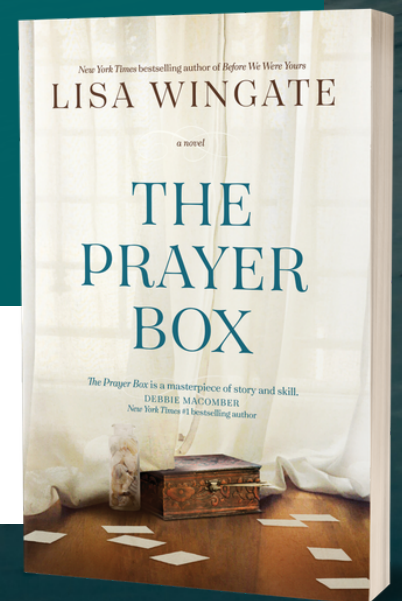


# The Prayer Box

Book Club Kit

"An enchanting, memorable pilgrimage into  
the fullness of faith and love."

***Publishers Weekly***



# Praise for *The Prayer Box*

---

"With a careful eye to detail and a beautiful, lyrical style reminiscent of those of Mary Alice Monroe and Patti Callahan Henry, Wingate vividly sets Tandi's struggles in a once beautiful Victorian mansion now falling to ruin and guarded by a cranky cat in a small town recovering from the ravages of a hurricane."

***Booklist, starred review***

"Wingate's prose and content strike a wonderful balance between thoughtful and simple, creating a seemingly effortless read that still has substance and heart."

***Foreword Reviews***

"A moving and inspiring story with interesting female characters and a colorful Southern backdrop. A good option for fans of Nicholas Sparks and Mary Alice Monroe."

***Library Journal***



# About Lisa Wingate

Lisa Wingate is a former journalist, inspirational speaker, and *New York Times* bestselling author of more than thirty novels. Her work has won or been nominated for many awards, including the Pat Conroy Southern Book Prize, the Oklahoma Book Award, the Carol Award, and the Christy Award. Her blockbuster hit *Before We Were Yours* remained on the *New York Times* Bestseller List for over one year, was *Publishers Weekly's* #3 longest-running bestseller of 2017, and was voted by readers as the 2017 Goodreads Choice Award winner for historical fiction. *Before We Were Yours* has been a book club favorite worldwide and to date has sold over two million copies.

Lisa writes her stories at home in Texas, where she is part of the Wingate clan of tall-tale tellers. Lisa believes that stories can change the world.

*Lisa Wingate*



I have lived my way into this music, note  
by note, and now I know no other.

Strange to think of that. The song of an ordinary life.  
Mine would be in these letters to you.

The Prayer Box



# Discussion Questions

- 1 Lola's written prayers create a record of her life. Have you ever written down your prayers or considered writing them down? What advantages can you see to using a prayer box?
- 2 How do the prayer boxes change Tandi's perspective on faith? Do you think the simple display of everyday belief can change people, even change a community? Have you ever seen it happen?
- 3 Tandi wants a better life for Zoey and J.T., but she struggles with figuring out how to make that happen. What did you think of her choices about how to care for them? How did you feel about her parenting at the beginning of the story? At the end?
- 4 Lola sees the kindness of friends and strangers as an extension of grace. Do you agree? Have you seen the "grace water" in your own life or in your community?
- 5 It seemed to be easier for Lola to give help than to accept it. Why might that be? Is it easier for you to serve others or to accept the gift of service?
- 6 Before Isabelle leaves for college, she and Lola have opposite goals for their future—Lola opting for a "safe" life and Isabelle seeking adventure. Isabelle notes that "fear builds walls rather than bridges." Do you think Lola, as a young woman, made her choices based on fear? Which woman's perspective is closest to your own?
- 7 Tandi finds herself so trapped by her past, by the need to replace the love she lacked growing up with something, that she consistently repeats the same mistakes with men. Yet when Ross comes into her life, she sees him as her "knight in shining armor." Why? Have you seen similar relationship patterns in your own life? What advice would you give to a woman trying to move beyond the wounds of her past and become fully whole?

