



FOUR SEASONS

Summer Breeze

CATHERINE PALMER & GARY CHAPMAN



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Summer Breeze

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When two people are under the influence
of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions,
they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited,
abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Getting Married



NOTE TO READERS

There's nothing like a good story! I'm excited to be working with Catherine Palmer on a fiction series based on the concepts in my book *The Four Seasons of Marriage*. You hold in your hands the second book in this series.

My experience, both in my own marriage and in counseling couples for more than thirty years, suggests that marriages are always moving from one season to another. Sometimes we find ourselves in winter—discouraged, detached, and dissatisfied; other times we experience springtime, with its openness, hope, and anticipation. On still other occasions we bask in the warmth of summer—comfortable, relaxed, enjoying life. And then comes fall with its uncertainty, negligence, and apprehension. The cycle repeats itself many times throughout the life of a marriage, just as the seasons repeat themselves in nature. These concepts are described in *The Four Seasons of Marriage*, along with seven proven strategies to help couples move away from the unsettledness of fall or the alienation and coldness of winter toward the hopefulness of spring or the warmth and closeness of summer.

Combining what I've learned in my counseling practice with Catherine's excellent writing skills has led to this series of four novels. In the lives of the characters you'll meet in these pages, you will see the choices I have observed people making over and over again through the years, the value of caring friends and neighbors, and the hope of marriages moving to a new and more pleasant season.

In *Summer Breeze* and the other stories in the Four Seasons fiction series, you will meet newlyweds, blended families, couples who are deep in the throes of empty-nest adjustment, and senior couples. Our hope is that you will see yourself or someone you know in these characters. If you are hurting, this book can give you hope—and some ideas for making things better. Be sure to check out the discussion questions at the end of the book for further ideas.

And whatever season you're in, I know you'll enjoy the people and the stories in Deepwater Cove.

Gary D. Chapman, PhD

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Though I often leave them for last, first on my list of supporters, encouragers, and loved ones are my family. Tim, Geoffrey, and Andrei, I love you so much.



CHAPTER ONE

The crackle of the two-way radio mounted in his boat alerted Officer Derek Finley to a call from Water Patrol headquarters in Jefferson City.

“Boater in distress,” the dispatcher said. “Boater in distress at the twenty-mile mark in front of Green Oaks Condominiums. Dan Becker is reporting the incident. Repeat, Dan Becker. He says he’s in the path of other boats, and he believes he is creating a possible hazard in navigation.”

“Ten-four, Jeff City.” Derek began to turn the twenty-nine-foot Donzi the Patrol had assigned him. With its twin outboard motors—each at 250 horsepower—the boat could go sixty-five miles an hour. But he wouldn’t push it to that speed on a routine call like this one.

“Okay, Jeff,” he told the dispatcher. “I will be en route from the twenty-five-mile mark.”

As he increased speed, Derek scanned for other boats in his path. On such a warm, beautiful day, the first day of the long Memorial Day weekend, the water would be busy. Without doubt, several folks would be boating while intoxicated. Though Missouri had many

lakes, rivers, and streams, Lake of the Ozarks had the highest number of BWI arrests in the state. Working the night shift, which began at three in the afternoon and wouldn't end until three the next morning, he had already stopped a boat after spotting a woman who had decided to sunbathe on a bow gunwale lacking adequate rails. Later, he had taken a call about a personal watercraft operating in a no-wake zone near someone's dock. Many PWC operators had no idea they were supposed to obey the same rules as a full-size craft.

The Donzi cut through the sparkling water, and as he often did, Derek reflected on how much he enjoyed his job. Though he had graduated from college with a degree in business and had worked behind a desk for almost a year, he'd quit the minute he heard the state was recruiting. Not long after, he'd passed the background check and the physical fitness test. His work with the Water Patrol provided the perfect blend of excitement, enjoyment of nature, public service, and—during the rare criminal investigation—intellectual challenge.

Now approaching the twenty-mile mark, Derek spotted the stranded boat—a twenty-five-foot Challenger bobbing midchannel as other vessels zipped around it. Two middle-aged couples, sunburned and hatless, began waving the moment they saw him.

