

A Fiction Lover's Devotional

21 Days  
of Grace

Stories that  
Celebrate God's  
Unconditional  
Love



Study Guide

Jeanette Morris and Kathy Ide

Study Guide for 21 DAYS OF GRACE  
By Jeanette Morris and Kathy Ide

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# Preface

From our earliest history, people have communicated through story. Long before we had books, or anything in a written language, for that matter, one generation shared its legends and lore to the next through storytelling.

Stories are entertaining and often informative. But they can also be instructional and inspirational—even life changing—when we see our own faults, foibles, and fears through the lens of plot and character.

Jesus used both true and fictional stories to share His good-news message of reconciliation with God. Sometimes the stories required soul searching and explanation, which encouraged discussion, transparency, and motivation to change. All of His stories had purpose—and so do the stories in *21 Days of Grace*.

The themes and truths within these stories are designed to do what Jesus modeled: point people to God’s unconditional love. Many who would not normally pick up a nonfiction inspirational book (or even a Bible) will eagerly read Christian fiction. This is a tremendous opportunity to encourage people to ponder how the stories they read apply to their daily lives.

In the group format, there is increased opportunity for ministry through sharing, prayer, and “going deeper.” That is why we’ve designed this study guide.

As writers of Christian fiction, we understand that we are in a position to deeply impact countless readers ... for eternity. It is our prayer that you will be one of those readers. *21 Days of Grace: Stories that Celebrate God’s Unconditional Love* can be used with your women’s group, Bible study, book club, or get-togethers with friends. Fiction lovers will enjoy this fresh, fun spin on group study of a devotional. Even those who aren’t fans of novels will discover the wonder of seeing how the Holy Spirit can use fiction to touch their hearts and change their lives.

If you’d like to kick off your journey with a personal visit from the editor/compiler, Kathy Ide, e-mail her at [Kathy@KathyIde.com](mailto:Kathy@KathyIde.com) to see if your location is near her (she lives in Southern California) or fits with her travel schedule.

# Tips for Group Leaders

Here are some ideas for how to lead a group study using *21 Days of Grace*.

Choose a schedule. You and your group members could read and discuss one story a day for three weeks, three stories a day for one week, one story a week for about five months, or whatever pace works best for you.

Invite group members to your home for refreshments, or plan on getting together at a coffee house or other regular meeting place.

Have everyone read the assigned story or stories prior to coming, or read aloud when you get together if time allows. Consider “dramatizing” some of the stories by assigning readers to play the parts of the various characters while the rest of the group follows along with the reading. One person could be the narrator for the sections that are not in dialogue.

After reading, discuss different aspects of the story, such as theme, characters, take-away. Use the questions included in this booklet to help you guide the conversation. As the leader, you can select the questions that work the best for your group. Don’t feel you have to cover everything.

If your group is a Bible study, we suggest you focus on the questions that direct participants to share Scriptures, compare the fictional story to a biblical story, and/or ponder spiritual applications.

Do your best to keep everyone in the group involved—don’t let one person monopolize or dominate the discussion.

Open and/or close each meeting with prayer. Pray for the needs of the members in your group expressed through the conversations you have together.

# Discussion Questions

## Foreword by Rene Gutteridge

The Foreword of *21 Days of Grace* speaks about the power of story to affect people in unique ways.

1. Have you read many novels? Or do you prefer nonfiction? Why?
2. If you are a fiction reader, what genres are your favorites? What do you like most about those stories?
3. Who are your favorite novelists, and why?
4. What fictional characters have remained vivid in your memory? What fictional situations have stuck with you over the years?
5. Has a fictional story ever changed your perspective about a situation in your life?
6. What has the Holy Spirit taught you through a story you read?



