

Consider these two Bible verses:

• **PROVERBS 11:27 (NIV):** "HE WHO SEEKS GOOD FINDS GOODWILL, BUT EVIL COMES TO HIM WHO SEARCHES FOR IT."

• **2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NIV):** "FOR GOD DID NOT GIVE US A SPIRIT OF TIMIDITY, BUT A SPIRIT OF POWER, OF LOVE AND OF SELF-DISCIPLINE."

• How might these verses be an encouragement to Peyton as she struggles to maintain a positive and edifying perspective?

• What kinds of things can we do to make sure we focus on the good? What might the "good" include?

The following verses relate to the topic of perspective. Consider how each one does.

• **EPHESIANS 4:22-24 (NIV):** "YOU WERE TAUGHT, WITH REGARD TO YOUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE, TO PUT OFF YOUR OLD SELF, WHICH IS BEING CORRUPTED BY ITS DECEITFUL DESIRES; TO BE MADE NEW IN THE ATTITUDE OF YOUR MINDS; AND TO PUT ON THE NEW SELF, CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS."

• **COLOSSIANS 3:2 (NIV):** "SET YOUR MINDS ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON EARTHLY THINGS."

• **HEBREWS 12:2 (NIV):** "LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH..."



Final THOUGHTS

The token villain in this film is Truman Harris, a narcissistic and self-serving newsman. Every story needs a villain; what kind of obstacles does Truman Harris represent for Peyton? Does he perform the villain role well? Why or why not?

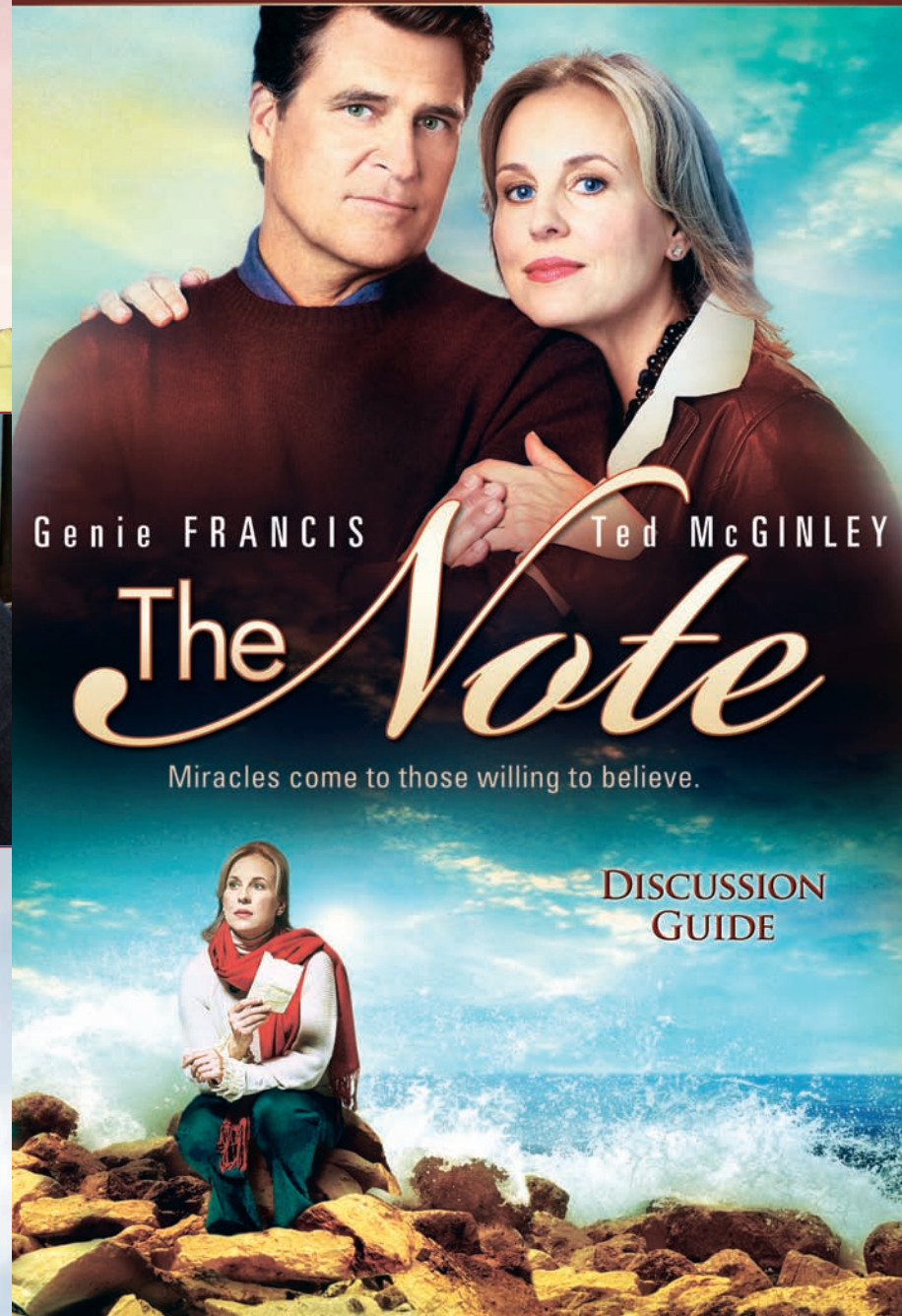
How do the movie's themes relate to the Christmas setting?