“Jeff, I am 10-23 with the boater in distress,” Derek told the dispatcher. He slowed the Donzi as he approached the stranded vessel. “How're you folks doing today? Is there a Dan Becker on board?”

“That's me,” one of the men answered. “It's my boat. I'm the one who called.”

“I understand you broke down.”

“Yeah, looks that way. We were out all morning fishing. Then we headed home and got this close to our dock, and suddenly the motor died.”

“We've tried everything,” the other man said. “The boat won't start.”

“You got gas?”

“We had a full tank when we left the dock.” Dan Becker scratched the rosy bald spot on his head. “We can’t have used all that up. Lemme check.” In a moment, he groaned. “Empty. Oh, brother. I never even thought of that.”

Derek smiled. Though the common boating mishaps that took most of his time could feel a little routine, he enjoyed helping people—whether it was seeing an intoxicated person out of danger to himself or others, guiding someone who’d gotten lost on the lake, or assisting a couple of stalled fishermen. Derek felt a sense of purpose and accomplishment at the end of each day. “Happens all the time,” he told Dan. “How about a tow? I can take you to your slip. Or there’s a gas dock about a half mile down. Mermaid Marina. You can fill up there.”

Fanning themselves, the women begged to be taken to their personal slip near the condominium. But Dan and his buddy prevailed. “Let’s get some gas. Might as well take care of it, since we’ve got you here, Officer.”

Expecting that answer, Derek was already gathering the tow rope. “I’m going to throw this across. Hook it to the bow eye.”

As the two men worked to clip the rope to their boat, Derek checked the black tow post mounted on his Donzi. When they signaled him, Derek stepped into the shade of the canopy to the operator’s position and took the wheel. As his Donzi moved forward, the tow rope tightened, and the Challenger began floating safely behind.

Out of gas, he thought with a chuckle and a shake of his head. How many times had he heard that one? His Donzi and the nineteen other Water Patrol boats that constantly roamed Lake of the Ozarks carried officers to answer complaint calls and emergencies. Success depended on control, wits, courage, and skill. Most of the time, the calls were run-of-the-mill, but he had to stay always alert in case of a real problem.

He mentally recounted the list of reasons people gave for their boats stalling in the water. “Officer, our motor broke.” “My boat won’t

start.” “Our outdrive is busted.” “We were pullin’ a skier and our motor fell off!” But by far the most common was “We ran out of gas.”

Towing the Challenger alongside the Mermaid Marina dock, Derek noted the college-aged young women who worked the gas pumps and encouraged people to visit the lake-view restaurant just uphill from the dock. He tipped his cap as a pleasant reminder that he’d be patrolling the area for boaters who might have had too much to drink.

Then he turned to Dan Becker and his companions. “Well, you’re here safe and sound,” he said as they unhooked the tow rope and tossed it back to him. “You folks have a great day now.”

“Say, Officer,” Dan called, “what do we owe you for the tow?”

“Part of the job.” Derek waved as he pulled away and reported to the dispatcher. “Jeff, I’m 10-24 and 10-8.”

With the assignment completed, he was back in service. As Derek steered into open water again, a fellow officer radioed him, and they agreed to meet at the fifteen-mile mark to touch base. With overlapping shifts, the men often met on the water to discuss ongoing investigations and recent incidents. In the past ten years, Derek figured he had seen just about everything. But the recent unusual drowning had him and the other officers puzzled. Five days earlier, Derek had found a body floating in a tangle of fishing line near Deepwater Cove. So far there were no clues as to the victim’s identity. And no one had reported a missing person.

Surveying the many boats on the lake as he passed them, Derek knew the unresolved incident was nagging at him. But without more information, there was nothing he could do.



Dark hair flying, the ten-year-old pressed back hard on the pedals of her bicycle. Girl and bike skidded to a stop in the driveway of the gray, wood-framed house with its window boxes full of draping, hot

pink petunias. As the bike's front wheel rammed into the post that supported the mailbox, the child's mother gasped aloud.

