

IN THE STILL OF NIGHT

by
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SYNOPSIS:

While accompanying her husband, Paul, on a business trip to Orlando, Anna Marquette is attacked in a dark alleyway. Beaten, raped, and left for dead, she lays unconscious while Paul searches frantically for her. Anna is finally discovered and taken to an Orlando hospital where her painful recovery begins.

Back home in their Chicago suburb, Anna deals with the traumatic aftermath of the attack. Just as she begins to feel that she has found safety--in her home, in her faith in God, and in the loving arms of her husband--Anna faces the shocking news that at forty-five she is pregnant with the child of the rapist.

Disbelieving and devastated, Paul and Anna begin to sort through the options available to them. Though at first abortion seems the only reasonable answer to their dilemma, Paul and Anna soon realize that they simply cannot go through with something they have always felt was morally wrong. But their decision causes them to face the hostility and alienation of their oldest daughter, Kara, who feels it would be a horrible mistake to allow this child of rape to be born.

Anna finds special comfort in the compassion of her husband and her younger daughter, Kassie, and in the newfound friendship of one of her college professors, Emma Green. Emma, an African-American woman who has overcome a life of hardship, unexpectedly leads the Marquettes to a solution when she shares the story of her own daughter and son-in-law's adoption experience. Anna begins to believe that adoption might be the answer she has been seeking. Eventually the young couple offer Anna the use of the small apartment in their New Haven, Indiana home until the baby is born.

Paul and Anna are distraught at the thought of a separation, but they come to realize that it would be far too complicated for Anna to go through this difficult pregnancy in their own community. Across the miles, they grieve their forced separation and begin to make the first of many complex decisions.

Shortly before the baby is to be born, they receive news which will change the course of their lives forever. When it seems that the outcome of their dilemma can bring nothing but sorrow, divine intervention redeems their situation in a surprising and miraculous way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How did Paul and Anna each blame themselves for the tragedy that happened to them? Are either of them justified in their feelings?
2. Discuss Paul and Anna's differing beliefs and the way they handled them when they first began sorting through their options. What are some possible outcomes had Paul not

come around rather quickly to Anna's way of thinking? Was there any room for compromise in their situation?

3. In what ways did their daughter Kara's disagreement and hostility affect the decisions the Marquettes made? How would you handle the situation if a grown child espoused beliefs that were vastly different from those you had taught him/her growing up? How might such a situation impact the relationship between the two sisters?

4. Discuss Anna and Emma's friendship. How did each of the following differences affect the way they related to one another? Married/Single; White/Black; Student/Teacher; Well-off/Hard up; Homemaker/Career woman. Which of these differences offers the greatest challenge to a friendship?

5. Anna's pregnancy caused a rift in her friendship with Maggie Ryan, formerly one of her closest friends. What were the reasons for this? Was Anna right in withholding the details of her situation to Maggie? How could she have handled things differently?

6. What would be the repercussions for a couple deciding to keep and raise a child conceived in rape? What roles would age, race, and attitude play in the outcome of such a decision? How would such a decision be different for the mother and for her husband? Discuss how--at various ages--the circumstances could be explained to the child in a way that would not cause rejection or pain? Would it be wise (or possible) to allow the child to believe that the husband is his birth father?

7. The Whitmans were a family who reversed their decision to adopt Anna's baby after they discovered that the child would be biracial. Their decision was based not on their own prejudice, but on the prejudice of extended family members. How do you view their decision? What other alternatives might they have considered?

8. Discuss the topic of interracial adoptions. What questions and problems do biracial children face as they grow older? Is it truly possible to judge a person totally apart from the way they look? Examine and discuss areas where you are prejudiced.

9. How could Anna be certain that the revelation she had in the hospital was from God? Share a time in your own life when you felt very certain that an impression or answer was divinely inspired.

10. Discuss open adoption. If you were in Anna's situation would it make your decision easier or more difficult to have ongoing contact with a child you gave up for adoption? If you were an adoptive parent, how would you feel about your child having frequent contact with his birth mother?