What do you think of the character of Mandy Hillridge (Peyton's sidekick/assistant)? Does she serve a specific purpose in the movie? What might that be?

Tanner Walton is the last person on Peyton's list. When we first meet him, there are several red flags to indicate that he's being less than forthcoming with information regarding the note and whether it's meant for him. What warnings stand out to you?

Consider the title of Peyton's column — "The Heart Healer" — with the idea behind the story. Discuss the irony with the column's title and the story being *The Note*.

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY ANGELA HUNT



The Note

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Crew OVERVIEW

DOUGLAS BARR (DIRECTOR)
ANGELA HUNT (WRITING CREDIT: NOVEL)
PAUL W. COOPER (WRITING CREDIT: TELEPLAY)

Cast OVERVIEW

GENIE FRANCIS (PEYTON MACGRUDER)
TED MCGINLEY (KING BERNARD)
RICK ROBERTS (TRUMAN HARRIS)
GENELLE WILLIAMS (MANDY HILLRIDGE)
KATIE BOLAND (CHRISTINE)

Using this DISCUSSION GUIDE

Intended for use after viewing the film, this guide provides catalysts for biblically-based discussion of the various themes found in *The Note*. The guide features three themes from the movie and is structured in such a way that groups can choose to discuss the entire guide at once or can focus on one or two themes at a time.

Film OVERVIEW / Note to GROUP

Based on Angela Hunt's contemporary fiction book of the same name, *The Note* tells the story of Peyton MacGruder (Genie Francis), a woman with a devastating past and, subsequently, a broken heart. Peyton's journey through the film teaches her about purpose, forgiveness, and perspective.

As the film opens, a plane crash off the North Carolina coast coincides with Peyton, a columnist for the Middleborough Times, receiving a warning from her boss: increase readership numbers on her column by Christmas...or find a new job. Peyton, reeling from this ultimatum, finds a friend and some advice in coworker, King (Ted McGinley).

One day, Peyton ventures to the coast to revisit the location of a small memorial service held by the families of the plane crash victims. While there, she discovers a hand-written note that is protected within a plastic bag. When Peyton realizes that the note may be the last piece of communication from the plane, she vows to find the intended recipient — this becomes the journey she chronicles in her column. Along the way, she must deal with an underhanded and self-serving anchorman, Truman Harris (Rick Roberts), who ultimately motivates her to pursue answers with unwavering determination.

(WARNING — SPOILERS MENTIONED BELOW.)

