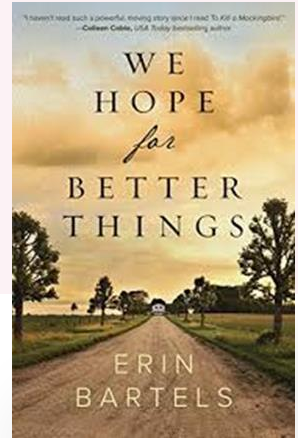




# PARTICIPANT GUIDE

## WE HOPE FOR BETTER THINGS BY ERIN BARTELS



*We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes.*

### DETROIT CITY MOTTO



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Q. Elizabeth, Eleanor, and Mary are separated over generations, yet their lives are beautifully linked together through family history and the Lapeer Farmhouse. Which character did you relate to the most? Why?

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2

Q. Mr Rich asks Elizabeth, "Do you believe he [God] works all things together for his glory?". Initially, Elizabeth disagrees, saying the world is 'too messed up'. How does this opinion change throughout the story? How have you come to believe this is true?

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3

Q. A theme in the novel is "Sins of Omission". Described on page 30 as "plain old garden variety neglect", which do "as much damage... as corruption and greed". How has reading this novel changed your views on 'doing nothing' or 'turning a blind eye'?

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4

Q. In this story, many characters show that they have prejudice and fears towards those who are different from themselves. What can we do to help remove these barriers?

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5

Q. Were any unknown prejudices of your own revealed to you while reading this book? You may like to prayerfully examine your own heart and ask God to show any beliefs about others that do not align with His views about them.

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6

Q. "She cried out for her impossible love, for her betrayal of her husband, for his betrayal of her, for her selfishness, and for her baby who had been stolen from her. In her sorrowful moans were all the words she felt she could not utter aloud before God and man, her full confession and cry for forgiveness" (p327). At this moment, we see Mary's complete despair as she holds nothing back and cries out to the Lord in anguish, regret, fear, repentance, and heartbreak. Can you relate to Mary's prayers, which come from a place of deep hurt? How did the Holy Spirit meet you in this place and give you comfort through the storm?

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7

Q. "Real romance happens when you least expect it. That's what makes it romantic. I fell in love with William on a couch very much like this one after I'd embarrassed myself at an awkward lunch... I did everything wrong" (p330-331). Share a romantic story from your life.

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8

Q. In her desperate situation, we see Louise Rich (William's mother) praying. "...Right now we got to pray. You understand? We got to pray like never before. You pray with me now, all right?" (p338). Can you share a time when you were in a crisis, and your only option was to pray and believe for a miracle?

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9

Q. "I think I've spent the majority of my life mending things for other people while I've been walking around in tatters. Today has me wondering what the last fifty years might have been like if I had forgiven my parents and forgiven JJ. Maybe I would have been happier" (Nora, p369). The Bible is clear that we ought to forgive others as we have been forgiven (Luke 6:37). But how does forgiveness protect our hearts, and help us to live happier, freer lives?

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# 10

Q. "Aunt Nora had been wrong when she said that history was written by the victors, for the victors in one generation may turn out to be the villains of the next. And the only way to get closer to the truth was to refuse to quit searching for it. All it took to lose one's history was a single generation that didn't take the time to learn it and pass it on. I would do my part to keep it alive." ( Elizabeth p376). What important idea, knowledge or dream will you try and keep alive for the next generation?

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## NOTES

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