



Reunion

Karen
KINGSBURY
with Gary Smalley



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC. ~ CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS



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Reunion

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kingsbury, Karen.

Reunion / Karen Kingsbury with Gary Smalley.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-8423-8688-3 (sc)

1. Adoption—Fiction. I. Smalley, Gary. II. Title.

PS3561.I4873R485 2004

813'.54—dc22

2004006001

New repackage first published in 2009 under ISBN 978-1-4143-3304-5.

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09

7 6 5 4 3 2 1



What Readers Are Saying about

K A R E N K I N G S B U R Y ' S

Books

“These books will touch your heart and stir your soul. They have helped me to realize that God is always in control!” —**Angela**

“Life-changing books! I haven’t been much of a reader until now! I have fallen in love with all of the Baxters. Thank you for letting me grieve my mother’s death in a whole new light. . . . I have recommended the series to everyone I come across.” —**Peggy**

“Karen Kingsbury’s writing moves me to tears and laughter. She really tackles hard situations with Christ’s love. Her inspirational words are such an encouragement to me.” —**Ellen**

“I just completed the first two books in the Redemption series with Gary Smalley. Awesome, just awesome. Again, you’ve touched my heart. I laughed and cried. I felt their pains and their joys. . . . Thank you for daring to write about the tough issues that even believers face.” —**S.A.**

“I have read every book Karen Kingsbury has written. Each one has brought me to a place of repentance in my life and the ability to forgive myself for things I’ve confessed to no one but God. Her books have given me hope and the assurance of forgiveness and the strength to look forward to what the Lord would have me do.” —**Karen**

“If you had an official fan club I’d love to be the president! . . . I am so hooked on your books. My goal is to collect them all and share them with my friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers!” —**Peggy**

“I can’t find the words to describe the emotions I went through reading the entire Redemption series. God bless you, Karen, for letting Him use your pen and hand and of course your heart to put words of such magnitude on paper to bless us all so much!”

—Darlene

“I loved the Redemption series and have shared it with various women in my church. Everyone has the same answer: ‘I loved it!’ We ALL laughed and cried. Your writing is an inspiration to all.”

—Rachel

“Karen Kingsbury’s books have made me see things in ways that I had never thought about before. I have to force myself to put them down and come up for air!”

—Tabitha

“Thank you for your beautifully written books. They make me laugh, they make me cry, and they fill my heart with a love that can only be God once again touching my heart and soul.” —Natalie

“The words God gives you in your stories have such power to reach my emotions. No other author has been able to do that!” —Diane

“God has truly given you a gift to write and not just write, but minister as well. I can feel His Holy Spirit moving in your books. . . . Thank you and please stay open to His leading and continue writing stories that not only touch the heart but help bring healing as well.”

—N.L.



TO OUR FAMILIES, WHO—
together with us and all who believe—
will one day be part of the greatest reunion ever.

AND TO GOD ALMIGHTY,

who has, for now,
blessed us with these.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to our families and our wonderful support teams, we'd like to thank our friends at Tyndale House Publishers for sharing our dream and vision and helping make the Redemption series a reality. A special thanks to Ron Beers, Becky Nesbitt, Anne Goldsmith, Andrea Martin, Jill Swanson, Travis Thrasher, and Linda Gooch for their determination to make this series everything it could possibly be.

Also, thanks to our agent, Rick Christian, at Alive Communications. You were handed the reins of this project half-way into it and have seen it through to completion. Thank you for advocating excellence in every area involved with finishing this series.

A special thanks to Beka Hardt and Bethany Larson, director and coordinator of Christian Youth Theater in Vancouver, Washington, for inspiring a story line in *Reunion* that will lead to my next set of books—the Firstborn series. And thanks to Pastor Matt Hannan for inspiring me—through his sermons—to continue to let God's truth shine through the stories I bring you.

Finally thanks to Almighty God for giving us a series of books that illustrate the truth that no matter what happens—there is redemption in Jesus Christ.



CHAPTER ONE

ELIZABETH BAXTER found the lump on March 7.

She was in the shower, and at first she brushed past it, figured it to be nothing more than a bit of fatty tissue or a knotted muscle or maybe even a figment of her imagination. But then she went over it with her fingertips again and again. And once more, until she knew.

No question—it was a lump.

And a lump of any kind meant getting an immediate check. This was a road she'd traveled before. If a breast-cancer survivor knew one thing it was the importance of self-checks. She stopped the water, dried off, and called her doctor while still wrapped in a towel.

