. Ron has no close relative deaths during childhood. The Man gives Denver one hog a year and five or six times he gets a few dollars but no school, no trade and no news about the army and World War II, Korea, Vietnam or blacks rising up to change his situation compared to Ron who is drafted, gets his degree, an MBA in night school and starts his own business.

Denver gets his own place at eighteen that is a two-room shack under a sycamore tree, with a bed, table, chairs, stove and his own outhouse that makes him feel like he lives "high on the hog." Ron pays \$275,000 for his house in an upscale section of Fort Worth and lives a society-page life from his art-dealing business and \$1,000-a-plate black-tie charity balls that make him happy. Denver leaves Red River Parish, Louisiana to travel the rails for several years out of Dallas, Fort Worth, Los Angeles and finally returns to Fort Worth. Ron travels to New York a week each month and flies first-class to Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Florence throughout the year.

Style

Perspective

Same Kind of Different as Me is a non-fiction autobiographical sketch of the authors Denver Moore and Ron Hall. Denver Moore is a homeless illiterate yet deeply spiritual black man who spends much of his life as a modern-day plantation slave, homeless hobo and jail inmate. Ron Hall is a wealthy widower, well-educated white man with several homes and his own art gallery business. These two unlikely characters are brought together by the vision of Deborah Hall, Ron's deceased wife, in her belief that Denver Moore is "the poor man whose wisdom saves the city" a quote from Solomon in Scripture. Deborah's unyielding energy and commitment drive Denver and Ron together before and through her untimely death at fifty-five of cancer. The authors write this book about their own experiences apart, together and in relation to what Deborah does in their life. They write with the assistance of Lynn Vincent who provides literary guidance in developing their characters and shaping their story.

They write this book in Ron's words because "One person can make a difference. Denver is making a difference. Debbie made a difference here on earth and continues to do so from heaven." In Denver's words they write because "You never know whose eyes God is watchin' you through. It probably ain't gonna be your preacher and it just might be someone who was livin' like I used to." They agree that they tell a story about a godly woman with a dream that may encourage others to be more like Miss Debbie. Audience for this book is any curious reader but especially for those who have lost a spouse, child or other family member like Denver and Ron both have. The authors are dedicated also to offering hope to the homeless and their relatives.

Tone

The authors write in a subjective tone which makes the reader feel comfortable and empathetic to the circumstances of the primary characters. The experiences of a black Southern sharecropper are as far apart from a multimillionaire jet-setting art dealer as night and day or black and white. Nonetheless, personality of both extremes is presented in a down-to-earth understandable manner that makes Denver or Ron each appear vividly alive and as comfortable as the neighbor next door.

Denver's iconic writing style reveals a candor of expression rarely experienced in the written word. There is little question about what either Denver or Ron mean by what they say. The writing is simple, straightforward, sensitive, lighthearted, heartbreaking and warming, colorful and suspenseful. Recollections of Li'l Buddy watching Big Mama burn are as powerful in emotional impact as Ron's recall of first date Bozo clothes are embarrassing. Denver's story of Miss Debbie's visitation stirs the heart with incredulous belief in the spirit. The rise and fall of pain and elation experienced with her becoming cancer free and then terminal tear at the emotional fabric of one's heart. The style of



writing in sixty-seven short vignettes captures a mood or thought apart from extraneous distracting material to create a stronger, more impacting tone in its clean simplicity. For example, suspicious of rich, white people asking questions Denver asks Ron "Why would anybody be wantin to know a homeless man's name and birthday, if they ain't the CIA?"

Structure

Same Kind of Different as Me is a 245 page non-fiction autobiographical sketch of the two authors Denver Moore, Ron Hall and Deborah, Ron's wife, who introduces them. The story is told in their words and dialect spread over 67 chapters. Back matter is comprised of a Reader's Guide, Where Are They Now? Acknowledgments, followed by photographs of the characters, places and events. Format of the book provides a lively, interesting dialogue of a Southern black man and white Texan learning about each other through the encouragement of Deborah who brings them together and then dies.

"Ghostwriter" Lynn Vincent blends the author's writing content into a conversation of thought, each with his own perspective expressed in his own dialect, as they come to know and love each other through their mutually beloved Debbie. The format of 67 chapters, though many, reads quickly in short 2-3 page vignettes speaking thoughts and feelings about events, conditions or persons. Chapter 1 by Denver leads into Chapter 2 by Ron. That format style of point and counterpoint follows throughout 67 chapters.

