

## **ANSWERS TO OPEN FOR DISCUSSION**

**ANSWER1:** Maggie had developed a relationship with a coworker at the law firm where she was employed. She felt that she did not want to do wrong, but Fred had been gone for such a long time. And while she prayed every day since he had been away that she'd be kept strong 'til he got back home, her spirit wasn't strong enough to resist the advances of a very persistent coworker – one who reminded her so much of Fred. She felt she could not help herself, but to give in to those desires. Maggie had lost hope that she would ever see Fred again, at least in a way that she saw him the night they met back at MCCU. Her mother did not help matters much, because she wanted her daughter to marry the son of her pastor, which Maggie ended up doing. But after her husband's untimely death, and after Maggie's reconnection with Fred, on that night she first saw him after his return from Hawaii, she had to leave earlier than she wanted to because she had the urge to see the man that she had become attached to physically, the man back at the law office who reminded her so much of Fred. She met him later that evening for a brief rendezvous before returning to her home.

**ANSWER2:** Yes, because of Maggie's liaison with the coworker at her law office, she became pregnant, something that she felt she needed to keep from Fred. She had a relationship with this man long before Fred had returned from Hawaii. She did not want to do wrong, but Fred had been away for a long time, and this person who reminded her so much of him, kept the pressure on her, until she eventually relinquished her will to stay true to Fred and gave in to him. Her feelings to be physically tied to someone, especially someone who reminded her of Fred, overwhelmed her sense of

judgment – her physical desires were apparently too strong in the absence of the man she really loved. But, with emotional ties still with Fred, because Maggie still loved him very much, she needed to have an abortion, and, to avoid the same mistake in the future, she had a tubal ligation to prevent any future pregnancies. Maggie felt she needed to keep all this from Fred. So being deceitful in the matter, not only to Fred but especially to the man to whom she later married, she decided to use the car accident as the reason why they could never have children.

**ANSWER3:** Jesus, being Divine, had the ability to heal the blind man, but in order for Him to do so, the blind man had to demonstrate his belief that Jesus could in fact heal him – he demonstrated that by simply acknowledging openly that Jesus could heal him when he confronted Him. Because of the blind man’s actions, Jesus told him that he was already healed. The story of Jesus and the blind man relates to Courtney and her desire that her marriage to Gates would get better. Based on the message that Courtney heard when she attended Queen’s Church with Fred, she learned that her faith needed to be demonstrated in some way, like that of the blind man when he came to Jesus, in order for her to have her desires. And her praying and acting on her belief that she would have a better marriage would be the key to her prayer being answered. But being new to the faith, Fred helped her in this regard – he prayed for Courtney and her marriage to Gates to improve. The motto that “prayer changes things” is not just a cliché, it is an accurate statement, but in order for it to work, as in Fred’s prayer that Courtney’s marriage to Gates would improve, Courtney’s faith needed to be demonstrated. She decided to demonstrate her faith with some action – the act of remaining in the marriage, even though there were no immediate signs of her husband changing

from being an atheist and from being the source of the disruptive household that Courtney experienced because of him to something better; the something better that Courtney prayed for was an improved relationship with her husband. To be sure, Courtney's faith may have been demonstrated in another manner, but she chose this action as her way of demonstrating her faith because, despite his shortcomings, she still loved her husband very much. Bewildered at Courtney's actions in the face of his continued mistreatment of her, Gates gradually succumbed to Courtney's actions, actions that proved to be the deciding factor based on her prayers, as well as the prayers of Fred, that her marriage to Gates would eventually improve - and even improve to the point of leading Gates to convert to her faith.

**ANSWER4:** John took advantage of what he felt was an alternative from an outwardly immoral situation with his colleagues by their entertaining these "strange women" – the alternative being to see Sandra who happened to be in Hawaii during that time. There was no clear evidence that Fred was involved immorally with Sandra, only speculation based on his actions towards wife Maggie. John had no particular desire to see Sandra in Hawaii. He only went to see her because she strongly encouraged it before they had left Detroit on separate trips for Hawaii, and especially because of his unwillingness to attend the meeting that his colleagues had scheduled with these "strange women"; the arrangement his colleagues made sealed John's consideration of meeting with Sandra while she was in Hawaii. John initially had intentions of communing with his colleagues the whole time, but was not willing to participate in the immoral activity that they had planned. Upon his knowledge of his colleague's intentions, he then thought of ways to get out of that situation, and remembered what Sandra had told him about her

