

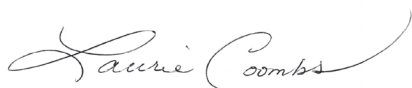
LETTERS *from*
MY FATHER'S MURDERER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I am so incredibly excited that you've decided to allow the truths of my story to penetrate your own! I am convinced if you take this journey with me, you will not be the same. Your life, like mine, will radiate the grace and love and mercy of God like never before. You will see Him redeem your past and work all things for both your good and His glory.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to speak into your life. I believe today is the day your healing begins.

Love and hugs,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Combs". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

CAST INTO DARKNESS

1. Have you ever been faced with the reality of evil? If so, in what way? How did you respond?
2. If you have experienced loss, can you describe what it felt like? What were your thoughts? What affected you most? Why do you think that was?
3. How do you think loss has colored your perspective on life?
4. How might you be a source of encouragement to someone who has recently experienced tragedy or loss? What might you say to encourage him or her? What should you not say?
5. What comes to mind when you hear, “He’s in a better place”?
6. Do you believe the hope of heaven is written on every human heart? Why or why not?
7. Have you ever wanted to believe in God but couldn’t? What motivated you to believe? What stopped you from believing?
8. Do you believe “everything happens for a reason”?

THE WILDERNESS

1. Have you experienced grief? What was it like?
2. Consider how our society views murder. In what ways do you see it glorified or elevated to entertainment? What are your thoughts on that?
3. Are sins other than murder glorified as well? If yes, which sins and how? What, if anything, are we able to do to curb this unhealthy fascination?
4. What, in your estimation, is the purpose of life?
5. Why do you think there is so much suffering in this world? How do you reconcile all the suffering we must endure with a good God who knows and loves us?
6. Have you ever put on a mask? If so, what thoughts or feelings were you trying to conceal?
7. Did you pray before coming to Christ? If so, what provoked your prayers?
8. What do you know of anxiety and depression? If you or someone you love experienced either, or both, what was that time like?
9. Where do you turn when confronted with something you cannot fix?
10. What is hope? How do you think hope is attained?
11. Do you believe it is possible to lose all hope? Or is hope always attainable?
12. What role do you think our thoughts play in our mental health?

THE LIGHT

1. What is truth? Is truth subjective or objective?
2. Do you believe God's truth is the truth? If so, have you learned to measure all things by it? If not, how is truth ultimately attained?
3. Is it possible to believe a lie? What lies have you bought into? How was your deception revealed?
4. What is faith? How is faith attained?
5. In what ways have you rebelled?
6. Who do you know God to be?
7. Have you ever prayed out of the outpouring of your heart?
8. What does it mean to "know" God?
9. What is the difference between practicing religion and following Jesus?
10. Do you have any objections to Christianity? If yes, what are they?
11. Do you believe it is possible to prove God is who He says He is?
12. What is your take on "blind faith"?
13. Is it possible to have faith in the face of doubt?
14. What does real faith look like to you?

“FOLLOW ME”

1. What are your thoughts on the adage “time heals all wounds”?
2. I’ve heard it said that a faith tested with doubt is a stronger faith in the end. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?
3. What’s the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of the word “forgiveness”? What is forgiveness? What do you think biblical forgiveness looks like?
4. How do we love our enemies?
5. When God calls you to do something, do you believe you will obey despite your will?
6. What enables us to do God’s will?
7. What is the difference between irrational fear and God-given fear?
8. What does the phrase “do it scared” mean to you? What might God be calling you to do scared?
9. Are we to always “let go and let God” or is the Christian life intended to be active? What is the Holy Spirit’s role in all that?
10. Would you characterize your faith as active or passive? Intentional or unintentional? Why?
11. How would you describe the gospel? What principles are at the center of the gospel?
12. How do you see God in light of what He commands us to do? What do you think motivates God’s commands?
13. What is your takeaway from Romans 12:17–21?

14. Whom do you need to forgive? What first step can you take toward forgiveness?
15. Who is your enemy? How might you love him or her? Could you begin to pray for your enemy?

THE LETTER

1. Why do you think people secretly revel at the thought of their enemy's misery?
2. It is so easy to believe inflicting pain on our enemy will somehow ease our own pain. What do you think is behind this flawed thinking? How might we be able to live differently?
3. Consider Martin Luther King Jr.'s statement: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Do you believe this to be true? If so, have you learned to live by this principle in your life?
4. How is forgiveness stepping down from the judgment seat and allowing God to take His rightful place on it?
5. How do we hold fast to our commitment to obey God's Word when the idea of forgiveness gives way to its reality?
6. In what areas of your life might you be holding your biases more closely than God's truth?
7. Do you believe forgiveness is a decision? Why or why not?