For convenience and clarity the guide divides chapters in nine sections based on time of life and experiences. First two chapters introduce Denver and Ron and the next fourteen provide information on their childhood days and background. Ten chapters discuss their meeting and developing friendship at the mission. Five chapters from Chapters 29 to 34 announce Deborah's cancer. Denver and Ron take a great leap forward in faith and trust when Denver drives to Denver, Co over the next four chapters. Miss Debbie's dying days are spread over thirteen chapters. Ten subsequent chapters discuss the aftermath of her death and the family's adjustment. By Chapter 63 through the end of the book in Chapter 67, Ron and Denver adapt to a new lifestyle and friendship by visiting Li'l Buddy's past in Red River Parish Louisiana and future projects writing Same Kind of Different as Me, Murchison Estate and remembering Deborah. Back matter brings the story of Ron and Denver up to date with their current activities to carry forward Debbie's ministry. Nine pages of photographs at the book's end put flesh and blood to the personalities presented throughout the book and end in the photograph of Deborah's memorial headstone.



Quotes

"I worked them fields for nearly thirty years, like a slave, even though slavery had supposedly ended when my grandma was just a girl. I had a shack I didn't own, two pairs a' overalls I got on credit, a hog, and a outhouse. I worked them fields, plantin and plowin and pickin and givin all the cotton to the Man that owned the land, all without no paycheck. I didn't even know what a paycheck was." Chapter 1, pg. 3

"So ambitious was the project that it was systematically displacing the city's homeless population, which was actually a stated goal, a way to make our city a nicer place to live. Looking down from three thousand feet, I was secretly glad they were pushing the bums to the other side of the tracks, as I despised being panhandled every day on my way to work out at the Fort Worth Club." Chapter 2, pg. 7

"From that day on, me and Bobby was partners in crime. Turned out he was the Man's nephew come to visit. He didn't know he wadn't s'posed to be my friend." Chapter 7, pg. 39

"I was just puttin the lug nuts back on when them three boys rode outta the woods and asked the lady did she need any help. 'Course, the redheaded fella with the big teeth was the one that first spotted me and called me a nigger. And the next thing I knew, I had a rope squeezed tight around my neck and black terror slitherin through my belly like a water moccasin." Chapter 10, pg. 48

"I expect I would a'died if Bobby and his aunt, the Man's wife from the other plantation, hadn't been drivin down the road right then. I'd about blacked out by that time, and I don't really remember too much of what happened next. I just know the draggin all of a sudden stopped. I peeked through my eyes, which had swoll up to slits and seen Bobby's aunt standin in the road pointin a shotgun at them boys on horses." Chapter 10, pg. 49

"From my office at the bank, I telephoned Mr. Crowfoot in San Juan and told him I would like to buy his painting. But I was far too busy to fly to Puerto Rico, I explained, and helped him see the wisdom of traveling to Texas and bringing his heirloom with him. The truth was that while I was doing better than some men my age, I could neither afford to buy a plane ticket to San Juan nor take time off from my day job." Chapter 11, pg. 55

"Used to be the thinkin in Red River Parish that there wadn't nothin lower than a sharecropper. There was, though, and I was it. There was a crack I fell through and others with me, 'cept I didn't know it at the time. See, there was croppers, and there was the children of croppers. Most a' them was croppers, too. But some of em, 'specially them that never learned how to read or figger, stayed on the land, workin for nothin but a place to live and food to eat, just like slaves. Oh, there was an understandin - that we still owed the Man. I knew he still kept books at his store and penciled down everything I took out the door on credit. There just wadn't no way to pay it off, 'cause the Man didn't



weigh the cotton no more. I knew I owed him and he knew I owed him, and that's the way it stayed." Chapter 13, pg. 62

"Next time you walkin around in Fort Worth and you see some homeless folks, you might notice that some of em's filthy dirty and some of em ain't. That's 'cause some street people have done figured out ways to stay clean. Just 'cause you homeless don't mean you got to live like a pig. Me and my partner kept on the same clothes all the time, just wore em till they wore out. But we figured out how to keep from smellin. That same fella that taught us the hamburger drop also taught us how we could get a good bath: at the Fort Worth Water Gardens." Chapter 15, pg. 71