Story #1  
Through a Dark Glass  
by Cindy Woodsmall

1. Iva and her husband made a decision that separated them from their families. They felt they were following God's leading. When you learn that someone is at odds with their family concerning their faith decisions, do you usually feel sympathetic to their situation? Or do you tend to think they wouldn't be in that dilemma if they'd used more faith or self-control?
2. Iva and Josiah loved God. Their families loved God. Yet their Christ-centered faiths separated them for two years. Do you think it's right to hold on to your convictions to the point of isolating family members who do not interpret Scripture in the same way you do? Why or why not?
3. When Iva was hurting beyond what she could bear, love reached in and made the suffering bearable. God used her husband and her sister to get a message of hope to her. Do you recall a time when love reached out to you when you were hurting?
4. Do you know someone who is hurting? What could you do or say to reach out to him or her with love, hope, and encouragement?
5. What do you think happened to Iva and Josiah after the story ended?
6. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #2**  
**The Smallest Gift**  
**by Robin Bayne**

1. Which of the characters in the story did you like the best/the least? Why?
2. If Ceci had caved in to the expectations of others, how would the story ending have been different?
3. If the situation described at the beginning of the story happened to you, how would you want the story to end?
4. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story's Life Application?
5. Ceci's "love language" was quality time. For others in the story, it was gift giving. What might the snooty Aunt Eleanor's love language be? How could you show someone you care this week?
6. How can you use the lessons in this story to improve the way you live out the love of Christ?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #3**  
**True Confession**  
**by Angela Elwell Hunt**

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most—Trace, Rachele, or her father, Mojag? Which one did you like the best/the least? Why?
2. What if Trace had hung on to his secret? How would the story ending have been different?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story? How are the two similar? Different?
5. Mojag quoted several Scriptures to Trace to lead him into truth. Do other Scriptures you have committed to memory come to mind as you think about this story?
6. Share your responses to the questions raised in the Life Application section. How can you apply the lessons in this story in your own life?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?





**Story #4**  
**Promptly at Seven**  
**by Barbara Curtis**

1. Which of the characters in the story are you most like—Lila, Pierre, or Charles? In what way(s)?
2. If you relate to Pierre, is there a specific area in your life where you might need to ask the Lord to help you overcome fear and/or pride so that you might reach out to someone?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s presence or influence on the outcome of this story? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story or Scripture passages came to mind as you read the story?
5. Isaiah 50:4, the theme verse of “Promptly at Seven,” states: “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary” (NKJV). In what ways can you prepare your heart and mind so that you will be ready to speak words of the Lord to those who are weary?
6. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story’s Life Application?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. In what specific ways can you be a “Lila” to someone today?
9. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



Story #5  
We Called Him Happy Face  
by Cecil Murphey

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most—the curious and fearful boy, the older brother, or the white missionary? Why?
2. If the white man had been nervous, unsmiling, and aloof, how would the story ending have been different?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story? How are the two similar? Different?
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story’s Life Application about a happy heart being a pathway to sharing the gospel?
6. How can you use the example in this story in your own life or relationships, especially concerning your unsaved family and friends?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



Story #6  
Rag Doll  
by Kathy Ide

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most? Which one did you like the best/the least? Why?
2. If Megan had stayed with her parents after her fiancé's death, how might the story ending have been different?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. Have you ever faced a situation that challenged your beliefs? How did you initially react? In what way(s) did God reveal Himself to you?
5. Have you ever turned your back on people who loved you? Why? If you haven't reconciled with them, what steps could you take to do so?
6. Share your responses to the questions raised in the Life Application section. How can you use the lessons in this story in your own life or relationships?
7. Have you ever made a rash decision in the heat of anger or hurt that sent your life in a direction you never imagined? How can you prevent that from happening again?
8. Are there any close friends or family members you've distanced yourself from, or who have distanced themselves from you, due to an emotionally charged incident in the past? What steps can you take to reconnect?
9. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



