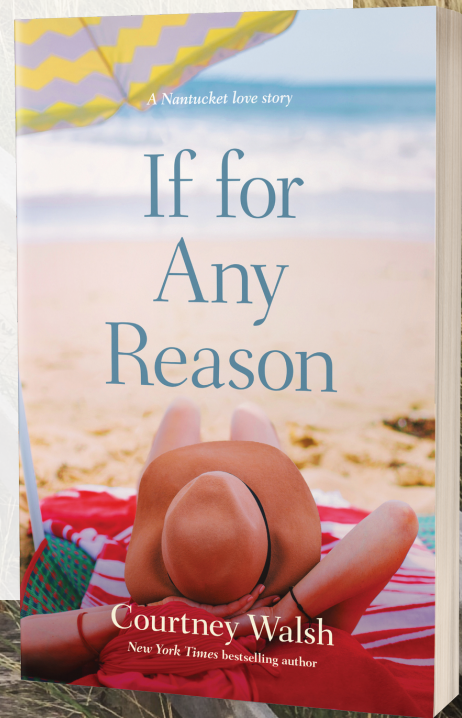


If for Any Reason

Book Club Kit



Praise for *If for Any Reason*

“Second chances and new discoveries abound in this lovely tale.”

Publishers Weekly



“Warm and inviting, *If for Any Reason* is a delightful read. I fell in love with these characters and with my time in Nantucket. Don’t miss this one.”

Robin Lee Hatcher, award-winning author of *Who I Am with You*



“Poignant! In *If for Any Reason*, Courtney Walsh expertly stitches a mother’s story to her daughter’s story using threads of mystery and romance.”

Becky Wade, award winning author of *Sweet on You*



“*If for Any Reason* took me and my romance-loving heart on a poignant journey of hurt, hope, and second chances.”

Melissa Tagg, award winning author of *Now and Then and Always*



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A Letter from Courtney Walsh

Dear Readers,

If I'm honest, this was not the book I intended to write. I have a half-written manuscript sitting on my computer . . . a completely different story in a completely different setting. This isn't the first time I've abandoned an idea halfway through because God tugs at me to write something else.

That book may get finished one day . . . but this was the book I was meant to write now, and it's become very personal to me.

The idea for this book was birthed out of my days in the scrapbooking industry. I was a designer for a company that held a very special contest every year, and one year the winner was an artist I admired not only for her beautiful designs but for the way she put so much meaning into her journaling. That year, she created a mini album of letters and titled it *If for Any Reason*. It was the first time I ever thought about leaving a legacy in this way: What words would I want to leave for my children *if for any reason* I wasn't there to say them in person?

Out of that single question, this story was born. And in the end, it was the story I was meant to write at the time I was meant to write it. I was able to infuse much of my own life by adding a theatrical element to this book, which was fun because it's the first time I've done that. But more than that, I was able to explore my relationship with my daughter in writing the letters to my heroine from her mother.

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In the midst of writing the manuscript, my daughter, Sophia, was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. As you can imagine, our life went on an indefinite pause after that. There were doctor appointments and blood draws and surgery and radiation. There was a lot of waiting and praying and the fear of the unknown. There is still, to this day, a ripple effect from that diagnosis that has stretched farther than any of us realized.

And it has been incredibly difficult. But how appropriate that my book became an outlet for the emotions I was feeling for her and our situation in that time. Obviously there were differences in what I would say to Sophia compared to what Emily's mother wanted to say to her—but the emotion behind it was the same and maybe even a little therapeutic. As you read Emily's story, maybe you'll be able to relate. I hope so.

And I hope you fall in love with the island of Nantucket the same way I did when I first visited several years ago. In 2017, my family spent a week in Cape Cod and journeyed again by ferry boat to this charming little community in the middle of the ocean. It remains unlike anywhere I've ever been. With cobblestone streets, shake shingle houses, and the biggest hydrangea bushes you've ever seen, it had my mind whirling: What would it be like to *live* here?

That question, along with my great affection for the island, led me to tackle the challenge of setting a novel in a real place, something that's always been just a little bit scary for an author who tends to live inside her imagination.