"Driving home, she reflected aloud on how society generally regards the homeless as lazy and foolish, and maybe some were. But she felt there was so much more below that surface image: dysfunction and addiction, yes. But also gifts - like love, faith, and wisdom - that lay hidden like pearls waiting only to be discovered, polished, and set." Chapter 18, pg. 85

"I wasn't about to invite a killer out for tea. But we did start tracking the man Deborah said she had seen in her dream. He intrigued us both. Probably in his sixties, he looked younger and, somehow, older at the same time. He dressed in rags. A loner, the whites of his eyes had gone an eerie yellow. He never smiled and seldom spoke. Nor did we see anyone acknowledge him. But it wasn't as though others at the mission ostracized him; it was more like they kept a respectful distance, as one might give wide berth to a pit bull." Chapter 18, pg. 89-90

"If I hung around long enough and concentrated on spotting a fellow who didn't want to be spotted, I'd nearly always see Denver. But if I made a move toward him, he would move an equal distance away. The fact that I was now calling him by his real name seemed to do more harm than good. If anything, he seemed irritated, like he was mad that I now had it right." Chapter 20, pg. 95

"'I want to apologize to you,' he said. 'You and your wife been tryin to be nice to me for some time now, and I have purposely avoided you. I'm sorry.'" Chapter 20, pg. 98

"'Yes. . . ,' he said, finally able to collect himself. 'Most folks that serve at the mission come once or twice and we never see em again. But you and your wife come ever week. And your wife always be askin everbody his name and his birthday . . . you know, gatherin information. Now just think about it: Why would anybody be wantin to know a homeless man's name and birthday, if they ain't the CIA?'" Chapter 22, pg. 105

"Denver looked away, searching the blue autumn sky, then locked onto me again with that drill-bit stare. 'So, Mr. Ron, it occurred to me: If you is fishin for a friend you just gon' catch and release, then I ain't got no desire to be your friend.'" Chapter 22, pg. 107

"With the museums, the restaurants, and the malls, I was showing Denver a different way to live, a side of life in which people took time to appreciate fine things, where they talked about ideas, where raw yellowtail cost more than cooked catfish. But he remained absolutely convinced that his way of life was no worse than mine, only



different, pointing out in the process certain inconsistencies: Why, he wondered, did rich people call it sushi while poor people called it bait?" Chapter 24, pg. 112

"Denver's brow wrinkled and his head dropped. Then with that dark glower that always preceded his most serious pronouncements, he said something that still rings in my ears today: 'When you is precious to God, you become important to Satan. Watch your back, Mr. Ron. Somethin bad gettin ready to happen to Miss Debbie. The thief comes in the night.'" Chapter 28, pg. 126

"My eyes widened as he went on. 'So he goes outside at midnight, sits down next to the Dumpster, and prays for Miss Debbie and your family. When I get up and come down here at three in the morning to get breakfast going, he comes in for a cup of coffee and we pray here in the kitchen for her until about four. Then he goes back outside and prays till sunup.'" Ashamed, I realized again how deep grew the roots of my own prejudice, of my arrogant snap judgments of the poor." Chapter 32, pg. 138

"I tried to convince myself I knew what I was doing, but the plain facts were that Denver was heading out on a two-thousand mile round-trip, navigating interstates, back roads, and mountain passes - the highest in Colorado - using a driver's license that had arrived in the mail only the week before. What was he thinking? Better yet, what was I thinking?" Chapter 35, pg. 148

"I ain't no thief and I ain't no liar, but Mr. Ron didn't know that. It just didn't make no sense to me why he gon' trust me to take all his daughter's stuff way off yonder to Colorado. Now I ain't the most intelligent man, but I can figure things out purty good, so I wasn't worried 'bout gettin there. But for the life of me, I couldn't figure out why a rich white man would give me his four-by-four, \$700 cash, and all his daughter's possessions, and expect a broke, homeless, man that can't read or write to go nearly a thousand miles to somewhere he ain't never been, deliver the goods - and bring back the truck!" Chapter 36, pg. 149

"The campfires and camaraderie worked magic on Denver as he began to know what it was like to be accepted and loved by a group of white guys on horseback with ropes in their hands. Exactly the kind of people he had feared all his life." Chapter 40, pg. 156