"Lydia, where is your helmet?" Kim called from the front porch of the lakefront house. "I told you never to ride your bike without a helmet. Go to your room and put it on this instant!"

"I'm done riding for the day," Lydia announced, dropping her bicycle in the driveway and flouncing toward the house. She wore a midriff-revealing, spaghetti-strapped T-shirt; a pair of tight aqua shorts; and sparkly flip-flops. "I called Dad while you and Luke were at the doctor. He wants to talk to you."

A chill of dread swirled through Kim's stomach. "Lydia, you're not supposed to talk to your father unless I'm in the room. That's a court order."

"Court order, court order! I'm sick to death of court orders. Who cares, anyhow?"

Lydia tried to step past her mother, but Kim blocked her way with an outstretched arm.

"What?" the girl snapped. "Let me by! I need to call Tiffany."

"Sit down here on the porch with me a minute," Kim ordered. Seeing the stubborn tilt to her daughter's chin, she added more softly, "Please."

"Mom, I need to find out what Tiffany's wearing to church tomorrow." Lydia, all skinny brown legs and lanky arms, dropped onto a wicker chair. "Her mom's going to let her wear shorts to church, because it's already a week past Memorial Day, and everybody knows Memorial Day is the start of summer."

"You're not wearing shorts to church," Kim declared. Two years older and a grade ahead of Lydia in school, Tiffany had little parental supervision. Lydia's best friend, she often accompanied the Finley family to church and on other outings, but her mother never joined them. In fact, Kim had never met the woman, who seemed to allow her daughter to do whatever she wanted any time of the day or night.

Kim shook her head. “I don’t think shorts are appropriate for church, and—”

“They’re appropriate if everyone else is wearing them!” Lydia glared at her mother with narrowed eyes. “You don’t know anything.”

Taking a deep breath, Kim settled onto a wicker love seat beside her daughter. As she studied Lydia, she attempted to pray away her ire while focusing on the lovely young woman emerging from childhood before her eyes.

“Lydia,” she began, stifling the urge to scold, “you know all the rules are for your own safety. The helmet is to protect your head, and the court order is to regulate your father’s contact with you. He hasn’t been abiding by our agreements, and I’m this close to calling my attorney about it. The last thing I need is for *you* to be calling *him*.”

“How long is this lecture going to take?” Lydia cut in. “Tiffany wants me to call her right after she gets home from the mall.”

“Interrupting me is rude and unacceptable,” Kim retorted. “I’d better not see you riding that bike without your helmet again, or I’ll ground you from it. And you can forget about wearing shorts to church. The ones you have on are too short. Don’t you realize what you look like these days? You’re almost a teenager, Lydia. You have to start behaving more maturely, and that includes being aware of the way you dress. And if I hear that you’ve called your father again, young lady, you’re going to have serious consequences. Now go move that bicycle out of the driveway before Derek comes home and runs over it.”

“Would you relax?” Lydia asked, her voice just at the edge of a sneer. She pushed up from the chair and started across the porch, headed for her bicycle. “You’re so grouchy. You yell at everyone and preach at us all the time. We used to have fun when you were home, but now I can’t wait until you go back to work. You’re making Luke and me miserable. I’m surprised Derek even bothers to come home. All you do is bite his head off.”

“You’re exaggerating, Lydia. I don’t yell at you and Luke, and I never . . .” Kim’s voice faltered as her daughter defiantly swung a leg

over the bike, settled onto the saddle, and pedaled off up the road. As Lydia's glossy brown hair vanished around a curve, Kim knotted her fists and battled down a cry of rage. This was not supposed to happen!

The focus of the family ought to be on Luke, not Lydia. Luke was the twin with diabetes. In order to stay alive, Luke needed the right diet, enough exercise, and regular monitoring of his blood glucose level. In the past few weeks, Kim had reexamined everything she knew about nutrition and basic general health. And then she'd had to absorb an enormous amount of new information. Things like syringes, glucose monitors, and lancet needles were part of everyday life now. She easily used new terms such as *beta cells*, *HLA markers*, *hypoglycemia*, *ketones*, and *triglycerides*. Day and night for the month since Luke's first symptoms and then the diagnosis, she had watched over her son. She spent hours praying for his health, worrying over any sign of a possible problem, and phoning to discuss each development with his endocrinologist.