Story #7  
Prairie Lessons  
by Deborah Raney

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most—Annie, Robert, Grant, or King? Which one did you like the best/the least? Why?
2. If Annie had made a different choice, how would the story ending have been different? If Robert had not been “socially retarded,” how would the outcome of the story be changed?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story?
5. What (additional) Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story’s Life Application?
6. Has pride ever blocked you from performing an act of kindness or being on the receiving end of an act of kindness? What do you wish you’d done differently?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. Did you ever consider that lack of humility blocks us from receiving God’s grace? How can you apply the lessons in this story in your own life or relationships?
9. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



Story #8  
The Pain Redemption  
by Roxanne Anderson

1. Do you have difficulty imagining God the Father and Jesus the Son having a conversation like this? Why or why not?
2. Does this conversation make you reconsider what Jesus experienced during His time on earth? In what ways?
3. Do you think it hurt Jesus to be let down and betrayed by His friends less or more than it hurts you when your friends betray and let you down? Why?
4. Do you think Jesus really understands the relationship issues and emotional pain you have? Do you think of Him as a friend who totally “gets” you? Have you ever considered this aspect of your relationship with God? How does knowing He understands your situation change your desire for intimacy with Jesus?
- 5.. Do you believe that God is passionate about having a close relationship with you? How can you return that passion?
6. What aspect(s) of God’s grace does this story bring out?
7. Which Scriptures does this story reflect?
8. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



Story #9  
The Guilty Party  
by Nancy Arant Williams

1. Which of the characters in the story were you drawn toward—the guilt-ridden Kaylie or the bewildered but tenderhearted Jeff? Or have you been in both roles?
2. If Jeff had not pressed Kaylie to unload her burden, how would the story have ended?
3. If the situation described at the beginning of the story happened to you, how would you want the story to end?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story?
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story's Life Application of shining the light of truth on our secrets?
6. Share your responses to the questions raised in the Life Application section. How can you use the lessons in this story in your own relationships?
7. What fruits of the Spirit do you see in Jeff's behavior toward Kaylie?
8. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #10**  
**A House with Pillows**  
**by Kathi Macias**

1. Which of the characters in the story can you relate to most—Mary, Jenny, or Karen? Why?
2. Compare and contrast the levels of faith of the three main characters. How did prayer change their situations?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story? How are the two stories the same? Different?
5. Besides the ones offered in the Life Application section, what Scriptures can you think of that reinforce the story’s themes?
6. Have you ever prayed for a miracle? Did you expect God to grant it? Why or why not? How can you use the lessons in this story in your own life or situation?
7. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



**Story #11**  
**Be Grateful in All Things**  
**by Diane Simmons Dill**

1. The characters in this story, Katy and Ben, approach their financial struggles in completely opposite ways. Which method most reflects the way you cope with similar difficulties?
2. Discuss the extremes of these two approaches. What might bring this couple closer to a better balance?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. Which Bible story came to mind as you read the story?
5. Look up the Scriptures quoted in the Life Application. Which character was most in need of hearing these words of truth and promise? Which Scripture spoke to you today, and why?
6. Share your response to the question raised in the Life Application section: "Why do we hang on to our worries?"
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. What does this story teach us about God's grace?





Story #12  
A Waffle Stop Story of Love and Pistols  
by Buck Storm

1. The characters in this story are all very different from one another. Which one could you identify with the most/the least? Why?
2. If each of the character(s) had made different choices, how would the story ending have changed?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read the story? How are the two stories the same? Different?
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story's Life Application about how God sees us as compared to how we see ourselves?
6. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
7. What do you think happened to the girl at the lunch counter, and to Pop, after this story ends?
8. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #13**  
**The Least of These**  
**by Dona Watson**