The note leads Peyton to three potential beneficiaries. The first two assert that the note isn't theirs. But, during the course of their interviews, they share memories with Peyton and use their interaction with the note's message to reconsider certain life decisions that they've made. The third person on the list claims that the note belongs to him, seemingly ending Peyton's search, but not giving her peace of mind that the note has found its true owner.

Toward the end of the movie, Peyton is approached by a young girl named Christine (Katie Boland), who claims that the note most likely belongs to herself and asks whether it may have been addressed to "T." After an emotional discussion, Peyton understands that the note's journey has come "full circle." She understands the importance of the note's message in granting second chances, encouraging people to embrace life, and giving hope where it might otherwise be lost.

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Theme Three: PERSPECTIVE: SEEING GOD'S HEART

GUIDING SCRIPTURE:

JOHN 16:33 (NIV): "I HAVE TOLD YOU THESE THINGS, SO THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THIS WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE. BUT TAKE HEART! I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."

Scene TO REVIEW



"HOW DOES HE DO IT?" (00:10:14 – 00:12:46)

- What kind of perspective or outlook does Truman Harris have? Is Harris' outlook necessarily a bad thing? How might his bravado serve him well?
- Now, consider Peyton and her outlook. Why is she having such a difficult time with this assignment? How does it relate to her perspective?

After the events of her heartbreaking past, Peyton put herself on emotional lockdown as a survival tool. She'd seen so much grief and tragedy that her attempts to infuse her column with any kind of emotion were superficial at best.

When King asks Peyton what's bothering her, she replies that she's a dry well, and that she has no idea what to do. King says, "Just do your job, Peyton, which means just like me and every other columnist, you may have to pry open some doors you'd rather leave closed."

- What good might come from the situation? How might Peyton manageably follow King's advice?
- What is she going to have to do about her perspective on the subject?

Part of the reason Peyton struggles to write a convincing "Heart Healer" column is that she's experienced such pain and loss herself that she has a difficult time questioning other people who have been the recipients of misfortune.

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW: HOW DOES HE DO IT? (00:10:14 – 00:12:46)

STAIRWELL CONVERSATION (00:24:49 – 00:27:47)

Overview

FOLLOWING A VISIT TO THE COAST (CLOSE TO THE LOCATION OF THE MEMORIAL SERVICE) AND SEEING TRUMAN HARRIS SO EASILY APPROACH AND QUESTION MOURNERS, PEYTON PACES AROUND THE OFFICE SAYING, "HOW DOES HE DO IT?" SOON AFTER, SHE RECEIVES SOME SENSIBLE ADVICE FROM KING.

Scene TO REVIEW



"STAIRWELL CONVERSATION" (00:24:49 – 00:27:47)

Notice that King presents Peyton with two choices during this conversation. He tells her that she can think of herself as an intruder in these people's lives. Or, she can remind herself that she's giving these grieving people the opportunity to talk to someone who will listen.

- How do you feel about King's advice? Is it sound? What might you have told her?
- Peyton is lucky to have a friend such as King. He's reliable, supportive, and wise, and he encourages Peyton during her moments of frustration. Think back through the movie and discuss the ways that King influences Peyton's perspective.

Peyton struggles with perspective quite a bit. Not only does she have the conversation in the stairwell with King, but she also dwells on the morbidity of the plane crash quite often. In fact, she does this so much so that King often comments on her macabre outlook.



star appointed by God for us to follow; he's meant to show us the way.

- Lavery senses that the story is more than just a column for Peyton. He says, "Well, maybe that note is meant to be your star, to guide you to whatever it is you're looking for." What do you make of this suggestion? Do you agree? Why or why not?

As Peyton is later narrating her column, she says, "The note and the plane crash served as a reminder to [Timothy Lavery] and to all of us that life is fragile and we must live each day as though it might be our last."

Take some time in your discussion to address purpose. Think about the difference between self-guided and Christ-guided purpose. How can we attain the latter?