Unwilling to send Luke to the sports and recreational camps the twins usually attended in the summer, Kim had asked permission to take a leave of absence from her work as a hygienist for a dentist in Camdenton. Dr. Groene was sympathetic and kind, and he'd hired temporary help for the short term. But Kim's paychecks had stopped, and the family was finding it hard to make ends meet.

A voice broke into her thoughts. "Where's Lydia?" Luke pushed open the screen door and stepped onto the porch. "I thought I heard her out here. Tiffany just called."

"She's riding her bike," Kim told her son. She signaled for Luke to join her by patting the wicker love seat. "How are you doing, honey? Are you shaky or nauseous like this morning?"

"I'm fine, Mom." He plopped down in the chair where his sister had sat moments before. "I wish I felt like riding my bike."

"Well, why don't you? Do you feel dizzy or anything like that?"

Do you have a headache?" She reached toward him. "Let me see if you're sweaty."

"Mom, stop. I'm okay." Luke pulled his knees to his chin and wrapped his arms around them. "You're treating me like a baby! I checked my blood. Nothing's wrong with me. Leave me alone."

"Then get your helmet and go catch up to your sister. I'm sure she'd enjoy the company."

"No." Glaring over his knees, he frowned out at the world. "I don't feel like doing anything. And I'm not wearing that stupid helmet anymore."

Kim sighed. Growing up in a home in which her parents' constant fighting had led to divorce, she had learned to cope with the unexpected. Her alcoholic mother had moved the children from town to town as drinking cost her one job after another. Kim had been determined never to repeat her parents' mistakes. The summer after graduating from high school, she'd gone to work for Dr. Groene as a receptionist and moved into a small apartment. Soon her next-door neighbor had charmed his way into her heart, and she happily married the handsome marine-engine repairman.

It wasn't long before Kim realized she had done exactly what she'd hoped to avoid. Every now and then—seemingly out of the blue—Joe became loud and mean. She was just past her first trimester with the twins the first time he slapped her. After that, her life became a nightmare.

Terrified to leave her husband and terrified to stay with him, she walked on eggshells and prayed that she could safely deliver her babies. Soon after they were born, Kim had started attending the Lake Area Ministry Bible Chapel. At LAMB Chapel, as it was called, she found strength and courage she had never known in her life. With the help and support of several women in the church, especially Patsy Pringle, she had managed to escape her husband and take refuge at an abuse crisis center. After divorcing Joe and winning custody of the twins, she settled into what she hoped could be a normal life.

And then she'd met Derek Finley. Even as she thought of the wonderful man who had stepped into her life and swept her off her feet three years before, Kim saw his truck rolling along the lake road toward their home in Deepwater Cove.

"Hey, here comes Derek!" Luke shouted. "I wonder if he brought me any cherry strings."

"You can't have—" Kim bit off the rest of the words. If Luke wanted to eat a snack now and then, he would simply have to monitor his blood sugar and keep everything in balance. He had learned to do that already. She needed to start trusting him. But a ten-year-old boy? It was so hard not to worry.

"Look, he's got Lydia's bike in the back!" Luke jumped off his chair and raced across the porch and down the steps. "I bet she fell off! I bet she wasn't wearing her helmet!"

"Oh no!" Kim ran toward the approaching truck. "Derek? Is Lydia all right?"

"Of course I am." Lydia opened the door on the passenger side and slid out onto the driveway. "Derek saw me riding near the highway to Tranquility, and he picked me up. Hey, Luke, want some trail mix? It's cheese flavored."

Before Kim could react, Luke had stuck his hand into the bag. She was trying to say something about it being almost supertime and not good for his glucose level when Derek swept her up in his arms and planted a warm kiss on her lips. She resisted for a moment—fears, worries, and frustration still at the forefront of her mind—and then she smelled his sun-heated skin. Melting into her husband, she wrapped her arms around his neck and slid her hand down the soft hair at the back of his head.