availability in Hawaii before they had left for the islands. So John thought more seriously about seeing Sandra later that evening – in fact, he ended up calling her, then leaving the meeting of his colleagues and met Sandra on the other side of town. John was not completely guiltless in the matter however, because, not only did he meet privately with a lady who was not his wife without Maggie’s knowledge of their getting together, it was Maggie’s assistant back at Faith Methodist no less. John’s actions gave the appearance of an immoral encounter. But he also reasoned within himself that he would not have to explain this action - this excursion with Sandra that night, to Maggie; he never told her of his escapades with Sandra, so she had always assumed that he was with his colleagues during this time. So, being deceitful in thought, he realized that Maggie would think that he would be at that meeting with his colleagues instead of a tryst with her assistant.

**ANSWER5:** Yes, when he got up from bed in the middle of the night to check on the noise that he heard from the storm. He heard yet another noise coming from Courtney’s room, and when he went there to see what the problem was, he found the door open and saw her sitting up on her bed. She was taking a sip of the rum that she had brought with her and had begun to cough because of its strength. Fred consoled her for a little while then went back to his room to bed.

**ANSWER6:** Yes, Maggie did misread Pastor John Sr.’s question to her because of the church’s general knowledge of the pastor’s love of alcoholic beverages, she responded to him by saying, “I sorry pastor, I don’t drink”, as in a drink of an alcoholic beverage. But the pastor was actually offering her a drink of coffee. He quickly clarified himself however by saying that he was offering her a cup of coffee.

**ANSWER7:** The turning point for Courtney was when she heard the pastor reference the biblical story of the harlot Rahab, whose deliverance from her situation was based on her not only believing in the one true God, but also in taking action and risking her life to help His people – the two spies – when it counted the most. What was brought out by the pastor, that belief in God has to be accompanied by some corresponding action to confirm that belief, was reconfirmed by Fred when, after the sermon had ended but prior to adjournment, Courtney whispered in his ear asking if all she had to do was to believe, as she heard the pastor say in his message. In response Fred whispered back to her and affirmed that all she needed to do was to believe, but he quickly added that she should do so with action to back up her belief. So she was excited, realizing that there was hope for her, despite her past transgressions, and was willing to act on her belief by going back into what was a difficult situation in her marriage to Gates.

**ANSWER8:** Yes, because Fred had always liked Mensie very much, and, being a prayer warrior as he was, had prayed after being notified of John's death by Maggie, not only for her well-being, but for that of the whole family, which included both Mensie and her husband Matthew, whom he visited often during that winter wonderland period when he was dating Maggie. You see, he was taught by his pastor, the Rev. Johnnie Jones, that you should always pray, or pray without ceasing as the Scripture says. But prayer is not simply a formal petition, given in a particular tone of voice or in a certain position or posture, but sincerely communicating with God anytime, anyplace, and in any situation, and asking Him to help deal effectively with any problem or situation that might come up in your life. Fred's prayer was like he was confiding to a best friend, but a friend that is the ultimate spiritual force on the earth and in the

universe. So Fred believed that God could rectify Courtney's situation, and prayed that He would help her attain the desire that she wanted – an improved marriage to her husband Gates. The answer to that prayer was manifested to Fred when he and his wife Maggie saw Courtney and Gates, with their baby, that day when he was surprised to see them at church.

**ANSWER9:** Yes, because after Matthew and Mensie went to a movie together, they attended a jazz festival with some friends when they left their daughter alone with Fred that night. While they attended church regularly, and, while obedient to the faith, they were not tied to a lot of regulations because of their association with the church - they lived their lives to the fullest while adhering to their faith. Because of their enjoyment of everyday life they often were involved with secular events like musical shows and festivals. Mensie also played bingo, and she and husband Matthew would go to a local casino in Detroit on occasion. They abided by John 10:10 that says that, "...I come that they may have life, and that they have it more abundantly." They believed what they were taught by their pastor at Mark Methodist, who contended that we should function happily in the world, while not being a part of its deviance, problems, and concerns.