Continued on next page →



Photos courtesy of Courtney Walsh

My hope is that for those of you who've also experienced Nantucket, you'll enjoy revisiting such a unique location, and for those of you who haven't, you'll enjoy discovering it on the pages of this book.

To be honest, I'm itching to return to the island to explore the parts of it that only the locals know about. I want to see Nantucket through their eyes. What I know for sure is that it oozes the small-town charm I require for any novel setting . . . and it was very easy to find romance on the shores of Nantucket.

I am excited to share a story like this, one that I feel so personally connected to, with you, dear reader. My hope is that you can lose yourself in the romance, the mystery, the setting, and also maybe find yourself there too.

As always, I love to hear from you and invite you to reach out via e-mail, social media or through my Reader Room on Facebook. There is nothing that brings me greater joy than connecting with readers, and I'm so very thankful to have you in my life.

Thank you for choosing to read my book. It means the world to me.

Courtney



"I'm not the crafty type, so I decided letters were more the way to go. Lessons I've learned along the way and want to pass on to you. Love letters to my little girl. I'll put them all together in a book and keep it for you. And if for any reason I can't tell you these important lessons in person, you'll still have my words, so you'll never have to wonder what I would say."

*Isabelle Ackerman,
If for Any Reason*



How to Create Legacy Letters

Tips from Courtney Walsh

Words are powerful, and getting your thoughts down on paper doesn't have to be difficult. Creating a legacy of letters is something anyone can do. The final product can be as artistic or as simple as you'd like.

Step one: Choose a container/book for your letters. You can use envelopes, a jar, a notebook, a scrapbook album, a simple box—anything that will keep your letters all together. If you're not the artsy type, keep the actual letters simple and purchase a container that will make them look nice.

Step two: Write. There are no rules here, so take your time and write the letters as the thoughts and emotions come to you. You can sit down and write a bunch at one time or space them out as you get ideas. The idea here is to be honest and personal, and if you're able, write them in your own handwriting (as opposed to typing them). There's something instantly comforting about seeing the handwriting of someone you love.

Step three: Bundle them together in your chosen container. That's it! You're done.

Continued on next page 

Now if you're having trouble getting started, here are a handful of prompts to help.

A letter for my daughter/son:

- On your first day of school
- On the day you have your first kiss
- When you get your heart broken
- When you fall in love
- On the day you get married
- When you feel discouraged
- When you don't know what you believe
- When you don't feel loved
- When you're happy
- When you leave home for the first time
- When you find out you're expecting a baby for the first time
- On the day you become a parent
- When you need to know how special you are
- When you feel overwhelmed

Of course, you can also write a more detailed journal about you and your thoughts, but the idea here is to write letters for your child to open at various milestones of their life. These letters are more about them and the wisdom you have to share about their life—not simply a snapshot of life as it is. (That's a different kind of book and one that has a lot of value too!)

The main point is, write from the heart.



Photos courtesy of Courtney Walsh

Discussion Questions

1. When Emily arrives on Nantucket at the beginning of the story, she's trying to recover from a significant professional failure. Hollis is also faced with the premature end of his baseball career. Have you ever had to deal with unexpected setbacks like Emily and Hollis do? How did you respond?

2. Hollis longs to connect with his daughter, Jolie, but at first he has no idea where to start. Why is it so difficult for him to relate to her? What are some things Hollis does to demonstrate his love for Jolie, and what impact does this have on their relationship?

3. One of Emily's life philosophies is "You have to go through the hard stuff to get to the good stuff." How does this play out in her story? Can you think of any "good stuff" in your life that resulted from going through challenging times?

4. For much of her life, Emily has unquestioningly followed the advice in her mom's letters. In what ways does Isabelle's advice benefit her, and how does it hold her back? How does Emily's perspective on the letters change throughout the story?

5. Isabelle's parents insist that she conform to their standards of success and decorum, but she has different ideas for how her life should go. How can parents guide and instruct their children while still allowing them to become their own people? How should older children respond when they feel unfairly constrained by their parents?