"Surprise," he said, kissing her cheek and then the side of her neck. "I hope you made enough supper for one extra. The captain saw I was getting bleary-eyed and sent me home for a couple of hours to eat and put my feet up."

“Blery-eyed?” Kim murmured. “Not you. And surely not in Party Cove.”

He laughed and swatted her playfully as he followed her to the porch. They both knew that in his ten years on patrol, Derek had become jaded by the skimpily clad twentysomethings who cavorted from boat to boat in the notorious cove.

With more than a little pride, Kim opened the front door to a home filled with the aroma of homemade spaghetti sauce and toasted garlic bread. As it was a Saturday, she had been able to start the morning by tackling the laundry that piled up through the week and scrubbing the master bathroom.

In the midst of tensions converging like a line of thunderstorms capable of producing tornadoes, Kim always tried to keep the house peaceful and clean. She knew she was sometimes discouraged or grumpy, but she hoped her husband and children understood how much she cared by the things she did for them.

“The doctor says Luke is doing very well at monitoring his glucose levels,” she told Derek as they stepped into the kitchen. That morning, Kim had fed the twins an early lunch before driving her son to his pediatrician’s office. Afterward, she’d had time to finish the laundry and vacuum the living room.

“I knew the boy could conquer this thing,” Derek said. “He’s tough as nails, that kid. How’s Lydia been today?”

“The same.” Kim lifted the lid on the spaghetti sauce and gave it a stir. “She wants to wear shorts to church tomorrow.”

“Why not? She’s a pretty little gal, just like her mom. Both of you look cute in shorts. Besides, it’s summer.”

“Don’t you dare side with her, Derek,” Kim warned. “She’s already pushing every limit we’ve set. She called Joe this afternoon when we weren’t home. She won’t wear her bike helmet. And now she’s determined to wear shorts to church just because Tiffany’s mother is letting Tiffany wear them.”

“Does God have something against shorts?”

Kim pursed her lips to keep from saying something she might regret. The only thing that had caused her to doubt the wisdom of marrying Derek Finley was his disinterest in church. She had read about the importance of sharing a religious faith with your spouse, but she hadn't realized how much it would mean to her until they were already married. Then she saw that Derek slept in on his work-free Sunday mornings, and he never made anything but indifferent comments when Kim tried to talk to him about her beliefs. He certainly didn't try to lead the family in prayer or direct their thoughts toward heaven. Still, in every other way, he had proven himself just about perfect.

"Oh, baby, that is the best-smelling sauce in the world." Derek sighed as he leaned over to savor the scent. "You are the queen of cooks, and I mean that. My mom could make some pretty decent spaghetti, but you have her beat hands down."

Kim smiled as she set an extra place at the table. Derek's mother was exactly opposite to hers. Kim's mom had barely been able to afford the clothes she needed to wear to apply for work, while Derek had been brought up in a lovely home in Clayton, near St. Louis. Before he was killed in an automobile accident, Derek's father had worked as an award-winning freelance photographer for various wildlife and exploration magazines. His mother always dressed in linen and pearls. She belonged to a country club and several volunteer organizations. And she never failed to point out the small flaws in her son's chosen life partner.

"I got my spaghetti recipe from that chef I told you about," Kim said as Derek washed his hands in the kitchen sink. She had asked him a hundred times to wash up in the bathroom. He never noticed the coat of grime he left on her white porcelain sink.

"The guy your mother worked for when you lived in Joplin?" he asked, shedding droplets across the countertop as he reached for the towel. "He taught you a lot. I owe that fellow. If we ever get down south, we'll stop by the restaurant so I can shake his hand and thank him for turning my wife into the best cook ever."

“You would have liked him. His name was Marcel, and he was from France. But he could make just about anything, including spaghetti.”

“He let you hang around in his kitchen?”

“Well, not at the restaurant. My mom got fired only a couple of weeks after we moved to Joplin. But she and Marcel had already struck up a thing for each other, so we moved in with him for a while. I can’t remember how long that one lasted. Anyway, he used to cook for us after work, and I would watch him.”

