



Stepping into Sunlight

Discussion Guide

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Discussion Questions:

1. When Penny notices she's having some emotional reactions to the crime she witnessed, she first tries to ignore it, blame it on the flu, convince those around her that she is fine, or force herself to "snap out of it." Can you relate to any of those early efforts? How do you tend to respond to emotional struggles in your own life?
2. Penny has a deep and sincere faith in God, yet has trouble leaning on Him in the weeks immediately after Tom leaves on his deployment. Why do you think that is? Have you had times where the words of Scripture felt flat, church attendance was difficult, or your prayers seemed to bounce against the ceiling? What helped you at those times?
3. Have you ever been a victim of crime or experienced a traumatic event? What physical, emotional, and spiritual effects did it have on you?
4. Dr. Karl Menninger, who wrote extensively about emotional healing suggested, "Walk out your front door and find someone who needs help." In *Penny's Project*, Penny Sullivan applies this approach as part of her journey to healing. How is the desire to reach out to others in the strength of God's love different from the notion of "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps"?
5. Penny receives various responses and advice from people in her life when she opens up about her struggle, (sister, mom, neighbor, Lydia, Dr. Marci). Which input was helpful? What suggestions have you received when you've been battling a difficult issue in your life?
6. What are some of the ways we can respond to the people in our lives who are living with effects of trauma, anxiety, or depression?
7. Penny discovers the healing joy of small acts of kindness. Can you share a time when someone did a small act of kindness for you?

8. Finding people to serve becomes a challenge to Penny. How many people do you cross paths with in a given day? What ideas do you have for small, simple ways to share a kindness with one of them?
9. Penny works to protect her husband from too much information about how much she's struggling, because she doesn't want his morale to suffer while he's on deployment. Was that the right choice? If you're married, how open are you with your spouse?
10. Do you think Penny should have gone to see the man who committed the murders in the convenience store?
11. What are some of the ways that Penny lived out her faith in the story and effected other characters (Jim-Bob, Laura-Beth, the support group members, the store-front mission, her family)?
12. What role did her experiences with Alex have in Penny's fears, choices, and ultimate healing?



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