8 lola enters into her life as a WAAC and even into her marriage while keeping her heritage a secret. Have you ever maintained a family secret? Or have you ever discovered one in your family? Do you think lola made the right choice when she ultimately decided to risk telling her husband the truth?

9 Tandi wonders how lola could cast aside the word *anathema* rather than taking it on as a part of herself. How do you think lola was able to do this? Is it possible to shed the labels given to us by others? How can we accept that one most important label—*beloved*?

10 Tandi and Zoey struggle as mother and daughter, particularly as Zoey navigates her teenage years. Is the relationship between all mothers and daughters a battle in some ways, or is this a result of Tandi's past mistakes? How can mothers guide their daughters without being overbearing? Do you think children can be prevented from repeating their parents' mistakes, or do they have to figure things out on their own?

11 Sandy seems to almost instantly recognize that Tandi has been sent to the Seashell Shop for a reason and quickly welcomes her into the sisterhood, yet Sandy's reaction to Gina is very different. Why do you think that is? Have you ever had an intuition about someone that proved to be true? Or have you seen a first impression proven wrong?

12 lola eventually desires to live her life "in anticipation of the bridges to magnificence." Some people seem to have a talent for doing this—for always seeing the positive and looking at the future with anticipation. Where do you think that ability comes from? Does this reflect your outlook on life? If not, how could you cultivate a spirit of anticipation?

**"The Prayer Box  
is a masterpiece  
of story and skill."**

Debbie Macomber, *New  
York Times* bestselling author





# A Note from the Author

---

*Dear Reader,*

This is how *The Prayer Box* came to be: by accident, if you believe in accidents. I glanced across the room one day, saw the small prayer box that had been gifted to me, and a story began to spin through my mind. What if that box contained many prayers accumulated over time? What if there were dozens of boxes? What if they contained the prayers of a lifetime?

What could more fully tell the truth about a person than words written to God in solitude?

Of course, Lola would say those random questions that popped into my mind, and *The Prayer Box* story itself, weren't accidents at all. She would say it was divine providence. Something that was meant to be.

I believe divine providence has brought this story into your hands too. I hope you enjoyed the journey through Lola's prayer boxes as much as I did. If the journey is still ahead of you, I hope that it takes you to far-off places . . . and into inner spaces as well. More than that, I hope it will inspire you to think about keeping a prayer box of your own and maybe giving one to somebody else.

The little box that was given to me was by no means unique. I'd heard of prayer boxes, and I knew what they were for. Either they're keeping places for favorite Scriptures, or they're similar to a prayer journal, only more flexible. Any scrap of paper will do, anywhere, anytime of the day or night. The important part, in a world of fractured thoughts, hurried moments, and scattershot prayers, is to take the time to think through, to write down, to clarify in your own mind the things you're asking for, the things you're grateful for, the things you're troubled about, the hopes you've been nurturing.



And then?  
Put them in the box and . . .  
Let. Them. Go.

That's what *trust* is. It's letting go of the worry. It's the way of peace and also the way of God. Such a hard road to travel for people like me, who are worriers. When I'm writing a story, I control the whole universe. In life . . . not so much. Actually, not at all. Things happen that I hadn't anticipated and wouldn't choose and can't change. That's the tough part.

Closing the lid on a prayer box is symbolic of so many things. When we give a prayer over to God, it's supposed to be in God's hands after that. I think that's what Sister Marguerite was trying to teach lola when she gave her that very first prayer box. Life is, so often, beyond our control, just as it was for that little ten-year-old girl, far from home. I like to imagine that Sister Marguerite decorated that box herself, preparing it with young lola in mind.

After studying more about prayer boxes and using them myself, I'm surprised we don't do this more often. Prayer boxes have a long-standing tradition, both among early Christians and among Jewish families. Jews and early Christians often wore small leather or carved bone boxes on the body. These phylacteries or tefillin were a means of keeping Scripture close to the wearer. Large boxes called mezuzah cases are still affixed to the doorposts of Jewish homes today.

It's a beautiful tradition, when you think about it, to surround our coming in and going out with a brush with God. It's also a reminder, as family members pass by, to pray and to trust that our prayers are being heard.

