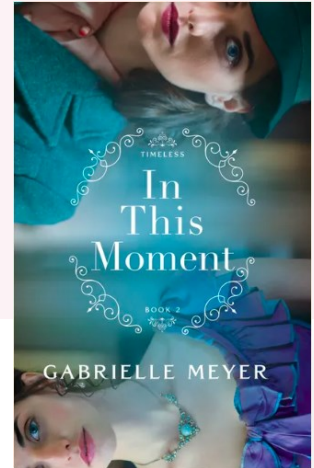




# LEADER'S GUIDE

## IN THIS MOMENT BY GABRIELLE MEYER



"In moments like this, I had to turn my prayers heavenward, hoping God was listening, as I asked Him to guide my steps when I wasn't sure which way to go."

**MARGARET CLARKE**

## THEMES

Sovereignty

Healing

Womanhood

Love

Grief

Trauma

Loss

Mental Health

## HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Terrorist Attacks

War

## CHARACTERS

### 1861

*Margaret Wakefield* is a time-crosser living between 1861, 1941 and 2001. In 1861, Margaret is 20 years old, the daughter of a high-ranking US Senator and friend to President Lincoln. After her mother's death, Margaret feels she must care for her father and diligently assumes the role of the woman of the home, entertaining and organising on behalf of her father and his prestigious friends. On the cusp of the Civil War, Margaret's complete obedience to her father's will wavers as she struggles to do what her Heavenly Father has called her to. She desires to help and to heal in a period when it was not socially acceptable for women of her class to work or become involved in the war.

*Graydon Cooper* is a mysterious foreigner working within the War Department in Washington. Mr Cooper is charming, honest and incredibly intelligent, with a unique gift of discernment. His gift has not always served him well and has led to his exile from England. He can immediately figure out the intentions of others, yet he can't quite figure Margaret out – leading to intense intrigue.

*Mr Wakefield* is Margaret's father, an influential US senator, and friends with the Lincoln family.

*Miss Clara Barton* is the founder of the red cross and Margaret's co-worker in the war efforts.

## 1941

*Margaret Hollingsworth* (Maggie) lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, with her time-crossing parents and sister, Anna. In this timeline, Margaret is a well-respected and capable nurse who entered service one year early with her sister Anna. Margaret adores her life and family in this path but feels a burden for her sister Anna whose grief and loss cause her to suffer from depression.

*Dr Zechariah Philips* is a surgeon at the Naval Medical Center in Maryland, where Margaret is appointed to her first fully qualified nursing position. His abrupt, disinterested and forbidding character terrifies many of the surgery nurses – but not Margaret. Beneath his front is a man suffering from illness, loss and grief, but Margaret, who sees beyond what others do, helps Dr Philips acknowledge and deal with his physical and emotional pain.

*Nurse Helen Daly* is the head nurse at the Naval Medical Center, and Margaret suspects she is in love with Dr Philips.

*Anna* is Margaret's older sister, and although she has two time-crossing parents, she never inherited any birthmarks herself. Anna is a nurse and studies alongside Margaret, yet her life is heavily shadowed by depression after the loss of Richard.

*Libby and Henry Hollingsworth* are Margaret's time-crossing parents. They are a constant source of comfort and wisdom to their children.

## 2001

*Margaret Clarke* (Meg) is an aspiring doctor and med student, adamant that she will complete her studies by her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Meg has dedicated her entire life to her studies, striving to learn as much as possible in this medically advanced timeline. When Seth sweeps her off her feet, suddenly, her future doesn't seem so straightforward, and she must navigate medical school, a relationship and unwanted press attention.

*Congressman Seth Wallace* is the youngest Congressman in Washington. He is handsome, charismatic and driven. He is striving to get his career off the ground, and although his intentions towards Meg seem genuine, he has ulterior motives and a tendency to put his desires above all else.

*Delilah LeBlanc* is Meg's sweet and quirky oldest friend and roommate. She holds Meg's time-crossing secret close to her heart, believing in and counselling Meg through the challenging decision-making process of which path to remain.

*General Jonathan Clarke* and *Peggy Clarke* are Meg's parents in her 2001 timeline. Her mother is the Social Secretary to George W. Bush, while her father works at the Pentagon. Jonathan and Peggy do not know that Meg is a time-crosser.

## STORYLINE

Margaret is a time-crosser, a unique gift given by God, the Author of life. She bears a sunburst birthmark over her heart, inherited from her mother, which sends her into the future, and a birthmark on the back of her neck, inherited from her father, which sends her into the past. She lives three lives in 1861, 1941 and 2001. She is one person, one conscious mind, set in identical bodies. Her conscious mind travels back and forth, accumulating experiences from each path to create one unique person.

At 20 years old, she is nearing her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday when she will be required to choose which path to continue in for the rest of her life; she cannot continue on three paths. Whichever life she chooses, she forfeits the other timelines where her body dies.