SEEKING TRUTH

1. Light cannot go where it is not permitted—doors must be opened. What door is God calling you to swing open so His light can penetrate the darkness within?
2. Where do you need healing most? List your hurts and pain. Then pray without ceasing until God binds your broken heart.
3. How have biases polluted the way you view your most challenging, painful circumstances?
4. How can we break free of our biases and come to see as God sees?
5. Have you struggled to find God's will in a situation? What was that like?
6. Do you believe God uses all things, good and bad, for good? If so, how do you live like you believe that? If not, what hinders you from believing it?

Chapter 7

ROADBLOCKS

1. What purpose might God have for placing a roadblock in our path?
2. What should we do when we're led to what appears to be a dead end?

THE PIECES

1. What do you think of a Christian murderer? How might it be possible for one to know God and commit such a heinous crime?
2. Consider the story of David in the Bible. How was it that a man, whom God Himself called a man after His own heart, could fall so far into sin that he was capable of committing both adultery and murder?
3. How might a follower of Christ attain sustainable victory over sin?
4. Not all people who claim to be a Christian are, so what does it mean to be a Christian? How does belief in Jesus cause Christ followers to think and act differently?
5. What is the biblical definition of adultery? Why do you think many in our society define it so loosely?
6. Why are we so tempted to rationalize sin? To explain it away and diminish its severity?
7. Why is it so hard to see loved ones as they are, not through rose-colored glasses? Why is it so hard for us to see their faults?
8. Have you ever sought your own happiness at another's expense? What was the cost of your selfishness?
9. God didn't abandon us because of our sin. He didn't look at us with disgust, but with love. He gives grace and mercy. How have you done the same with those in your life?
10. What offenses, large or small, are you holding onto?

11. How are we able to view the offenses of others differently after we come to understand our own propensity to sin against others?
12. How might God be calling you to right your wrongs?

Chapter 9

CALM

1. How can we protect our hearts from pride?
2. Do you believe forgiveness is always possible? Why or why not?
3. What keeps us from believing God? Believing that He is who He says He is? Why do we have trouble believing God does what He says and that He *can*, and will, work in our lives?
4. If we're to err, we ought to err on the side of faith. Think about this statement. Does it reflect your heart?

FEAR

1. Think about a time when you were struck with fear. Was your fear founded or was it irrational?
2. How can we combat fear and doubt?
3. How can we be sure we're on God's path for our lives? What type of counsel can we seek to ensure we don't go astray?
4. What position or attitude can we take to remain open to God's leading and not veer from His path?
5. How has God used your fears and doubts to bring about good in your life?
6. Why do you think God allows us, and even leads us, to enter the fire at times? What purpose might the fire have in our lives?

TENSION

1. Do you believe that apart from God's grace we are all capable of doing the unthinkable? Why or why not?
2. Could humbly accepting our propensity to sin be the very thing that protects us from sin?
3. It is by grace alone we stand. What is the grace of God? What is the proper response to it?
4. Have you placed sin in a subjective, self-constructed hierarchy?
5. Why is sin such a big deal to God?
6. All who follow Jesus stand on level ground, equally loved and forgiven, regardless of what sins they've committed. Think about this truth for a moment. What does this mean in your life?
7. What is biblical repentance? What does it look like?
8. Like me, have you almost veered off the path God set before you? What stopped you?
9. What do you do when you don't know what to do? How can we discover God's will?

FORGIVENESS

1. What is your immediate response when things aren't going your way? Would you say your response is grounded in God's truth or your own?
2. Do you find it difficult to wait? What about waiting is most difficult? Do you think waiting is a waste of time? Why or why not? What might God be doing or teaching us while we wait?
3. What value is there in fasting and prayer?
4. Why do we often wait for others to be fully repentant before we're willing to forgive? Does this way of thinking reflect the forgiveness God gives us? Why or why not?
5. What is our motivation to forgive?
6. What does unconditional forgiveness look like?
7. What are some characteristics of biblical forgiveness?
8. Why do you think many people mistakenly characterize forgiveness as being burdensome? How is forgiveness a blessing?
9. What are some of the most common misconceptions about forgiveness you've heard?
10. How might we best bring the gospel to life for our enemies?

