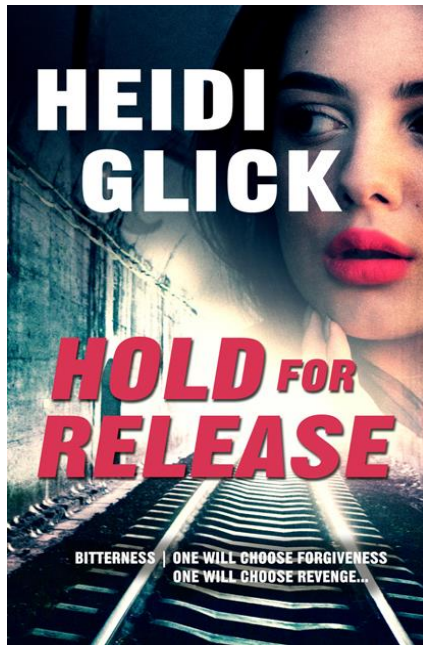


## Discussion Questions

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### **HOLD FOR RELEASE**

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### **About the Book**

Carlotta Hartman's life is falling apart.

Although Carlotta desperately wants a child, her journalist husband just wishes their marriage would go back to the way things used to be before infertility treatments took over their schedule. While volunteering at an animal shelter to fill the void, Carlotta stumbles upon dead animals and a human body. Days later, Jake confesses to an affair with a co-worker. Hurt and confused, Carlotta moves in with her sister.

And then things go from bad to perilous.

As Jake receives counsel from a pastor, he pledges to woo Carlotta again and piece together their shattered marriage. But as Carlotta rushes out of Jake's arms, she runs straight into danger. Like the articles Jake writes and holds for release, a psychopath, bent on revenge, vows to hang onto Carlotta until the time is right.

In the end, a secret from the past threatens to kill all hopes of a happy future.

TITLE: Hold for Release

Discussion:

Question 1: (1) How can bitterness defile someone? (Hebrews 12:15, Matthew 6:14-15)

Answer 1: God wants us to forgive others. If we hold on to grudges and an unforgiving attitude, it can destroy us. When we don't forgive, we become angry and unhappy. Bitterness can eat someone up inside. When we forgive, we have more peace.

Question 2: (2) When we have a hard time forgiving someone else, what can help us? (Romans 5:8)

Answer 2: We can remember that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Also, we can pray and ask God to help us forgive the other person. Finally, we can talk to a Christian counselor or a pastor.

Question 3: (3) Carlotta mentions she and her sister went to church but didn't really know God. How can someone attend church but still miss out on having a close relationship with God? (Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 7:23, James 1:22)

Answer 3: Our motives are important. Are we attending church to know God more and learn more about Him, or mainly to be part of a social club? Our hearts will reveal our motives, so we can ask God to help us examine our hearts. We can know a lot about God (facts) and not take that knowledge to heart. We are to not just to read God's Word, but to do what it says.

Question 4: (4) At one point, Carlotta is concerned that God doesn't think she is nurturing enough to be a mother. Why do bad things happen to good people? Is God punishing us? (Matthew 5:45, 2 Timothy 3:12, John 9:2-3, Job 42:7, Romans 8:28, Genesis 50:20)

Answer 4: The Bible tells us that God sends rain on the just and unjust. But also, all who live godly in Christ will suffer. Christ himself suffered. God can use the bad things in our life for the purpose of sanctifying us and for His glory. Diamonds are created through heat and pressure. God can use suffering to help us conform to the image of Christ. God allowed suffering in Job's life, and God even rebuked Job's friends, who wrongly suggested he'd caused the suffering by sinning. While sin has consequences, not all suffering results from sin.

Question 5: (5) Jake says that Granny lived her life according to the Bible. Also, he mentions that Detective Kelsey Krouse genuinely cares for people. He saw her as religious, but the real deal. If you are a follower of Christ, how can you live your life so that others want to know more about God and His Word? (James 1:22, Matthew 7:3-5)

Answer 5: The Bible says we are not to listen merely to the Bible, but we are also to do what it says. We will mess up, but we need to ask God and others for forgiveness. When we live differently, people will see the difference in us and wonder why we are that way. Rather than only point out the faults in others, we must examine our hearts and repent of our own sins.

Question 6: (6) When Pablo is framed, he still thanks God. Why? (Genesis 37-50)

Answer 6: Suffering is part of life. God will use it for His glory. He prays and thinks about the example of Joseph. In the Bible, Egypt was about to experience a famine. God used it to put Joseph in a position where he could interpret a dream for Pharaoh and later be able to advise Pharaoh to save food ahead of time. In my own life, God has used suffering to draw me closer to Him and to learn to trust Him more.

Question 7: (7) Sometimes we compare ourselves to others. We think I'm better than him, or at least I'm not as bad as she is. What does the Bible say about our righteousness compared to God's standard? (Romans 3:10, Isaiah 64:6)

Answer 7: The Bible says there is none righteous and our righteousness is as filthy rags. According to man's standards, most of us come up looking pretty good. But God is perfect, and none of us meets His standard of holiness. As a Christian, I don't think I'm perfect. I know I'm not. That's why I need a Savior—Jesus, who is perfect.

Question 8: (8) Why was it easier for Jake to turn toward God once he'd lost his job and his wife? How have hardships drawn you closer to God? (Genesis 50:20)

Answer 8: As mentioned previously, God often uses suffering and hardships to draw us closer to Him. As with the case with Joseph, what others mean for evil, God can use for good. Sometimes people do not realize their need for God until God is all they have left.

Question 9: (9) At first, Carlotta wants to be in control and thinks she can do everything on her own. Why is this a prideful attitude? (Isaiah 55:8-9, James 4:6)

Answer 9: God wants us to lean on Him. The Bible says God gives grace to the humble. When we want to control things, it's as if we think we know better than God. God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not like our thoughts.

Question 10: (10) Eventually, Carlotta finds her worth in Christ. What does that mean, and why is it so important to find it there and not someplace else? (Romans 5:8, Jeremiah 31:3, Matthew 10:31)

Answer 10: God sent Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of others. The Bible says, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So, even when we were destined for hell, God demonstrated His love by sending His only son to die for you. You are worth a lot to Him. We often base our worth on our looks, our job, our family, or our bank accounts, but all those things can change. Our looks might change. We might lose our job. Our family might die. We might go bankrupt. But, if our worth is based on Christ and what He did for us, then it won't change.