Set during three monumental and devastating periods of history; 1861 during the cusp of the Civil War, 1941 with the threat of World War II, and 2001 with the upcoming terrorist attacks, Margaret must navigate these difficult times, make her final decisions on which timeline she will inhabit, all the while striving to follow God's call in her life to help and heal.

In 1861 Margaret mingles in prestigious social circles and meets the mysterious foreigner Graydon Cooper. Immediately drawn to him, she wonders about his purpose in Washington, and although Mr Cooper is charming and seems honest, Margaret can't help but wonder if he's hiding something.

As the Civil War gets off to a disastrous start for President Lincoln, Margaret must put aside all social expectations and delve into the care of injured soldiers. Against her father's will, Margaret saves young Virgil Earp's life through surgery practises from 2001, exposing her to Gray, who, through his gifts of discernment, recognises that Margaret lives a double life. At the same time, Margaret's fears that Gray is a spy are relieved as she discovers he is working as a secret agent to uncover the true spy, who is guilty of sharing secrets with southern sympathisers.

In 1941, Maggie and Anna are accepted into nursing positions at the Naval base in Maryland. When Maggie meets the surgery doctor Dr Zechariah, she is shocked by his brash and uncaring manner, but she also feels the desire to help him, having recognised signs of sickness. Maggie proves herself as a capable and hard-working nurse, and soon it's requested that she and Anna transfer to Hawaii, which after deep thought and consideration, Maggie accepts. As Dr Philip acknowledges his love for Maggie, the dark cloud of Pearl Harbour overshadows her as she knows this terrible event is coming, but she is helpless to prevent it. She battles internally, trying to decide which man she truly loves. After Dr Philip is injured during the bombing, Maggie feels an intense obligation to choose 1941 for both Dr Philip's and Anna's sake.

In 2001, Meg struggles to successfully balance her newly blossoming romance with Seth and her desire to complete medical school by the end of the year successfully. When Seth's behaviour is exposed as self-seeking and toxic, Meg prays to God for clarification on which path to take. Meg is killed in 2001 during the terrorist attack on the Pentagon, immediately losing her 2001 path, her loving parents, her best friend Delilah and her future medical career.

Reeling from the sudden loss of her 2001 path, the trauma from Pearl Harbour and the loss of her father from the war in 1861, Margaret turns to Gray for support. She shares her story with him and finds immense comfort in his constant and diligent care of her. She comes to realise that 1861 is the path in which she desires to remain, and while she cannot fathom leaving her parents, Anna and Dr Philip, in 1941, she trusts God to care for her loved ones and says goodbye to that path, while securing a future with Gray.

The story ends as Margaret and Gray celebrate the birth of their identical twin daughters, who both bear a mark on the back of their necks.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. Which character from 'In This Moment' did you relate to the most?

## TALKING POINTS

We may connect to a character for the following reasons;

- We feel empathy or sympathy for their circumstances.
- We share similar character traits or personalities.
- We share similar desires, hopes, or dreams.
- We have made similar mistakes or poor decisions in our own lives.
- We like or dislike particular characters because of our experiences with others.

# 2

Q. "I do not simply live here in 1861. I also live in the years 1941 and 2001" (Margaret). Which timeline did you enjoy best? Why?

## TALKING POINTS

Multi-timeline stories are becoming increasingly popular. The separate storylines, which form a larger narrative, add cliffhangers and suspense at the end of each chapter as we journey back and forth between times and characters. We may have enjoyed one timeline more than another because of:

- The love story between Margaret and Gray in 1861.
- The history and suspense of Pearl Harbour.
- The familiarity of 2001.
- The different ways of life between 1861, 1941 and 2001.

# 3

Q. Margaret asks, "Is it possible to fall in love with three different men at the same time?". Which man did you hope Margaret would choose? Did it change throughout the story?

## TALKING POINTS

- Graydon Cooper, 1861
- Dr Zacheriah Philips, 1941
- Congressman Seth Wallace, 2001

# 4

Q. Margaret knows that, above all, she wants to heal others. Discuss the differences between the timelines and Margaret's ability to fulfil this calling.

## TALKING POINTS

In 2001 Margaret was living in an advanced medical age where women could both study medicine and become doctors. Her ambition and desire to help were celebrated and received well by friends and family.

In 1941 Margaret was able to study nursing and graduate early. However, her desire to "bend the rules" for early admittance was not well received, and she was told it reflected poorly on her character – ambition for a woman in this era was not celebrated in 1941 as it was in 2001.

In 1861 Margaret's desire to help and heal was forbidden by her father and considered inappropriate for a woman in her social class. Margaret used a false name to protect her father from shame and went against his wishes to obey God and heal those in need. Her father eventually acknowledged her gift and wisdom and blessed her efforts. It wouldn't be until later in the war, when help was desperately needed and social barriers broken down, that nursing became a socially acceptable career path for women in Margaret's position.

# 5

Q. Margaret is burdened with a deep desire to achieve something good in each timeline before she leaves it. Can you relate to her need to strive? How can we rest in Christ instead?