"Well, that made me have to eyeball him. 'You asked the man how you could bless him, and he told you he wanted two things - cigarettes and Ensure. Now you tryin to judge him instead of blessin him by blessin him with only half the things he asked for. You saw the man. Now tell me the truth: How much worse you think he gon' be after smokin? Cigarettes is the only pleasure he got left.'" Chapter 41, pg. 161

"She looked at him, processing words that refused to be processed. 'You mean I'll never get to eat again?' In disbelief, she flashed me a look that begged me to ask him the question differently so that the answer might be different. I knew it wouldn't be. Though I hadn't told her yet, I'd already learned that the tumors, overwhelming and inoperable, had grown inward around her remaining colon, sealing it like a vault. Digestion of



anything solid was biologically impossible. Ice chips and small sips of water were all she could have." Chapter 45, pg. 172

"We had prayed to be able to celebrate our thirty-first anniversary together. Now, watching her cling to life, her breathing hitched and shallow, I wasn't sure she would live to see it. But she did. As daylight peeked through the crack in our bedroom drapes, I whispered in her ear: 'Debbie, we woke up.' But she could not answer. Five days earlier, she had fallen silent." Chapter 47, pg. 177

"Then tears spilled from his eyes. I had never seen him weep. His tears flowed into the lines in his face like rivers of grief, and it hit me again how much he loved Deborah. I marveled at the intricate tapestry of God's providence. Deborah, led by God to deliver mercy and compassion, had rescued this wreck of a man who, when she fell ill, in turn became her chief intercessor. For nineteen months, he prayed through the night until dawn and delivered the word of God to our door like a kind of heavenly paperboy. I was embarrassed that I once thought myself superior to him, stooping to sprinkle my wealth and wisdom into his lowly life." Chapter 48, pg. 183

"I knowed she could hear me then, so I went right on. 'I can understand how important it is to you that we keep on reachin out to the homeless. Now you done did all you could do. And God has put it on my heart to tell you that if you lay down the torch, I'll pick it up and keep your ministry to the homeless goin.'" Chapter 49, pg. 185

"I don't know how long I sat up there on that hay bale. But it was mornin when we buried Miss Debbie and night when I finally got through talkin to her and went on home." Chapter 53, pg. 193

"I got real serious with him then. 'Mr. Ron, Miss Debbie is in heaven, and this is not 'bout Miss Debbie anyway. It's about God. Are you gon' get in the way of God when He's on the move?'" Chapter 56, pg. 201

"My fear gave way to anger, and I had plenty to go around. But as I fired arrows of blame - at the doctors, the pharmaceutical industry, cancer researchers - clearly the bulls-eye was God. It was He who had ripped a gaping and irreparable hole in my heart. Without a gun or mask, He robbed me of my wife and stole my children's mother and my grandchildren's grandmother. I had trusted Him, and He had failed me." Chapter 57, pg. 203

"Now on East Lancaster Street stands a new mission that includes new services for the needy: residential rooms for women and children and the Deborah L. Hall Memorial Chapel. Both are a memorial to a woman who served the city, a woman God took home so that in His strange providence, the sick and the lost might find greater refuge and hope. Bitterly, I wondered if He could have managed to build them without taking my wife. It could have been called God's Chapel and Deborah Hall could have served Him there." Chapter 66, pg. 230

"The truth about it is, whether we is rich or poor or somethin in between, this earth ain't no final restin place. So in a way, we is all homeless - just workin our way toward home." Chapter 67, pg. 235



Topics for Discussion

Identify, list and describe at least five experiences that Denver and Ron have individually while growing up as young men/teenagers that are similar in their backgrounds.

Explain and discuss how the perceptions that Ron and Denver have of each other change significantly before and after they meet personally from their prejudices.

Identify and describe the premonitions that Debbie and Denver have about each other that help bring Ron closer to each of them.

Describe and discuss the significance of the trip Denver takes with Ron's truck to pickup Regan's college possessions. Why is this experience a turning point?

Identify and describe how Denver is in touch and communicates with Debbie while she is on her deathbed. Discuss whether you think this is a realistic experience for them to have.

Identify, describe and explain how Ron feels about God and Debbie's death. Discuss whether and how Denver's faith helps Ron to overcome his despair.

Describe and discuss why Ron wants to visit Louisiana with Denver. What is the significance of their trip to Denver's birthplace and its meaning in each of their lives?

Identify, list and describe at least five elements of your lifestyle that would make you more sympathetic to the poor and homeless. How would you implement those feelings in your daily lifestyle like Ron?