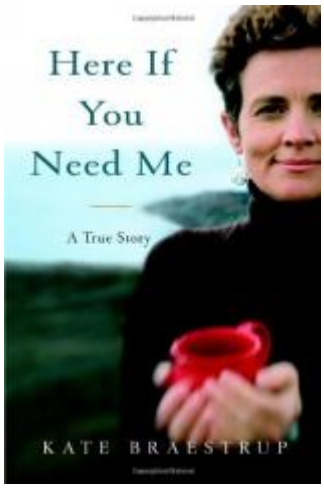
Here If You Need Me: A True Story

by Kate Braestrup



About the Book

Ten years ago, Kate Braestrup and her husband Drew were enjoying the life they shared together. They had four young children, and Drew, a Maine state trooper, would soon begin training to become a minister as well. Then early one morning Drew left for work and everything changed. On the very roads that he protected every day, an oncoming driver lost control, and Kate lost her husband.

Stunned and grieving, Kate decided to continue her husband's dream and became a minister herself. And in that capacity she found a most unusual mission: serving as the minister on search and rescue missions in the Maine woods, giving comfort to people whose loved ones are missing, and to the wardens who sometimes have to deal with awful outcomes. Whether she is with the parents of a 6-year-old girl who had wandered into the woods, with wardens as they search for a snowmobile rider trapped under the ice, or assisting a man whose sister left an infant seat and a suicide note in her car by the side of the road, Braestrup provides solace, understanding, and spiritual guidance when it's needed most.

Here If You Need Me is the story of Kate Braestrup's remarkable journey from grief to faith to happiness. It is dramatic, funny, deeply moving, and simply unforgettable, an uplifting account about finding God through helping others, and the tale of the small miracles that occur every day when life and love are restored.

Discussion Guide

1. Kate Braestrup admits that before serving as chaplain to the Maine Warden Service, she had little idea of what the position entailed, joking that people ask her "What does a warden service chaplain do? Bless the moose?" (p. 62) Did you know the role that game wardens play prior to reading **Here If You Need Me**? Were you in a situation that required the Warden Service, would you want the assistance of a chaplain?

2. In the Author's Note, Kate writes that her favorite definition of the Greek word Logos is "story." Of the many stories Kate tells in **Here If You Need Me** from her role as Warden Service chaplain, which was your favorite?

3. When Kate was a child, she believed she experienced a vision of Jesus Christ from her family's car, only to find a few days later it was a fiberglass statue placed in a memorial garden. Have you ever encountered an unexplainable situation? Like Kate, did you eventually find the explanation?

4. Early on Kate writes "I love my uniform. Quite apart from whatever unwholesome sartorial fetish this may reflect, my uniform is so *useful*." (p. 64) Do you share a similar feeling about an aspect of your profession? If so, what is the cause of the attachment?

5. Although Drew was employed as a Maine State Trooper, Kate writes he had planned to begin a second

"career" as a minister. Have you ever considered changing professions? If so, what new occupation would you choose?

6. Upon her decision to become an ordained minister, Kate's brother writes to her expressing his skepticism about religion. How are these email interchanges important to Kate in how she regards her own faith?

7. At one point Kate writes "that's where I still feel most religious; when I'm out in the woods." (p. 186) Discuss the role nature plays in her memoir, both as it impacts her profession and her faith.

8. Kate offers several plausible definitions of the word "miracle", then asserts that "a miracle is not defined by an event. A miracle is defined by gratitude." (p. 181) Do you agree with this interpretation? Did reading **Here If You Need Me** alter the way in which you view miracles in any way?

9. Near the memoir's end, Kate concludes "I can't make those two realities—what I've lost and what I've found—fit together in some tidy pattern of divine causality. I just have to hold them on the one hand and on the other, just like that." Do you agree with Kate's resolution?

10. At one point Kate offers proof that God has a sense of humor, and despite the tragic events described in the memoir, there are many humorous moments as well. How does humor serve Kate and the wardens she works with in their professional capacities? What was your favorite funny moment?

Author Bio

Braestrup's novel **Onion** was published by Viking in 1990, and she has since published a series of magazine articles in *Mademoiselle, Ms., City Paper, Hope* and *Law and Order*. She lives in Maine.

Critical Praise

"'Insightful' and 'extraordinarily well-written' "

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