Scene TO REVIEW



ALL IS FORGIVEN. (01:08:08 – 01:14:45)

Peyton is certainly no stranger to the struggle to find purpose and meaning. As a young married (and pregnant) woman, she received the tragic news that her husband had been killed in a horrible accident. Soon after, Peyton tried to take her own life. However, her attempt was not successful; instead, she survived to deliver the baby she was carrying, and decided to give the baby to an adoption service; only to have the note bring her child back to her.

- Having arrived at this moment in the movie (discovering that Christine is Peyton's daughter), think back and consider any previous scenes from the film that indicated that Christine would be a key character. Was it obvious?
- There are many revelations in this exchange between Peyton and Christine. What do you think of the information that's been exposed at this point?
- Peyton chooses not to reveal her identity to Christine. What would you have done?
- As Christine sees the note, what might she be feeling?

- As Peyton realizes Christine is her daughter, what might she be feeling? How does this make you feel?

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV) says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" And, **JEREMIAH 1:5 (NIV)** says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

- Even though these verses (technically speaking) are specific to the prophet Jeremiah, how can we take comfort in knowing that God has a specific plan for our lives, too?
- How might we trust in these verses (**JEREMIAH 29:11; 1:5**) to understand that God has a purpose for each of us?
- What is God's plan for Peyton's life? What is her purpose? Was there purpose in the suffering she endured? Why or why not?
- What do you think or believe about the concept that God ordains man's steps?

Scene TO REVIEW



A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE (01:16:43 – 01:21:05)

- In this scene, Peyton asks King if he believes in miracles. Do you believe in them? What's the difference between a miracle and mere coincidence?
- Here, in one of the most expressive and important scenes in the movie, Peyton says that she set out to give someone a Christmas miracle, but that she received her own. What does this moment mean for her?

Think about Peyton's circumstances for a moment. For some reason, she was fated to see her husband pass and to have to concede her baby. She tells King that she was in a deep depression and terrible despair at the time; otherwise she never would have forfeited her child. In the meantime, Christine was obviously placed with a loving family (as evidenced by the close relationship

she had with her dad). So, while Peyton was not in a condition (physically, emotionally, or psychologically) to care for Christine, God provided care. And, now that Peyton's heart is ready, God has reintroduced Christine (notice that it's just when Christine needs it).

ROMANS 8:28 (NIV) says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

- Even though it may not always seem like it, God truly works things together for our good. How can we trust that the trials of life are working together for our good?
- Which people in the Bible learn about God's perfect timing? How?

Theme Two: FORGIVENESS: ACCEPTING GOD'S PEACE

GUIDING SCRIPTURE:

ROMANS 8:1 (NIV): "THEREFORE, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS."

Scene TO REVIEW



A VISIT WITH TAYLOR (00:48:00 – 00:53:30)

- In this scene, what do you think of Taylor's coarse exterior and unwelcoming personality? Does she have good reason to begrudge Peyton's visit? Why or why not?
- What does Peyton say that abruptly changes Taylor's attitude? Why does Peyton's honesty about her own past make any difference?
- As Taylor tells her own story, she finally admits that the tension between her family and herself was her own fault. Why, then, would she not seek out her

- How does **ROMANS 8:28** relate to the concept of purpose? How does it relate to the concept of God's plan for our lives?

In life, there are times when we think we can see the outcome so clearly. For example, Peyton says that she feels fate has entrusted her with the letter. Because of that trust, she wants to do everything she can to help the note find its true owner. At that point in the movie, Peyton believes she knows her end goal. However, Peyton's humanity limits her view.

As you conclude this theme discussion, what other verses pertaining to purpose come to mind?

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW:

A VISIT WITH TAYLOR
(00:48:00 – 00:53:30)

SECOND CHANCES
(00:59:13 – 01:01:37)

Overview

ONE OF THE MOVIE'S BIGGEST THEMES IS FORGIVENESS. EVEN THOUGH THE VIEWER DOES NOT SEE THE NOTE'S CONTENT UNTIL THE END OF THE FILM, THE MESSAGE'S IMPACT IS OBVIOUS EACH TIME ANOTHER PERSON READS IT. FOR SOME, THE MESSAGE BRINGS JOY AND IMMEDIATE HEALING. FOR ONE WOMAN, THOUGH, THE MESSAGE IS ABRASIVE. ONLY AFTER SOME THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION DOES A GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE BECOME APPARENT.

family and ask for their forgiveness? What things might have prevented her from taking this step?

