

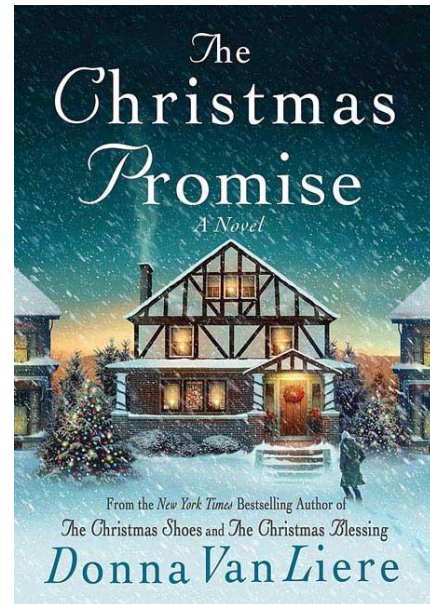
READING GROUP GUIDE

The Christmas Promise

By Donna VanLiere

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Christmas Promise* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Christmas Promise*.

About the Book

Each Christmas we are given a promise from heaven. And each year on earth we make promises to each other. This is a story about how a promise from one person to another shows us the true meaning of faith, remembrance, and love.

Seven years ago Gloria endured a family tragedy that almost shook her faith entirely. Each Christmas she places a card in an envelope on her tree, restating a promise she made to her husband before he died. Now, having moved from her small town and all the painful memories it held, she is building a life by caring for people in need. Whether it's a young mother who can't pay her electric bill or a family who needs some extra food, Gloria always finds a way.

Miriam is a thorn in Gloria's side. Miriam is a constantly critical, disapproving neighbor who looks with suspicion at all the good things Gloria does. When a twist of fate makes them roommates instead of neighbors, it's the ultimate test of patience and faith.

Chaz has a good job as head of security at Wilson's Department Store, but each night he returns home to an empty apartment. He longs for a wife and family of his own but realizes that the life choices he's made have alienated him. He befriends a young boy whose mother has fallen on hard times, giving him a chance to have a life he thought impossible.



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In *The Christmas Promise*, the lives of these characters collide and we learn that even as we move ahead, the past is never far behind. And when we are forgiven much, we love much. In this warmly humorous and deeply poignant story, we are reminded that the Christmas Promise is the promise of second chances.

About the Author

Donna VanLiere is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author. Her much-loved Christmas Hope series includes *The Christmas Shoes* and *The Christmas Blessing*, both of which were adapted into movies for CBS Television; *The Christmas Secret*; *The Christmas Journey*; and *The Christmas Hope*, which was adapted into a film by Lifetime. She is also the author of *The Angels of Morgan Hill* and *Finding Grace*. VanLiere is the recipient of a Retailer's Choice Award for Fiction, a Dove Award, a Silver Angel Award, an Audie Award for best inspirational fiction, and a nominee for a Gold Medallion Book of the Year. She is a gifted speaker who speaks regularly at conferences. She lives in Franklin, Tennessee, with her husband and their children.

Discussion Questions

- 1.) If Chaz were sitting this group, what would you ask him? Considering all that you now know about Gloria's life, what would you ask her?
- 2.) In what ways are the lives of Chaz and Miriam similar? Have you personally known anyone who is "difficult to reach" on a personal level? If you managed to get close to them, how did you do it?
- 3.) In your opinion, what is the source of tension between Gloria and Miriam? In what ways are the two women similar? Different? Do you like, dislike, pity or have other feelings for Miriam?
- 4.) Who was your favorite character in the novel and why?
- 5.) How do Chaz, Gloria, and Miriam change over the course of the novel? Which character can you most closely identify and why?
- 6.) How have the choices Chaz and Gloria made defined their lives?
- 7.) As you read *The Christmas Promise*, did you begin to feel as if you knew the people involved? If so, would you rather have Miriam or Gloria as a neighbor and why?
- 8.) How would you describe this book? Is it a love story or of heartbreak? Is it the story of a mother's devotion? A novel of how choices define us? Or is it something bigger and deeper?
- 9.) Why do you think Marshall Wilson gave Matt a second chance? If you were his employee would you have been inclined to fire him or keep him?



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- 10.) Why do you think Matt and Erin would have been drawn to each other?
- 11.) One of the underlying themes of the book is that of destiny. What other themes did you discover in your reading?
- 12.) What do you think Gloria's relationship is like with her son today? What kind of father do you think Matt will be? What kind of mother do you think Carla is today? Is Miriam still self-absorbed or do you think she readily befriends others now?
- 13.) What do you think the author is referring to by the promise of Christmas?

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