1. As a social worker, Alaina saw many abused children and struggled to believe that God would allow anything bad to happen to these innocent ones. Why do you think God allows tragedy to affect good people?
2. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction the story was taking?
3. Alaina told Shaquis she believed in Jesus and that Jesus loved him, even though she still didn't understand why God allows bad things to happen to good people. What do you think caused her to reconsider her doubts about God?
4. Have you ever experienced a difficult season in life where it felt as if God didn't see or understand your struggles? If so, who or what helped you through those tough times?
5. The Bible tells us, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and avenger" (Psalm 8:2 NIV). How do you think children can show us the truth of God's love?
6. In Matthew 25, Christ teaches that when we are kind to innocent and needy people, we are being kind to Him. But sometimes it's hard for us to slow down enough to help those around us. Was there ever a time when you saw someone who needed help but you were tempted to keep going? What did you do? If you were faced with the same situation today, would you react in the same way? Why or why not?
7. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #14**  
**Rower's Wisdom for an Empty Tank**  
**by Jeanette Morris**

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most? Which one did you like the best/the least? Why?
2. If Pablo or Greg had made different choices, how would the story ending have changed?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this alter the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story came to mind as you read this story? Discuss similarities/differences between this fictional story and the biblical story.
5. Take note of the "story within the story"—the parable about the rower. Discuss how storytelling can be a pathway to sharing the gospel.
6. Share your responses to the questions raised in the Life Application section. How can you use the lessons in this story in your own relationships?
7. What Scriptures reinforce the story's theme of living out your faith?
8. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
9. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #15**  
**The Setting ... The Pruning ... The Fruit**  
**by Amarilys Gacio Rassler**

1. In this story, Miriam heard a voice accusing her of being unclean (Revelation 12:10). Who do you think spoke those words? How could Miriam have used Romans 12:1 to extinguish those accusations?
2. At the end of the story, Miriam's husband gifted her with forgiveness, hope, and a promise to be with her through the trial ahead. In what other instances did you notice her husband depicting God's presence and love?
3. What caused Miriam to fall into temptation? In what other ways could she have handled her needs or desires?
4. The main character in this story has the same name as Moses's older sister. What do these two women have in common? (See Numbers 12.)
5. Many scholars believe that the name Miriam is derived from the verb mara, meaning "to be rebellious or disobedient." Mara can also signify bitterness. Why do you think the author named her story's main character Miriam?
6. The Bible tells us about believers receiving a new name from God in heaven. (See Revelation 2:17.) At the end of this story, if you could give Miriam a new name, what would it be?
7. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #16**  
**Among the Shades of Gray**  
**by Carolyn Bennett Fraiser**

1. What do you think was going through Nikki's mind when she ran away? Were her thoughts justified? When have you felt the same way? How did you respond?
2. How could Nikki have responded differently? What would be the result of that choice?
3. How do you think Bryan and Christine felt when they discovered Nikki had left? What decisions did they face? How would the story have ended if they'd made a different choice?
4. Have you ever met someone who rejected God because he or she felt undeserving? How did you help that person? What would you say to someone struggling with understanding and accepting God's grace?
5. How has your understanding of God's unconditional love changed after reading this story?
6. What Scriptures have helped you accept God's grace?
7. Read Psalm 51 aloud. Take a minute to think about areas where you struggle with God's grace. Write down your thoughts and pray about them. Ask God to help you understand the full magnitude of His grace.



**Story #17**  
**Afraid to Ask**  
**by Jeanette Hanscome**

1. Which of the characters in the story did you relate to most—Carrie or Leanne? Why?
2. If the two women had stuck to their original plan to work out together, how would the story ending have been different?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God’s influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story passages came to mind as you read the story? How are the stories similar? Different?
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story’s Life Application?
6. When have you been afraid to ask God for something? How have your life experiences impacted your ability to trust God?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. What has God taught you about His ability to give good gifts? What is the last “good gift” you received from God?
9. What does this story teach us about God’s grace?