Discussion Questions

7. Hollis credits his friend Jimmy with encouraging and supporting him after his injury and setting an example of faith in God. “When it came to his faith, Jimmy approached things his own way. God wasn’t something far-off in the sky that couldn’t be grasped or understood—to Jimmy, he was as real as Hollis and the other guys he called friends.” Can you think of a friend or family member in your own life who has played a role like this for you? What would it look like for you to be this sort of friend to someone else?

8. Jack edges his way into Emily’s life by signing on as a contractor for her home renovation. Do you think he went about this the right way, or would you have advised him to be more straightforward in connecting with her? How would you describe Jack and Emily’s relationship by the end of the story? How are they able to move toward reconciliation in spite of the mistakes of Jack’s past?

9. Emily discovers a passion for working with kids: her love for youth theatre grows over the course of the summer. What about this vocation is so rewarding to Emily? If you could transform one of your passions into a career, what would it be?

10. In Emily’s letter to her mom, she writes, “I thought [God had] abandoned me, but it seems maybe he was there all along—maybe it was time for me to deal with this pain so I could move forward.” How does Emily arrive at this place of renewed faith and determination to move forward? Looking back over your life, can you identify a painful situation where God was at work, even if you couldn’t see him there at the time?



Discussion Questions

11. Nantucket serves as a vacation destination for several generations of the Ackerman family. Does your family have a favorite spot to vacation, now or when you were a child? What are some of your favorite—or least favorite!—memories from that place?

12. At the end of the story, Hollis and Emily discuss possibilities for their future together. How do you imagine their lives unfolding beyond the final page of the book?



My Book Club Questions

Jot down some questions about the novel you want to discuss in your book club:

If for Any Reason

printable quote

Turn the page for an *If for Any Reason* printable quote. Use this pretty print to decorate in your home or office.



The heart of
Britain is
somewhere
to be found



COURTESY
WALSH

My Book Club Notes



My Book Club Notes

If for Any Reason



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Thanks for choosing

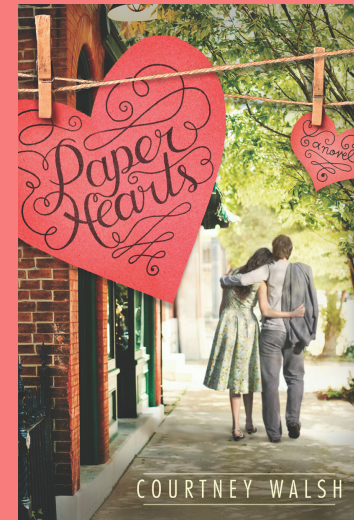
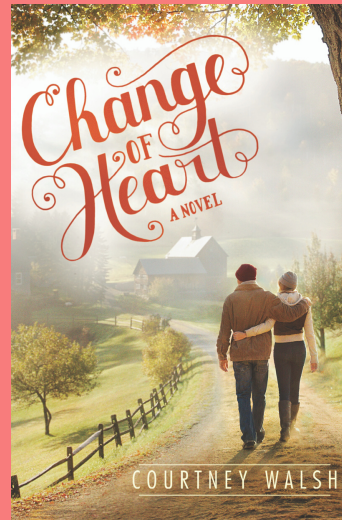
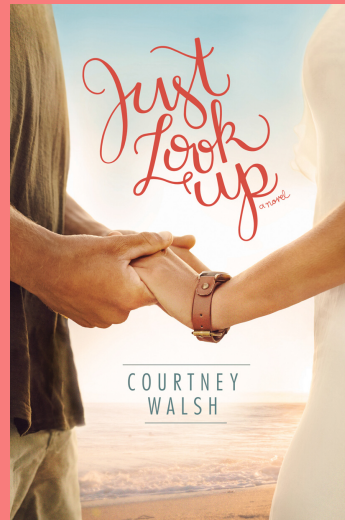
If for Any Reason

as your book club pick!

Keep an eye out for the next novel by Courtney Walsh coming spring 2021 from Tyndale House Publishers.

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