**ANSWER10:** Yes, because, as many Christians believe, once this natural physical life is over, there is no more opportunity for salvation if what Jesus did at the cross for our redemption is not accepted at that time – they are permanently kept behind "heaven's gate" as it was construed in Maggie's vision. But Maggie's vision leaves room for individuals who may not have had the opportunity to know Jesus and what He offered to them in this physical life, either because they were never introduced to Him or because they had been blinded to the truth. In this case they would have that

opportunity during a millennial period where teaching and learning would abound where everyone would have ample opportunity for salvation, as Maggie was taught by her pastor at Mark Methodist while growing up – as taken from Revelation 20:6.

**ANSWER11:** Fred couldn't believe it. He didn't recall Courtney being pregnant, and he had just seen her only a few weeks earlier. He couldn't understand how she could go through with a nine-month pregnancy in such a short time – since the last time he saw her back in Hawaii. But he didn't know that the baby had been adopted, something that Courtney told both Maggie and Fred about at a later time. Maggie, by the way, was thrilled to have another baby possibly being available for her future daycare center, and it also gave her inspiration for her and Fred to adopt a child of their own, since she could no longer give birth to a child herself, as she told Fred, "because of the accident."

**ANSWER12:** While Maggie never learned of John's excursions with Sandra as expressed in the book, she did develop inward anxieties about her. This was because Maggie felt that Sandra was resentful towards her because now, at her new church, Faith Methodist, she had been promoted over her whereas only a short while before back at Mark Methodist, she was Sandra's assistant. Nevertheless, Maggie never figured out, based on the vision she had because of the accident, why she had not seen Sandra at the heavenly event she envisioned.

**ANSWER13:** Yes, she communicated freely with her other siblings, her parents, and her grandparents Alonya and Marco.

**ANSWER14:** The group was "The Dells" and the year the song was released was 1969.

**ANSWER15:** Yes, because the doctor's background included a year of seminary school, as he had mentioned to Maggie during their time together while treating her. But he did not complete his schooling in that area because of a greater interest in becoming a medical doctor. Therefore, Maggie's doctor was able to combine his knowledge of biblical topics from his seminary study as it related to the near-death experience that Maggie described to him from her vision and his experience while under sedation for a medical procedure that he had that he described to her. As a result of these experiences, he explained to Maggie what thought death is like from both a religious and secular point of view.

**ANSWER16:** The basis for this book came from an interview the author had with a guest to a writers' group in which he is a member. The group of about ten authors and perspective writers meet for lunch once every month to discuss issues and concerns of the writing profession. At least one guest usually attends this meeting every month. At one meeting a lady, who was a guest, had just returned to this country and told about how she had heard of the group and how she wanted to attend and gain more information about how to become a successful author. When the meeting was over the lady discussed with the author more details of her history. She told about her marriage to a serviceman and how they had relocated, with their small child, to the Philippines. She told how she and her husband lived there for a while, but soon he became very abusive to her and subsequently they separated. He left her for another woman, as she told the story, and then she and her child were left alone in a foreign country. They stayed there for a short while before returning to the U.S., where she and her child settled in the Washington, D.C. area. She eventually was found by her former husband, now divorced from him, and he tried to reenter their lives.

But he was not successful because, as the lady continued to tell the story, she had remarried. Her new husband and her child eventually relocated to North Carolina in the Raleigh area. She gave more of the details of her story to the author, who was motivated by her will to survive domestic abuse, and her desire to help others who found themselves in a similar situation. The author indicated to her that he was inspired by her story, and plan to write a novel based on the events that she described. She indicated an interest in reading a story based on her experience, and the result was creation of the book, "Heaven Can't Wait, or Can it?". It is interesting that the incident of the author meeting the lady with this story occurred about one year prior to the book being published; the lady had not returned to the writers' group since that time. Remembering the scripture in Hebrews 13:2, the author thought to himself, *was she an angel, sent to this meeting to encourage me to write the novel?* Whatever the case, the story was so compelling to the author that he was motivated to develop a novel about it. So the book "Heaven Can't Wait, or Can it?" while a fiction story, was motivated by events shared with him by the lady who was a guest to the writers' group meeting that day. In developing her story, the author used physical settings other than the ones that were a part of the lady's experience as she told it.

**NOTE:** Included within the text of the novel are references to songs that accentuate the storyline's significance. By taking time to listen to these songs, especially while reading parts of the novel where these references occur, can enhance the story's significance to the reader; as an alternative option, the reader may substitute these songs with whatever others that may be considered more appropriate for a given storyline.