## TALKING POINTS

Margaret admits in 2001, "I'm not sure why I work so hard". Sometimes we're completely unaware of our striving, and it's not until we pause and ponder our efforts or someone points it out, that we notice we're striving.

More often than not, striving is caused by fear:

- We may feel we lack resources such as time, achievement, clarity, purpose, energy, confidence, or acceptance, so we strive to pretend these aren't our reality.
- We may feel that we don't measure up as friends, at work, as mothers, as wives, as parents, with our appearance, so we go above and beyond to feel accepted.
- When we experience fearful seasons, we can strive to regain control, which results in worry, hopeless feelings and anxiety because, more often than not, the cause of our fear is not within our control.

Sometimes we believe God is enough to save us from eternal despair but not enough to secure us here and now – our actions often suggest putting our trust in ourselves instead of God.

Notes from Ruth Chou Simons' book 'When Striving Cease':

- "When you believe your only hope is God's grace, you'll respond with gratitude and relief."
- "When you believe it's up to you to perfectly please God, you'll struggle with guilt and fear."
- "And if you believe God is unknowable, unkind, or unfair in what he asks of his creation, you'll stop trying to know him at all."

# 6

Q. "When I was younger, my gift had always made me feel like I was unique and special to God. But as I grew older, I realized that everyone had a unique and special purpose on earth." (p104). Discuss.

## TALKING POINTS

Knowing that everyone is unique and has a special purpose here on earth helps us to reject harmful beliefs such as racism, caste systems, importance based on wealth, social status or value based on physical or mental differences. If we're ALL made in the image of God, no one person can claim to be more significant or better than anyone else; we are all created equal and bearing God's image.

# 7

Q. In 1941, Maggie's father, Henry, says, "Suffering is not the worst thing in this world... We all suffer. Letting grief hold you back from living is the true travesty." (p117). Discuss.

## TALKING POINTS

"Suffering with the Lord is better than ease without Him" (Daily Grace Co. Bible Study, Pslams);

Elisabeth Elliot said, "What God means by happiness and goodness is a far higher thing than we can conceive". There are a few things we can remember while enduring suffering and trials;

- God's supernatural peace and joy soothes our heavy hearts during grief.
- We must first think of God's perfect love for us, then consider our circumstances so we do not begin to question His perfect love.
- God is worthy to be praised in all circumstances, not for all circumstances, but in them.
- Trials and suffering can strengthen our character and confident hope of salvation (Romans 5: 3-5).

# 8

Q. "It is not your job to fix all the pain in the world, Maggie". Margaret is a "fixer". Can you relate to her need to fix everyone and everything? What happens when Maggie can't fix things? What happens when you can't fix things?

## TALKING POINTS

'Fixers' can become consumed with problems that they feel they ought to fix. Unable to rest, they need to find a solution to feel at peace;

- Anger builds up when we can't fix the situations we find ourselves in, especially when we don't have the tools to deal with the emotions.
- The tools we need [Jesus, the Bible, and Christian fellowship] don't "fix" anything yet recalibrate our understanding as we can learn how to carry grief as a shared burden with our Saviour.
- When we learn to take our pain, suffering, grief and need to fix unfixable things to the Lord, we can rest in His sovereignty and experience supernatural peace.
- Although things may seem "unfixable" on this side of heaven, Jesus will right every wrong – fix every unfixable thing – in eternity. We also have Christian hope that those unfixable things can and will be used for God's glory and our good.

# 9

Q. Historical fiction, biographies and storytelling profoundly impact the soul, often in a way that textbooks and facts cannot. Was there a moment for you in the book where history came alive? How did this change your perspective of war or challenge your attitudes towards circumstances you may be facing today?

## TALKING POINTS

Answers may vary and could include:

- The bravery, sacrifice and patriotism during the Civil War.
- The deaths of loved ones and casualties from World War II.
- The evolution of women's equality.

Perspectives;

- Learning about war, loss of life, trauma, poverty, and fear may help us to put our current circumstances into a healthy perspective. Not to belittle our pain, trials, or suffering, yet to remind us we are not alone in our human experience.
- Pain, hardship, trauma, and suffering are a part of life in our broken world - many others have suffered and endured much in the past.
- While experiencing suffering, we can thank God for our blessings: food, shelter, safety, freedom to worship, family and friends.

# 10

Q. A powerful theme in the novel is the Sovereignty of God. How has reading this book shaped your thoughts and feelings toward God's sovereign plan for your life?

## TALKING POINTS

Kneeling to God's sovereign will (whether we believe God ordains, allows or sends trials and suffering) gives us a song of praise to sing that our circumstances can't change. It provides us with comfort and peace and reassures our weary and lamenting hearts that ALL wrongs will be made right in the second coming and judgement of Jesus. The song on our lips for the duration of our lives can be one of rejoicing in God's goodness and great love. This doesn't mean we won't experience seasons of doubt, loneliness, depression and deep heartache. But during these dark seasons, we do the next thing with the hope of heaven encouraging us.



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