The mammogram came three days later, and a biopsy was performed the day after that. Now, on a brilliantly sunny morning in mid-March, in the private office of Dr. Marc Steinman, Elizabeth sat stiff and straight next to John as they waited for the doctor to bring the results.

“It’s bad; I know it is.” Elizabeth leaned a few inches to the side and whispered, “He wouldn’t have called us in if it wasn’t bad.”

John did a soft sigh and met her eyes. “You don’t know that. It’s probably nothing.” But his tone lacked the usual confidence, and something wild and fearful flashed in his eyes. He tightened his grip on her hand. “It’s nothing.”

Elizabeth stared straight ahead. The wall held an oversized, framed and matted print of a pair of mallard ducks cutting a path across a glassy lake. *No, God, please . . . not more cancer. Please.* She closed her eyes and the ducks disappeared.

A parade of recent memories marched across her heart. Ashley and Luke sitting side by side at Luke and Reagan’s wedding reception, reconnected after so many years apart; Kari and Ryan exchanging vows at a wedding in the Baxter backyard; little Jessie taking her first steps; Maddie and Hayley holding hands for the first time after Hayley’s drowning accident.

They need me, God . . . they still need me. I still need them. Please, God . . . no more cancer.

Footsteps sounded in the hall outside, and Elizabeth’s eyes flew open. “Help me, John.” Her voice was pinched, panicked.

“It’s okay.” John leaned closer, letting her rest on him. “It’ll be okay.”

The doctor entered the room, a file clutched beneath his arm. He stopped, nodded, and sat at the desk opposite them. “Thanks for coming.” He opened the folder and pulled out the top sheet of paper. His eyes met first John’s, then Elizabeth’s. “I have the results of your biopsy.”

A pause followed, and John cleared his throat. “She’s fine, right?” John’s tone sounded forced, unnatural.

The doctor opened his mouth, but Elizabeth already knew. She knew the news would be bad, and in that instant she couldn’t think about surgery or radiation or how sick she was bound to get. Neither could she think the unthinkable—about regrets or do-overs or things she wished she hadn’t done. Instead only one question consumed her soul.

How in the world would her family live without her?



The idea of meeting with the birth mother gave Erin Hogan a bad feeling from the beginning.

Their adoption attorney had warned them against it, but with four weeks until their baby daughter's birth, Erin couldn't tell the woman no. Sam agreed. Whatever the outcome, they would meet the birth mother, hear what she had to say, and pray that nothing—absolutely nothing—would damage the dream of bringing home their daughter.

The meeting was set to take place in thirty minutes at a small park not far from Erin and Sam's Austin home, where they would spend an hour with the birth mother, Candy Santana, and her two children.

On the way out the door that day Erin's stomach hurt. "Sam?" She paused near the nursery door and gazed in.

"I know." He stopped at her side and ran his fingers over her arms. "You're worried."

"Yes." The nursery was entirely pink and white: pink walls and a white crib with pink bedding, and dresser topped with pink teddy bears. It smelled faintly of fresh paint and baby powder. Erin folded her arms and pressed her fist into her middle. "Everything's been going so well." Her eyes found Sam's. "Why now?"

"I don't know." He kissed the top of her head and studied the nursery. "Maybe she wants to see how excited we are."

The possibility seemed like a stretch. Despite the warm March Texas morning, Erin shivered and turned toward the front door. "Let's get it over with."

The short ride to the park was silent, mostly because Erin was afraid to talk, afraid to speculate about what might happen or why in the world the birth mother would want to meet them now. Without the social worker or attorney or anyone official. They parked the car and headed toward a picnic table.

Ten minutes later a young woman and two small girls headed

toward them. Next to her was a thin man with long hair and mean, dark eyes.

“Who’s he?” Erin whispered. They were sitting on top of the table, their feet on the bench as they waited.

Sam frowned. “Trouble.”

The approaching couple held hands. As they drew closer Erin felt the knot in her stomach grow. Candy was very pregnant, dressed in worn-out, dirty clothes and broken flip-flops. The man’s arms were splattered with tattoos. On one was a rooster with a full plume of feathers and the word *cock* in cursive beneath it. The other arm had the full naked figure of a woman framed on top by the name *Bonnie*.

Erin swallowed to keep from shuddering. She lowered her gaze to the girls, who were running a few feet in front of the adults. Candy’s youngest daughter was maybe two years old and wore only a droopy diaper. The other girl, not much older, had a runny nose. Both children had blonde matted hair, lifeless eyes, and vacant expressions. The look of neglect and emotional disconnect.

