The Seventeen Second Miracle

by Jason F. Wright

About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE WEDNESDAY LETTERS and THE CROSS GARDENER, a story of small kindnesses-and life-changing miracles.

Seventeen seconds can change a life forever. This is what Rex Connor learned on a gorgeous summer afternoon in 1970 when, as a lifeguard, he diverted his gaze for 17 seconds and tragedy occurred. Forty years later the waves of that day still ripple through the lives of countless people, including his son, Cole.

Cole Connor has become a patient teacher, and now he has invited three struggling teenagers to visit him on his front porch to learn about Rex Connor --- and the Seventeen Second Miracle. Together they will learn how Rex Connor could have allowed 17 seconds to destroy him, but instead he chose to live every day believing the smallest of acts could change the world for good. And the students, each with their own secrets and private pains, will begin to understand that even tragedy brings lessons. Even pain brings comfort. Even death brings miracles. A seventeen second miracle can change a life-if you let it.

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Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think most people blame Rex for Flick's drowning? Do you think that is a fair assessment? Why or why not?

2. Losing a child is an emotional hardship. Do you think Flick's mother was so unforgiving of Rex because she thought he could have prevented Flick's death, or is there something more to her ire?

3. Forgiveness can be a slow process. Discuss why Sparks and Rex stay together even after everything that's happened in their relationship, and to her family. Did you ever doubt they would be able to make their relationship work?

4. Why do you think Sparks was so quick to forgive Rex and help him heal?

5. Discuss the significance of Cole and Jade's porch and how it becomes a point of contention when Jade considers it "Cole's porch," but also how it becomes a haven for them and others.

6. Jade and Cole cannot have children and Jade had become "defeated with God." At one point, Jade says "I won't feel sorry for myself and blame God. I won't. I'll just live a different life than the one I dreamed of" (p 114 manuscript). Discuss how this tests their faith and marriage.

7. Rex "knew no strangers" (p 128 manuscript). How does this work in context with his life's work in performing, witnessing, and collecting seventeen-second miracle?

8. Jade gives Cole braids that symbolize the past, present, and future and reminds him to remember what the Discussions are really about. Why do you think it took so long for Jade to have this conversation with him? How do you think it changed how Cole led the Discussions from then on?

9. Would you consider the incident with Travis on the Mall a "failed miracle?" Why or why not? Are there other examples throughout the novel where the characters are confronted with a "failed miracle," only to have their faith see them through?

10. At the end of chapter 31, Cole says, "I retrieved Travis's watch. It worked, but it was badly beaten" (pg 152 manuscript). How is this symbolic of what just happened in the story? Were Travis's actions toward Cole justified after the incident?

11. Why do you think Jade is willing to give up Paper Gems if they can't arrest the arsonist? How does this exemplify the type of person she is?

12. As an apology to Jade, Cole buys three dozen roses and tucks a card into each vase, telling her to open them in any order. Discuss the symbolism and significance of the order in which she opens them: "You. I. Love."

13. Cole and Jade fight on their honeymoon because Cole is performing a miracle after Jade asks him not to get involved. Is it ever possible for a miracle to be detrimental?

14. At one point, Cole contemplates that his father "raised me in 17 second miracles." Do you think there is any truth to this statement?

15. Do you think that Cole was better prepared for the Discussions by not following in his father's footsteps? Why or why not?

16. Discuss the difference between "being good" and "goody-goody" (pg 226 manuscript) in the context of the story and Rex's life.

17. Have you ever performed or experienced a 17 second miracle?

Author Bio

Jason F. Wright is the *New York Times* bestselling author and political commentator whose editorials have appeared in newspapers nationwide. He has been seen on CNN, FoxNews, C-SPAN and local television affiliates around the country. Wright and his wife, Kodi, live with their four children in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

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