That's one of my favorite reasons for keeping a prayer box inside the home, or for giving one as a gift. When you see the box, you're reminded that things are supposed to go in it. In other words, the prayer box isn't meant to gather dust; it's meant to inspire a habit. That's the real idea behind making a prayer box attractive, and the reason I think lola must have decorated so many of hers. I imagined that, as each year came, she prepared a box that represented her life at the time, and then she kept the box out where she would see it and be reminded that her Father was waiting to hear from her.

I wonder if lola ever gave prayer boxes as gifts, just as that first box was given to her. Maybe that's what she did with those many glass boxes she purchased from Sandy's Seashell Shop. Do you think so? What better way to bind a family, help a friend struggle through an illness, start a just-married couple off right, celebrate a tiny new life just born, send a graduate into the world, than to give a prayer box and an explanation of what it's for? The box can be something you buy premade or something you decorate yourself. If you're hand-decorating it, why not personalize it with photos or favorite Scriptures?

Are you inspired to consider spreading the tradition of prayer boxing yet? I hope so. I could go on and on with ideas and stories here, but that's another book in itself. If you'd like to learn more about how to use prayer boxes in your church, your study group, your family, your ministry, your community, or as gifts, drop by [www.LisaWingate.com](http://www.LisaWingate.com) for more information about prayer boxes, some examples, sample notes to include with prayer box gifts, and other ideas for making, using, and giving them.

My wish for you is that, in this age-old tradition, you and others will find what Tandi found when she entered Lola's blue room in her dream. May the glorious light fill you and shine upon you and draw you ever closer.

We all know who waits inside the light.

**"Tenderly woven. Skillfully threaded. A grab-your-heart story about faith, the healing power of love, and how both are often found in unlikely places."**

Charles Martin, *New York Times* bestselling author



# My Book Club Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

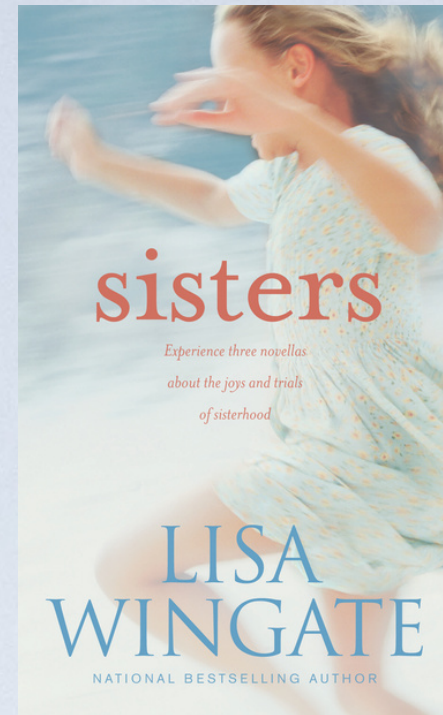
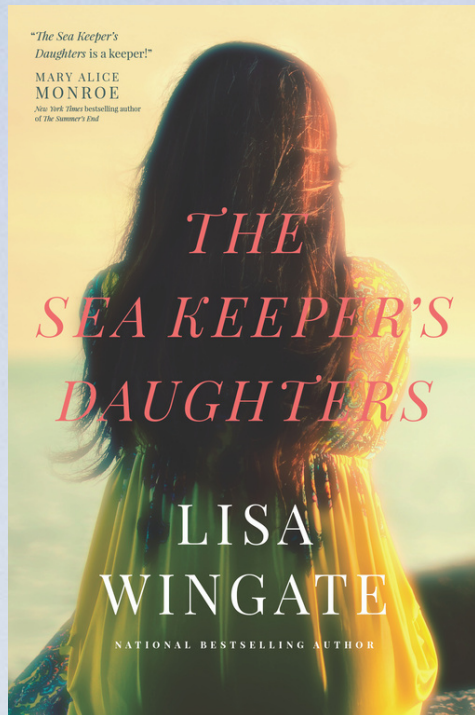
---







# Discover more great stories by Lisa Wingate



Available in print and ebook now

Join the conversation at