The same way Candy’s unborn child would look one day if something happened to the adoption process, or if Candy changed her—

No, God . . . don’t let me think like that. The couple was a few feet away now, and Erin could feel the color draining from her face. *Please . . . get us through this meeting.*

“Hi.” Candy gave them a look that fell short of a smile. The right side of her upper lip twitched, and she rubbed her thumb against it. “This is Dave. The baby’s dad.”

The baby’s dad? A thin wire of terror wrapped itself around Erin’s neck. “Uh . . .” She forced herself to smile. “Hello. I’m Erin.”

Next to her, Sam held out his hand to the tattooed man. “Hi.”

Dave shook Sam’s hand, but refused to look either Sam or Erin in the eyes. Instead he shifted his gaze from Candy to the girls, to the ground, and back to Candy again. He grunted something that might’ve been a greeting. Erin wasn’t sure.

For a moment no one said anything. Then Candy cleared her throat and glanced at her daughters. The youngest had picked a dandelion and was chewing on the stem. “Hey!” Candy pointed at the girl and let loose a string of expletives. “I told you a hundred times don’t be stupid, Clarisse, and I mean it. You ain’t a goat; take the flower outta your mouth.”

The girl lifted her eyes in Candy’s direction. “No!” She put the flower stem between her lips.

Candy mumbled something as she stomped over to the child and grabbed her arm. “Let it go!”

Fear filled the girl’s eyes. She dropped the flower and tried to back away from Candy. The woman released Clarisse’s arm and snarled at her. As she returned to the table she seemed to realize what she’d done, the way she’d behaved toward her daughter. A nervous look flashed in her eyes, and the lip twitched again. Candy managed a frustrated smile. “Crazy kids.”

Erin didn’t know what to say. She looked at her hands, at her wedding ring. *God . . . what’s this about?* She lifted her eyes and looked from Candy to Dave.

The tattooed man cleared his throat and gave Candy a pointed look.

Candy nodded and turned to Erin. “We, uh . . . we have something to talk to ya about.”

The knot in Erin’s stomach doubled. She felt Sam take her hand and give it a firm squeeze. “Okay.” Erin massaged her throat for a few seconds. “We’re . . . we’re very excited about the adoption. Nothing’s changed.”

“Has something changed for you, Candy?” Sam’s voice was even, but his words made Erin’s heart miss a beat.

Candy and Dave exchanged a look, and the twitching in Candy’s lip grew worse. “No, it’s just . . .” She looked at the ground for a moment. “We kinda ran into some money troubles, you know? Tough to get a job when you’re, you know, pregnant and everything.”

The instant Erin heard the word *money*, she relaxed. Was that

all this was about? Candy was short on rent and needed a few hundred dollars? Their attorney had warned them against giving Candy additional money. Her financial needs during the pregnancy had already been taken care of, and Candy had signed a paper agreeing not to ask for anything extra.

But if she needed more money, then so be it. A few hundred dollars and they could all move on like before. Erin's heart rate slowed some. Her baby's face came to mind, the smooth skin and fine features, the way she'd always pictured her. Amy Elizabeth, their first child. Everything would be okay after all. Everything.

Sam was nodding, looking at Candy. "That happens." A fine line of moisture gathered along his upper lip. "Money gets tight for everyone."

Dave shifted his weight to the opposite foot. He gripped the tattoo on his left arm. "What she's saying—" he cocked his head—"is we need more money."

There it was. Erin swallowed. In case they'd had any doubts, now the request—a request all of them knew was against the rules—was out in the open. She caught Sam's look and gave him a silent go-ahead.

He stared at Candy. "Have you talked to the lawyer? I believe we agreed on what you needed."

"It wasn't enough." Candy glared at Sam. "You try raising kids and being pregnant on that kind of money."

Raising kids? Erin gritted her teeth. Candy wasn't raising the girls; their pastor had confirmed that on several occasions. Candy's mother was taking care of them. The fact that they were here now was purely show.

"Here's the deal." Dave pressed the toe of his worn boot into the ground and dug his hands in his pockets. He grinned, and Erin could see a gold stud in the center of his tongue. "We need more."

For a while no one said anything. The girls were quiet, still playing a distance away. Finally Erin found her voice and directed her attention to Candy. "How much?"

Above them, a warm wind played in the trees that lined the park. Candy pursed her lips. "Five thousand."