Derek came up behind Kim and slipped his strong arms around her waist as she checked the pasta. “I don’t know how a woman like you could have emerged from that kind of past,” he murmured. “But I sure am glad I found you.”

Kim turned her head and kissed his cheek. “God brought us together,” she told him. “And I have no idea how He feels about shorts in church.”

“Go easy on Lydia, Kim. I bet if Luke starts acting more like himself, Lydia will follow.”

Kim stepped out of her husband’s embrace and took down bowls for the sauce and pasta. She generally respected the way Derek handled the kids, but when they disagreed, it was all she could do to keep from reminding him that they were *her* children, and he ought to just back off. This time, as usual, he was right.

“I’m probably being too hard on both of them,” Kim admitted. “I talked it over with Patsy last week, and she thought maybe Lydia’s rebellion is her way of responding to all the changes we’ve had to make because of Luke. It made sense. I know I’m overprotecting him and making both of the kids as afraid as I am.”

“Really, Lydia’s doing pretty well, considering.” Derek sat down at the table as Kim called the twins to dinner. “The shorts, the helmet, even calling Joe . . . none of those things is all that bad. Not like the stuff I see going on with girls just a few years older than Lydia. She’s a great kid.”

“What do you mean calling Joe is not that bad? You know what kind of a man he is. I can’t believe you think Lydia’s behavior today is okay.”

“Calm down, honey. Joe only contacts the kids because it makes you crazy. There’s no way he’s getting anywhere near them. Don’t get so upset.”

“You’d be upset too if you really understood what that man put us through. You may be used to dealing with out-of-control drunks, but I’m not! The kids and I were his victims long enough, and the thought of him being in contact with them still scares me.”

“You’re a strong woman, Kim.”

“Maybe so, but Joe is stronger.” She shook her head in frustration. “You know what he’s like, Derek, but you’re never willing to discuss it with me. You won’t do anything about it, either. You just keep telling me it’s going to be okay. Sometimes I wonder if you even hear what I’m saying. Where’s your concern for me? Where’s the protection you ought to be offering the children? Joe is out there, and he scares me to death.”

“But he can’t hurt any of you, Kim. The law protects you, I’ll protect you, and you can stand up for yourself. At some point you need to trust yourself—and the kids.”

“They’re only children, Derek. They’re ten years old.” Kim glared at him as she took the chair across the table. “Things have changed. I realize the twins are almost eleven, and I’ve left them alone in the past. Summers have been filled with camps and clubs and some free time at home. But with Joe making trouble and with Luke’s problems, I can’t imagine doing that now.”

“Listen, I had an idea—”

“Hey, Derek, did you find out who drowned the other day?” Luke skipped into the kitchen, followed closely by his sister. “Did some drunk fall out of a boat again? Or was it a murder? That would be cool!”

“He’s not going to say anything about it,” Lydia admonished her brother. “I already asked him.”

“Your sister’s right—I can’t talk about an ongoing investigation,” Derek told Luke, reaching over to rumple his hair. “You know that, buddy. Besides, who wants to hear that kind of thing at the table? Look at this awesome dinner your mom made.”

“I hate spaghetti,” Lydia announced. “I’m not eating it. She leaves chunks of tomatoes floating around so you can see them. It’s disgusting.”

“Lydia,” Kim began.

“Are we going to pray?” Luke cut in. “I’m so hungry I feel like I’m going to throw up.”

“Hunger and nausea. That’s a blood sugar imbalance!” Kim started to leap up from the table, but Derek caught her arm.

Luke scowled. “Mom, just feed me, okay? I’ll be fine in a minute.”

“Just feed him,” Lydia insisted, her face going pale. “Feed him, Mom!” Suddenly bursting into tears, she grabbed her brother’s plate and ladled spaghetti sauce onto it. “Eat, Lukey,” she said, pressing a spoonful toward his mouth. “Eat! Eat this right now.”

“Stop it, you idiot!” Luke knocked the spoon out of his sister’s hand, splattering the kitchen floor and wall with red sauce. “I’m not gonna die! Everybody quit freaking out! I hate the way you guys treat me all the time. You make me feel like I’m dying, and I’m not!”