**Story #18**  
**Fall from Grace**  
**by Tracy Higley**

1. Could you relate to Vasha's story? How do you typically handle the shames in your past? Is that method working for you?
2. If Vasha had made a different choice, how would the story ending have changed?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible stories came to mind as you read the story? Discuss the similarities and differences.
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story's Life Application?
6. After receiving the grace of adoption into God's family, have there been times when you turned your back on that grace to pursue something else? What were you pursuing? Did you find fulfillment there?
7. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated by the "master" in this story?
8. Perhaps your choices have not been as drastic as Vasha's. But what about the "small refusals" in your life that turned you away from what God had planned for you? What have you refused to do for God because it seemed too difficult, challenging, or humbling?
9. Do you think Vasha returned? Why or why not?
10. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #19**  
**Thorns**  
by **Nanette Thorsen-Snipes**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you've been abused—verbally, mentally, emotionally, or physically? How did you handle it? Did you try to change the other person? Did you go to counseling? Did you leave? Did you turn to God for help? Did you pray? How did He respond? Were you able to forgive your abuser?
2. Abused people feel like they can't trust anyone, even themselves. But God is trustworthy. What Scriptures do you know that support this promise?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence on the outcome? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. In the story, the parable of the prodigal son was mentioned, along with the theme of forgiveness. How can you apply the truths of that parable to your situation?
5. It took some time, but eventually Amy asked God to help her forgive her husband for his abusiveness. Are you able to forgive the people who have hurt you? If so, how does that make you feel? Forgiveness releases us from the clutches of the Enemy. He wants us to be imprisoned, but when we forgive, we are free from his clutches.
6. What fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
7. What does this story teach us about God's grace?





Story #20  
The Mask  
by DiAnn Mills

1. The main character of this story, Rachel, was difficult to like but easy to pity. Why? What happened to turn this perspective around?
2. What if Nicole had left the sandwich and walked away, as many others had? How would the story ending have been different?
3. At what point in the story were you aware of God's presence or influence? How did this change the direction of the story?
4. What Bible story or parable came to mind as you read the story?
5. What Scriptures can you think of that would reinforce the story's Life Application?
6. Which fruits of the Spirit are illustrated in this story? In which scene(s) and by which character(s)?
8. God's grace is extended to us in adversity. Share a personal situation where He extended His grace to you.
9. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



**Story #21**  
**There and Back**  
**by Lori Freeland**

1. If Ellie hadn't gone back to seek forgiveness from Dane's parents, how would that have affected her new life and her engagement to Jon?
2. Ellie was eaten up by guilt. God doesn't want any of us to live that way. At what point in the story did you see God's presence and influence on Ellie's decision to return home for the ribbon-cutting ceremony?
3. If Dane's mom had been bitter and angry toward Ellie, how would the end of the story have been different?
4. Is there someone in your past you feel you need to seek forgiveness from? Is someone seeking forgiveness from you? What encouragement can you gain from this story to help you move from bitterness into peace?
- 5.. Ellie came home expecting condemnation. Instead, she found hope. Can you think of a time when you were in a situation that felt hopeless, yet God reached out and provided you with grace? How did you respond?
6. What Bible story can you compare to "There and Back"? What Scripture passage comes to mind?
7. What does this story teach us about God's grace?



# Wrap-Up Questions

1. Have you enjoyed this study guide of *21 Days of Grace: Stories that Celebrate God's Unconditional Love*? What did you like most? What could have been done differently to make it better? (Share your ideas with the group or the leader.)
2. Which story was your favorite? Why?
3. The next time you read a novel or a short fiction story, will you view it differently? Will you be more likely to look for ways the characters and situations apply to your life and circumstances? To mine the depths of the story for the themes and messages the author may have intended—or that God had in mind when He led you to read that story?
4. How can you encourage others by sharing the blessings you received from this study guide and/or from the devotional? Would you consider visiting FictionDevo.com and posting something on the forum for “*21 Days of Grace*”? Or going to facebook.com/FictionDevo and sharing your thoughts there?
5. Would you like to do a group study for other books in this series? Which of the following do you think you'd enjoy most?  
*21 Days of Christmas: Stories that Celebrate God's Greatest Gift*  
*21 Days of Love: Stories that Celebrate Treasured Relationships* (for Valentine's Day)  
*21 Days of Joy: Stories that Celebrate Motherhood* (for Mother's Day)