



Book Club Discussion

Welcome! Thank you for hosting a Book Club "It is important to remember as you enter into this conversation with others, that you will be talking about their feelings and situations that have happened to the characters and will find resemblances to their personal lives. People may share as much or as little as they wish. People may begin feeling difficult emotions at times - perhaps anger, sadness, anxiety, irritability, or tension. If this happens, please encourage them to either seek professional help (resources on the website) or see their physician. This is normal. It is part of the healing process. Thank you for taking on this discussion and feel free to reach out through my website if you have any questions or concerns. The sacred text reading is optional.

Thank you, Reverend Odell Montgomery Cooper

A. Interruptions: (Chapters 1-8)

1. | Open discussion on the various interruptions that occurred in any of the characters. (Good, obstacles, reoccurring, barriers, fork in the road, and a hindered emotional wellness)
2. | What developmental characteristics did you notice in Odell's upbringing that helped address her traumatic life interruption
3. | How would you define "interruptions"?
4. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?
5. | How was Odell's parents, Duke and Mary's life interrupted and Momma Doe?

Sacred text: 1 Peter 5:8–9 MSG: "Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You're not the only one plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So, keep a firm grip on the faith."



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B. Trauma (Chapter 9)

1. | How did Odell demonstrate behaviors of being traumatized?
2. | How did Odell's faith and family values conflict with accepting her traumatic interruption? And did it delay her healing process?
3. | Why were family and friends having difficulty communicating the truth about Coop to Odell and Jackie?
4. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred text:

Isaiah 41:10 MSG: "But you, Israel, are my servant. You are Jacob, my first choice, descendants of my good friend Abraham. I pulled you in from all over the world, called you in from every dark corner of the earth, telling you, 'You're my servant, serving on my side. I have picked you. I haven't dropped you.' Do not panic. I am with you. There is no need to fear for I am your God. I will give you strength. I will help you. I will hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you."

C. Homegoing Service (Chapter 9)

1. | Why did people expect Odell to respond as a minister and not as a mother during this interruption?
2. | How old were you when you attended your first homegoing service?
3. | What does you feel about cremation vs. burial?
4. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?



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Sacred text: John 14: 1–3 MSG: “Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live.”

D. Grief Process (Chapters 9-10)

1. | How does your culture and expected gender roles impact how you respond to traumatic interruptions?
2. | Do you believe that talking about your feelings makes you appear weak? How has this perception affected you?
3. | Grieving is an immensely powerful state of despair and disbelief. How did this traumatic interruption affect the emotional wellness on Odell's mind, body, and spirit?
4. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred text: Psalm 56:7–9 MSG: “Pay them back in evil! Get angry, God! Down with these people! You've kept track of my every toss and turn through the sleepless nights, each tear entered in your ledger, each ache written in your book. If my enemies run away, turn tail when I yell at them, then I'll know that God is on my side.”

E. Carrying the Weight of Trauma and Seeking Help (Chapters 12-15)

1. | Odell talks about emotional triggers when she returned to work. Discuss what caused them?
2. | Some of the characters adopted addictive behaviors to fill that pain in heart. What were some of their coping mechanisms? (i.e., how did the characters deal with/handle their current situation?)
3. | What are some of the intergenerational struggles you witnessed in this story?
4. | How do these struggles affect our emotional wellness?



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5. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred text Psalm 77:2-6 MSG: yell out to my God, I yell with all my might, I yell at the top of my lungs. He listens. I found myself in trouble and went looking for my Lord; my life was an open wound that wouldn't heal. When friends said, "Everything will turn out all right," I didn't believe a word they said. I remember God—and shake my head. I bow my head—then wring my hands. I'm awake all night—not a wink of sleep; I can't even say what's bothering me. I go over the days one by one, I ponder the years gone by. I strum my lute all through the night, wondering how to get my life together

F. Social Justice and Paying it Forward (Chapter 11)

Definition: Social Justice is the concept of fairness as it manifests in society. That includes fairness in healthcare, employment, housing, and more. Now, social justice applies to all aspects of society, including race and gender, and it is closely tied to human rights.

1. | Names social justice advocates and discuss how they have impacted change in our society and culture
2. | Was the police investigation common in communities of color? If so, why? How can our communities begin to change the narrative?
3. | What motivated Odell to stop the violence at the Pizza Bar? And what was Jackie's reasoning for refusing to assist her mother in closing the Pizza Bar?
4. | What was CONECT's role in supporting the community and the issues in this chapter?
5. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred text Jeremiah 3:23 MSG: "This is God's Message: Attend to matters of justice. Set things right between people. Rescue victims from their exploiters. Don't take advantage of the homeless, the orphans, the widows. Stop the murdering!"



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G. Faith and Spirituality (Chapters 12-15)

1. | What are some of the sentiments shared by other people of faith that Odell believed was preventing her from healing?
2. | What motivated Jackie to reach out for support?
3. | What did you learn about faith from your elders throughout your lifetime?
4. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred text Hebrews 11:1, 6: “The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.”

H. Resilience and Emotional Wellness (Chapters 16-17)

1. | What is the difference in a person being stubborn or strong-willed?
2. | Against the doctor's advice, Odell went to a Stevie Wonder concert and a Dallas football game. What was her reasoning for taking these health risks?
3. | What traits did Odell possess from their childhood, education, faith and culture that helped her to reinvent themselves?
4. | How did Jackie and Marcel exhibit resiliency throughout their roles?
5. | Upon your reflections what will you do differently so that your stubbornness and strong-willed will not impede your emotional wellness.



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6. | What is the connection between the sacred text and today's case study?

Sacred Text

MATTHEW 5:3–12 MSG: "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. You're blessed when you are content with just who you are - no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat. You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'careful,' you find yourselves cared for. You're blessed when you get your inside world - your mind and heart - put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of competing or fighting. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. Not only that - count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort, and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens - give a cheer, even! - for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."