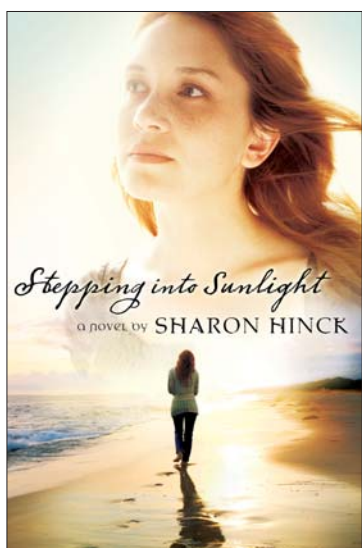


QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SHARON HINCK



Stepping Into Sunlight

by Sharon Hinck

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1. All your books feature contemporary characters who are mothers, and who are faced with challenges they feel inadequate to solve. How is *Stepping Into Sunlight* similar to or different from your previous novels?

All my books are set squarely inside the point of view of one woman who is very attuned to her inadequacies. Despite this, each woman finds ways to act heroically in the lives of the people around them, and each discovers that God can use her even among the ordinary moments of life. While there is still some dry humor and quirky characters, the tone in *Stepping into Sunlight* is a little less playful. This story goes to some new emotional depths.

2. Tell us about the storyline.

A Navy chaplain's wife, Penny Sullivan, witnesses a violent crime that shakes the bedrock of her faith. Unfortunately, they've just moved across country to a new home, away from all her family and friends, and her husband leaves on his first deployment right after the crime. She has a seven-year-old to single parent, and yet begins to suffer from the effects of post-traumatic stress and can't seem to snap out of it. She gets help from a storefront mission in her neighborhood, a victim support group full of quirky characters, and from a project she calls Penny's Project.

3. Your main character struggles with panic attacks. Why was this topic important to you?

I really wanted to give a voice to the 60 million people in America who struggle with various degrees of depression and anxiety disorders—with suffering that is often invisible to others. C. S. Lewis said, "We read to know we aren't alone," and I often find that when I read a character I can identify with, I draw comfort and inspiration from their journey.

I've personally battled with some bad episodes of depression, and have many friends who deal with some of these various battles. God's grace is so powerful and real to us in those dark times, but it often doesn't arrive in the ways we expect. I enjoyed watching how God's love continued to reach out to Penny in the story, and how He worked through her to bless others—even at times she would have described herself as too broken to be of use.

4. How does the character move toward healing in your story and overcome her challenges with post-traumatic stress?

She sets out to do a small step of kindness for a new person each day. That adventure helps her in the very frightening battle toward emotional health.

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5. How can readers apply this project to their own lives?

They can literally participate in Penny's Project along with the character. I have a special interactive blog where folks can share ideas for small steps of kindness and report on results. While it was a special tool for Penny in the struggles she was overcoming, it's a great idea to try no matter your circumstances. She finds that even a kind word at a key time can be life-changing—and it's fun to find creative ways to serve others and then watch how God multiplies it.

6. You set the novel in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Have you ever lived there?

Yes. My husband and I moved there for about three years while we attended graduate school. It was exciting but often difficult to be in a brand new place away from old friends and family. I used some of the landmarks that we visited often within the story, and some of my memories of how Chesapeake, Virginia, felt to me as a Midwestern gal.

7. Why did you make the main character a Navy chaplain's wife?

It's a current issue today. So many people are dealing with separation from spouses in the military, or even long absences due to business trips. And of course as a novelist, it's my job to let my characters suffer. Having Penny move to a new place far from family and friends, then have her husband deploy, all added to the difficulty she faced in recovering from the crime she witnessed.