

## To Love Anew: Sydney Cove Series #1

by Bonnie Leon

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### About the Book

#### **A heart-gripping journey toward forgiveness and love**

Hannah Talbot has no one. Forced to leave the only home she's ever known, she works for a cruel employer who brutally takes the one thing she has left --- her dignity. When she is banished to an Australian prison, she is certain God has turned his back on her. How could he --- or anyone else --- ever love her again?

John Bradshaw is a successful businessman, but his untamed spirit wants more. Little does he know what he will have to endure to find the adventure he seeks. Betrayed by those closest to him, he loses everything, even his freedom. There is no returning now. His life is not his own.

Now aboard a ghastly prison ship, John and Hannah are about to cross paths. What will happen when two hearts filled with pain discover how to love anew? This first book in the *Sydney Cove* series will capture your heart.

### Discussion Guide

- 1. To Love Anew's** first scene begins with Hannah visiting her mother's grave. Have you or anyone close to you experienced this kind of heartbreak? What helped you through the process? Is death really a "normal" part of living? God addresses this in the book of Genesis. What do you think he says about life and death?
2. In chapter one Hannah quotes her mother, saying, "Mum often said, 'Life isn't supposed to be fair, but it can be good.'" Do you agree with that statement? If so, how do we find joy and contentment in the midst of a harsh world?
3. We meet John in chapter two. He has a desire for adventure, yet believes stability is important and sets his dreams aside. What do you think about that? Should we follow our dreams or keep our feet solidly planted? How do we know if a dream is God-given or our own, sometimes foolish, desire?
4. In chapter four Hannah says that if she could have the days back she'd cherish every one. It's human nature to plan for tomorrow, next week, or next year and to forget to cherish today, missing so many special moments. Do you find yourself wishing away today for a distant tomorrow? Do you have any ideas about how we can capture the uniqueness and gift of each day?
5. Both Hannah and John have been betrayed in the worst way, and then they endure unspeakable hardships. Why do you think God allows His people to suffer? Do you think tribulation is part of His plan or

simply part of living in this world?

- 6.** Both John and Hannah struggle with bitterness over the wrongs done to them. We may feel they have a right to be angry, but God's Word says we're to forgive our enemies. Why do you think He asks that of us? Do you think we should forgive every kind of sin?
- 7.** Hannah believes God no longer loves her because she's committed an unforgivable sin. Do you think there is such a thing? Are all sins covered by God's grace?
- 8.** Have you ever done something you thought was too terrible for God to forgive? Sometimes forgiving ourselves is the most difficult act of forgiveness of all. Why do you think that is?
- 9.** How did you feel when Hannah was unjustly accused of stealing from Mr. Walker and then made to pay the consequences for something she didn't do? Have you or someone you know ever been unjustly accused? What was your response?
- 10.** In the midst of a living nightmare, God's presence was felt by many of the prisoners. They trusted and walked uprightly when most would have surrendered. Where does spiritual strength come from, and why are we sometimes able to obtain it and other times can't lay hold of it? In this story there are moments of light --- friendship, love, peace, even dancing dolphins, and God's presence. Do you believe these things can be seen only by those who are looking for and expecting them or are they offered to everyone?
- 11.** Do you think that living through something like John and Hannah did creates a more enduring faith or is more likely to smother a person's faith?
- 12.** Lydia is a glass-half-full type. Which are you?
- 13.** When Hannah realizes she's pregnant she asks God to take the baby. Can you relate to her fear and dread or were you disappointed in Hannah? Do you believe her request had anything to do with the death of the child?
- 14.** Consoling herself about rejecting her baby, Hannah tries to convince herself it was the best thing for the child. It's human nature to make excuses for wrong deeds and to hide our sins from others. Why do we try to hide from others? From God?
- 15.** Have you ever experienced God in the midst of a ghastly situation or experienced a friendship that helped sustain you through a difficult time? Share with the group.
- 16.** In chapter ten Hannah says she's not afraid of dying; she's afraid of living. What do you think she meant? Have you ever felt that way? Can you share your thoughts or a personal experience?
- 17.** In chapter eleven the ship encounters a frightening storm and some passengers question if God is with them. We've all been in situations that are frightening and instead of believing, we were afraid. If we believe, why do we become fearful?
- 18.** We discover later in the book that even while John was on the prison ship he was certain he loved Hannah. Circumstances were anything but normal and he spent very little time with her. Do you believe he really loved her then? Or was it something else?
- 19.** Corliss Browning is an unusual woman. She always believes, is always faithful, unafraid, sees the good in life and even sees herself as blessed even though she's living in dreadful circumstances. Have you ever known someone like that? What kind of impact did they have on your life?
- 20.** Rosalyn used her body to get the things she needed and wanted. She acts as if her behavior doesn't disturb her. Do you think that's true? Earlier in the book Hannah is tempted to sell her body for food. Under similar circumstances do you think you would have been tempted to do so? Is it ever all right? How would you feel?
- 21.** When John is hired by Mr. Atherton it seems like good luck, but when Hannah is engaged as a housemaid it feels more like providence. What do you think? Does God orchestrate our lives and to what extent? Have you ever experienced something that you absolutely knew God put together? How did it make you feel?
- 22.** When Hannah confesses her hidden sin to Catharine Atherton, she's shocked that Catharine doesn't hate her but is still convinced John will. Why don't we put our burdens before God and others more often? Is the fault our own or could it be that we've experienced Christians who gossip or judge harshly that keeps us from seeking support?

**23.** When she begins to grasp God's love, Hannah believes her salvation is still dependent on her own good works and she promises God that she'll do all the right things --- go to church, pray, think kindly toward others. Is that what God wants? Or does our salvation depend upon something else?

**24.** Although Hannah is preparing to marry John, she hasn't told him about her hidden sin. She reasons it won't make a difference. Do you agree? Why or why not? What could the ramifications be?

**25.** Who is your favorite character and why? And who did you like the least and why? Did you have a favorite scene? Was there a quote from the book that has stayed with you?

#### Author Bio

Bonnie Leon is the bestselling author of many historical romance novels, including TOUCHING THE CLOUDS and WINGS OF PROMISE. She stays busy teaching women's Bible studies and speaking at writing seminars and conventions. She and her husband, Greg, live in Oregon.

#### Critical Praise

"Bonnie's fans will love cheering for her characters. No protagonists more deserve a happy ending."

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