It seems that Taylor is (and has been) living in a state of self-condemnation for a long time. She's forfeited the security that a loving family and nurturing relationships can offer. **1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)** says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

- Imagine that you are Peyton, standing in that recording studio and listening to a woman tell you about her deepest (and darkest) secrets. What ad-

vice might you offer? Would your advice be similar or different to Peyton's scripted response?

- In thinking about Taylor's situation, consider the very sad condition in which she's trapped herself. Why are people so hard on themselves? What prevents humans from fully embracing the forgiveness, grace, and love that Jesus has to offer?

Although Peyton makes progress with Taylor after admitting to issues with her own father, these women share more than parental struggles; they are both extremely unforgiving of their past "mistakes." Taylor can't forgive herself for her addictions. Peyton can't forgive herself for her past actions.

Scene TO REVIEW



SECOND CHANCES

(00:59:13 – 01:01:37)

- At one point in the scene, Peyton tells King that the note seems to give people second chances; it gives people the chance to "fix their broken lives." Is it possible that a simple note could really offer such a liberating experience? At this point in the movie, the viewer is unaware of the note's content — does Peyton's declaration shed some light on the potential message written on the small slip of paper?
- Peyton says, "I don't feel like I deserve a second chance," to which King replies, "Everyone deserves a second chance." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

The Bible contains several verses about forgiveness. After all, Jesus is the greatest symbol of forgiveness and his message of mercy and redemption is unparalleled. Consider the following verses, not only in reference to *The Note*, but also as a reminder of Jesus' love:

- **PSALM 103:2-3 (NLT):** "LET ALL THAT I AM PRAISE THE LORD; MAY I NEVER FORGET THE GOOD THINGS HE DOES FOR ME. HE FORGIVES ALL MY SINS AND HEALS ALL MY DISEASES."
- **MARK 2:7 (NIV):** "WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE?"

- **JOHN 3:16 (NIV):** "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."
- **ROMANS 10:9-11 (NIV):** "THAT IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH, 'JESUS IS LORD,' AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED. FOR IT IS WITH YOUR HEART THAT YOU BELIEVE AND ARE JUSTIFIED, AND IT IS WITH YOUR MOUTH THAT YOU CONFESS AND ARE SAVED. AS THE SCRIPTURE SAYS, 'ANYONE WHO TRUSTS IN HIM WILL NEVER BE PUT TO SHAME.'"
- **EPHESIANS 2:4-9 (NIV):** "BUT BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US, GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY, MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN TRANSGRESSIONS — IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED. AND GOD RAISED US UP WITH CHRIST AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS IN CHRIST JESUS, IN ORDER THAT IN THE COMING AGES HE MIGHT SHOW THE INCOMPARABLE RICHES OF HIS GRACE, EXPRESSED IN HIS KINDNESS TO US IN CHRIST JESUS. FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH FAITH — AND THIS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD — NOT BY WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST."

In addition to forgiveness, Jesus also represents love. There is a freedom that we can embrace when we choose to embrace the new life that Jesus offers. Take a moment to read these verses:

- **2 CORINTHIANS 3:17 (NIV):** "NOW THE LORD IS THE SPIRIT, AND WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS FREEDOM."
- **1 JOHN 4:18 (NIV):** "THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. BUT PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR, BECAUSE FEAR HAS TO DO WITH PUNISHMENT. THE ONE WHO FEARS IS NOT MADE PERFECT IN LOVE."

