

Requiem in Stones

A novel of grief and grace.

By Richard Wile

Questions For Discussion

Chapter One:

What draws Tom to Christine?

How would you answer Christine's question?

Chapter Two:

How does the way Tom perceives God change after he meets Christine?

Are there indications, even before Annie's diagnosis and death, that Tom's and Christine's marriage is not as unshakable as he thinks it is?

Chapter Three:

What reasons (besides those he gives his mother) can you think of for Tom's not attending his own daughter's funeral or putting Annie's obituary in the newspaper?

Chapter Four:

How does Annie's death initially change Tom's relationship with Christine?

Nathan? God? Himself?

Chapter Five:

What finally sends Tom to make an appointment to talk to Father Curtis Matthews?

For what reasons do you think Tom finds Father Curtis's advice helpful?

Chapter Six:

What is the connection between Red Bailey and Tom's grief?

Chapter Seven:

How do the Family Center for Grief and Loss and Sam and Diane's wedding help assuage Tom's grief?

What indications are there that this respite is temporary?

Chapter Eight:

When Tom's grief returns, how has it changed from the grief of the previous spring?

Chapter Nine:

How do Chapters Eight and Nine show the destructive nature of grief?

Tom actively cultivates Albert Camus's "disdain" for an "absurd world." Why then do you think he reacts so emotionally when Carol talks about God?

Chapter Ten:

How did Tom's childhood, especially his mother and father, contribute to the guilt he carries for Annie's death?

Chapter Eleven:

How does Tom's second trip to the EMMC Chapel mark a turning point in this journey through grief?

Have you ever been angry with God? How did you express this anger?

Chapter Twelve:

How does Tom and Christine's trip to England change their relationship?

How does it change Tom's "story"?

Chapter Thirteen:

How does the Christian meditation called Centering Prayer help Tom deal with his grief?

Chapter Fourteen:

In what ways does Tom's grief start to subside? Why?

Chapter Fifteen:

How do Tom's feelings towards his father change during his meditation?

Why does he decide to get a memorial stone for Annie?

Chapter Sixteen:

Grief counselors say that sometimes the hardest grief to let go of is grief itself.

How do you see that happening in this chapter?

Chapter Seventeen:

Has Nathan's new family changed his relationship with Tom? If so, how? If not, why not?

Chapter Eighteen:

Why does Tom find lay pastoral visiting so difficult?

Chapter Nineteen:

When Rachel Silas says that Tom had been a big help to her, Tom wonders, *how?*

How do you think he gives her help?

Chapter Twenty:

How has Tom and Christine's relationship changed since they first met?

What have they lost?

What have they gained?

General Questions:

1. How are the following people important to Tom on his journey through grief:

Curtis Matthews Red Bailey

Jonathan Bennett Ike Jacobs

Brother Jeremiah Paul Tibbets

2. How do the following Biblical stories help Tom:

The Israelites wandering in the desert

The Healing of Lazarus

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

The transfiguration of Jesus and the healing of the demoniac

Jacob wrestling with the angel

3. How does the Hymn “Jesus Christ/Christ the Lord is Risen Today” change meaning for Tom during the course of the novel?

4. *Requiem in Stones* is “a Novel of Grief and Grace.” Finding grief in the book is easy; what examples of grace can you find in the novel?

5. Tom’s inner journey through grief and grace is often revealed through his dreams. Have dreams been important to you? In what ways?

6. Discuss Tom’s various “false selves.”

What are some of yours?