“Whoa there.” Derek laid his hand firmly on Luke’s shoulder. “Nobody thinks you’re dying. You’re *not* dying, kiddo; you’re living. You’re doing great with everything, and your mom and I are so proud of you we could just about bust. So, let’s all settle down and have some dinner. Kim, how about if I pray?”

It was the first time in their marriage that Derek had even mentioned prayer, let alone offered to ask a blessing. Kim was so astonished she couldn’t speak.

Keeping one hand on Luke’s shoulder and the other on his wife’s

arm, Derek bowed his head. “We’re all a little off-balance here,” he began, “and we need to settle down and realize that someone bigger than us is in control. Please help Luke get to feeling comfortable managing his diabetes, and help Lydia to accept the change in her brother without getting too upset. And be with Kim, who trusts in You to look out for her family. Amen.”

Everyone lifted their heads at the same time. Kim swallowed in grateful amazement that for the first time, her husband had acknowledged the existence of a heavenly power. Maybe Derek hadn’t used God’s name or mentioned Christ, but at least he had offered up a prayer. It was a beginning—a huge beginning.

A smile softening her heart, Kim lifted the bowl of pasta and passed it to her husband. “Thank you, honey,” she said. “That was exactly what we needed.”

Derek grinned as he dished out a plateful of noodles. “And here’s something else that’ll help us all feel better—an answer to my prayer right off the bat. I was about to mention this earlier, but I got interrupted. Kim, you’re going to be able to go back to work on Monday, and the twins will be safe and sound right here at home.” He looked around the table. “My mother called this afternoon. Kids, your grandma Finley’s on her way down here from St. Louis for a nice long visit!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The principles and strategies illustrated in this novel are taken from *The Four Seasons of Marriage* by Gary Chapman. In this book, Dr. Chapman discusses marriage as a journey back and forth through different “seasons.”

- **Springtime** in marriage is a time of new beginnings, new patterns of life, new ways of listening, and new ways of loving.
- **Summer** couples share deep commitment, satisfaction, and security in each other’s love.
- **Fall** brings a sense of unwanted change, and nagging emptiness appears.
- **Winter** means difficulty. Marriage is harder in this season of cold silence and bitter winds.

1. In *Summer Breeze*, which season of the year is it in Deepwater Cove, Missouri? Which season of marriage do you think Derek and Kim Finley are experiencing? What are the signs that let you know?
2. At the start of the book, someone has drowned near Deepwater Cove. What changes does this event bring about in Derek’s life? How does the drowning affect Kim? What does the news mean to Cody? Can you think of an example in your own experience in which God has used one event to bring about change in many peoples’ lives?
3. What are Luke and Lydia like at the beginning of the book? How do their personalities change through the story? How does a family’s structure affect children? How does the parents’ relationship affect children’s behavior?
4. On the way to church, the Finley family erupts into a furious argument (pages 135–139). What is the end result for each member of the family? Do you ever find your own family engaged in disagreements on the way to church? Catherine Palmer’s family refers to these quarrels as “holy wars.” Why do you suppose tensions are so high at such times? Can you think of some good ways to prevent “holy wars” in your family?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Catherine Palmer lives in Missouri with her husband, Tim, and sons, Geoffrey and Andrei. She is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University and holds a master's degree in English from Baylor University. Her first book was published in 1988. Since then, Catherine has published more than 40 novels and won numerous awards for her writing, including the Christy Award—the highest honor in Christian fiction—in 2001 for *A Touch of Betrayal*. In 2004 she was given the Career Achievement Award for Inspirational Romance by *Romantic Times BOOKreviews* magazine. More than 2 million copies of Catherine's novels are currently in print.

Dr. Gary Chapman is the author of *The Four Seasons of Marriage*, the perennial best seller *The Five Love Languages* (over 3.5 million copies sold), and numerous other marriage and family books. He is the director of Marriage & Family Life Consultants, Inc., an internationally known speaker, and host of *A Growing Marriage*, a syndicated radio program heard on more than 100 stations across North America. He and his wife, Karolyn, live in North Carolina.