At the beginning of the movie, Peyton's boss had said, "The Heart Healer" has no heart; you're not touching your readers." Yet, later in the movie, Peyton narrates, "The note itself is not the most important thing. The message is. It contains the power of life and love." She continues, "The note, after all, was a message of forgiveness and, to this broken heart, it has not lost its power to restore."

- Take a moment to trace Peyton's journey in the movie. How does her heart change? Which scenes demonstrate different aspects of her metamorphosis?
- In your own words, explain what it means that a message of forgiveness contains the power of life and love, and that it also has the power to restore.

As you conclude this theme discussion, what other verses pertaining to forgiveness, grace, mercy, and second chances come to mind?

Theme One: PURPOSE:

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLAN

GUIDING SCRIPTURE:

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV): "FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE."

Scene TO REVIEW



"WHOSOEVER WILL, MAY COME."

(00:32:30 – 00:38:19)

- At the beginning of the scene, when Peyton exits the taxi, she looks up to see a sign over the church's entrance. The sign reads, "Whosoever will, may come." What does this mean? What relevance might it have for someone like Peyton?
- How would you describe Reverend Lavery's general attitude and outlook? Is he a pessimist, an optimist? How so?

Through the course of the discussion, Peyton and Reverend Lavery delve into a pointed conversation about choices and purpose. Lavery tells Peyton that he's been offered a position at a much larger church, but he's struggling with the decision to leave Holy Fortress. Even though it's a small church, Lavery's spent much of his life in it — he married there, baptized children there, and took over the pulpit when his father stepped down.

- Can you relate to Reverend Lavery's indecision? Think of moments in your life when you needed to make a tough decision. What kinds of opportunity costs (the value of an opportunity that is lost or sacrificed) were at stake for you?
- What opportunity costs are at stake for Lavery? What would he be giving up to pursue "bigger and better" things? In your opinion, are those sacrifices worth it?

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW:

"WHOSOEVER WILL, MAY COME."
(00:32:30 – 00:38:19)

ALL IS FORGIVEN.
(01:08:08 – 01:14:45)

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE
(01:16:43 – 01:21:05)

Overview

PEYTON'S FIRST POTENTIAL "T" IS REVEREND TIMOTHY LAVERY OF HOLY FORTRESS BAPTIST CHURCH IN ST. LOUIS. AS PEYTON MEETS WITH THIS MAN OF GOD, SHE FINDS HERSELF IN A VALUABLE AND SOUL-SEARCHING DISCUSSION ABOUT PURPOSE.

Consider the following verses — think about their relevance to the idea of purpose.

- **GENESIS 1:26-27 (NIV):** "THEN GOD SAID, 'LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, IN OUR LIKENESS, AND LET THEM RULE OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA AND THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, OVER THE LIVESTOCK, OVER ALL THE EARTH, AND OVER ALL THE CREATURES THAT MOVE ALONG THE GROUND.' SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM."
- **PSALM 32:8-10 (NIV):** "I WILL INSTRUCT YOU AND TEACH YOU IN THE WAY YOU SHOULD GO; I WILL COUNSEL YOU AND WATCH OVER YOU. DO NOT BE LIKE THE HORSE OR THE MULE, WHICH HAVE NO UNDERSTANDING BUT MUST BE CONTROLLED BY BIT AND BRIDLE OR THEY WILL NOT COME TO YOU. MANY ARE THE WOES OF THE WICKED, BUT THE LORD'S UNFAILING LOVE SURROUNDS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN HIM."
- **PSALM 118:24 (NIV):** "THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT."
- **PHILIPPIANS 4:13 (NIV):** "I CAN DO EVERYTHING THROUGH HIM WHO GIVES ME STRENGTH."

When they first meet, Lavery tells Peyton about the Christmas ornaments (mostly star-shaped) on the church tree. The children make them, and the members of the congregation buy them to support those less fortunate in the community. With the ornaments in mind, Peyton later reminds Lavery that God once used a star to show people the way.

She's referring to a couple of things. First, God literally used a star to guide the Magi to the newborn Christ (**MATTHEW 2:2 [NIV]:** "'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'"). Second, Jesus is the