Chapter 13

STANDING GROUND

1. Have you wanted something so badly that you considered compromising your integrity to get it?
2. Do you strive for the things you want or are you able to lay your desires before God and accept His will over your own?

HEARTS SOFTENED

1. What would happen if we began to live our lives with expectancy for what God will do in and through us? Not expectation, but expectancy. Not knowing what God will do, but knowing that He will do something that far surpasses what we can conceive. How might our perspective and attitudes change? How would we be more willing to make ourselves available to God and His purposes?
2. What would happen if we gave to others what we have received from God? Even to our enemies? How might lives change around us?
3. What role does humility play in forgiveness? In our relationship with God? In our relationship with others?
4. How would looking from another person's perspective change the way we see our own difficult situations? What about trying to see them through the eyes of our enemy? Through the filter of God's truth? How might our stories change?
5. What affect does grace have on us? Why do you think receiving grace results in change?

THE LONG-AWAITED LETTER

1. Why do you think God often calls us to dig up our past? To go back to our most painful memories?
2. What happens in our hearts when we willingly revisit our pain with the purpose of allowing God to heal it?
3. My dad's murder had always seemed so meaningless, like a waste. I did not see how there could be any purpose behind such a terrible tragedy. Are there areas in your life that seem unredeemable to you?
4. What does the word redemption mean to you? What does a redeemed life look like in your mind?
5. It's not about our past, but our future. About how God wants to use our past for immeasurable good. Think about this statement. How can we see this truth played out in our lives?
6. How have you seen God answer your prayers? What impact did answered prayers have on your faith?
7. There is purpose in our pain. How might this truth impact the way we view our trials?

GOOD TRIUMPHS OVER EVIL

1. What makes following God scary? Why do most people hesitate to answer the call God places on their lives? What do you think would happen if they simply lay down their fear and pride and follow? How would their lives change? How would others be impacted?
2. What does it mean to be an instrument of God's grace? What does it look like?
3. How does true, lasting change come to an individual?
4. What would it take for you to remove your happy masks once and for all?
5. What do you think of the fact that God can take two people who were once enemies, bring them together, allow them to work through the mess of their past, transform their hearts through love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and call them to proclaim the same message to two vastly different audiences both inside and outside of prison? Considering the truth of this story, what do you think God wants to do in your life?
6. Good reigns victorious over evil every time. In what areas of your life has this been true?
7. Look at Romans 8:28. How might you be able to filter all that has happened in your life, both good and bad, through this one promise? How would your perspective on your life change if you did so continually?

GRACE

1. Why is it important to live our lives one prayer at a time?
2. What is the difference between reconciliation and forgiveness?
3. In what circumstances is reconciliation possible? In what circumstances is reconciliation not possible?
4. What part of your life is God asking you to relinquish your desire for the simple, easy life in exchange for something a bit more messy?
5. Like Anthony, God sometimes asks us to let go of how we'd like our lives to play out and accept where He's placed us. In what part of your life might God be asking you to accept His will over your own?
6. Do you believe God can and will heal your wounds and redeem your losses?
7. How can a simple act of obedience change your life?
8. Is your faith just a belief system or does it change the way you live?
9. In what ways might God be calling you to follow Him?

THE STORY CONTINUES

1. Are you able to trace God's hand throughout your life? What "coincidences" might have been the hand of God?
2. Jesus is Immanuel—God with us. What does that mean to you? How have you known God is with you? In what ways has He been your comforter, your guide, your strength, and your shield?
3. Is it comforting to know that God not only sees you in your pain but purposes at using all of it for good? Why or why not?
4. What is God asking you to lay down so that you can receive all the blessings He has for you?
5. In what ways can we bring the *Word* to our enemies? To our family and friends? To each and every person we come into contact with each day?
6. Have you ever thought about the concept of DOING the Word of God? What might God be calling you to do—by the power of the Holy Spirit—in this season of your life?
7. Have you ever experienced an outpouring of blessing as a result of obeying one of God's commands? If yes, what command did you obey and how were you blessed?
8. Why is it important to understand God's heart when you consider some of the more difficult commands such as the call to forgive and love your enemy?
9. How can all the commands we're given in Scripture be traced back to the greatest command to love?
10. God's not done with us yet. Think about that. What does this statement mean to you?