Erin had to grip Sam's arm to keep from falling off the bench. *Five thousand?* The adoption had already cost them their entire savings; they could never come up with that much money before the baby was born.

Candy was saying something, trying to explain, but Erin couldn't concentrate, couldn't hear anything but the number.

Five thousand dollars?

The figure tore at the picture of the unborn baby, the picture Erin had created in her mind of a little girl cradled in her arms. She gasped for breath and turned toward her husband. "Sam . . ."

He covered her hand with his, his teeth clenched. The figure was still finding its way to the recesses of Erin's mind when Dave delivered the final blow.

"Five thousand in twenty-four hours." He flashed a smile that fell far short of his eyes. "Or the deal's off."



The blood test had been the doctor's idea.

Not because he doubted whether she was HIV-positive. In fact, since he'd taken over Ashley's case, the doctor had called the original lab and discovered that they had done two tests with the original blood sample. Both were positive. Rather, he wanted a complete panel on her, a breakdown of her enzymes and mineral levels and every other test that might determine how healthy she was, how compromised her immune system. And most of all, what method of treatment to take.

Ashley expected the results to come by phone, the way they had the last time, but this warm Friday morning stuck in the middle of a stack of mail was a thick envelope from the lab. Ashley studied it as she made her way back into the house.

Cole was inside, writing his alphabet on a piece of paper. He grinned at her from the dining-room table as she walked in. "Hi,

Mom.” His feet didn’t quite reach the floor, and he swung them under his seat. “I’m on *T* already.”

“Really?” Ashley’s eyes were back on the envelope. “That’s great, buddy. Tell me when you’re done so I can check it.”

She went into the kitchen and set the rest of the mail on a desk by the telephone. She stared at the thick envelope, slipped her thumb beneath the flap, and pulled out the stapled document.

Next to her name, the top sheet read “Lab Results.”

Ashley had no reason to feel nervous or strange about the results. She already knew she was HIV-positive; it was only a matter of how her blood was holding up under the compromise of HIV, and whether any sort of progression toward full-blown AIDS could be seen.

Her eyes darted over the page, anxious for the summary lines, the places where any untrained person could make sense of the numbers and calculations. Then, at the bottom of the first sheet she saw it. A simple few lines with only a few words that made Ashley’s heart skitter into a strange and unrecognizable beat.

She sucked in a quick breath and blinked hard.

It was impossible; she couldn’t believe it, wouldn’t believe it. Someone had to have made a mistake.

Her head began to spin, and she gripped the counter to keep from falling to the floor. She had to find Landon, had to tell him.

“Mommy . . . I’m all done!” Cole’s singsong voice called out to her from the adjacent room. “Come check.”

“Okay.” Ashley’s face was hot and tingling, the way she felt when she got too close to a campfire. “Just a minute.” She pressed her hands against her cheeks and jerked back. Her fingers were freezing. She found the results line again. They couldn’t be right, could they?

A chill made its way from the back of her head, down her spine, and into her feet. *God, is it true? Is it really true?* Then one last time she studied the lab results and began to imagine that maybe—just maybe—they were right. It wasn’t possible, but still . . . what if? What if she’d come this far, given up so much,

only to find out this? She wasn't sure whether to scream or shout or break down on the floor and cry.

But she was sure of one thing.

If the results were accurate, from this moment on, her life would never be the same again.

A WORD FROM KAREN KINGSBURY



AND SO WE HAVE COME to the end of the Redemption series.

Sort of. I'll explain more about that later. First let's go back; let's revisit the journey of not only *Reunion*, but the entire Redemption series.

In writing *Reunion*, I felt again and again the faithfulness of God, working in me, going before me, speaking to me in the plot and story line. But it wasn't just his faithfulness in writing *Reunion*, but his faithfulness in seeing the entire Redemption series come to an end.

Everything the Baxter kids had to work through over the past several years had seen a transformation because of God's redemption. Not without consequences or sorrow, but always with his love and grace and hope.

I have to tell you, I hated outlining *Reunion*, because I couldn't imagine saying good-bye to the Baxter family. After writing five books with these characters, they felt more than real to me. I'd find myself talking about our weekly church service and referring to the pastor as Pastor Mark.

I also struggled with letting Elizabeth die, but God reminded me of something in the midst of writing *Reunion*. It isn't the number of our days that counts, but the life in our number.

Many of you know personally the pain of suffering. Whether you've lost a job or a friendship, or worse, a spouse or a child. Maybe someone you love has walked out of your life the way Tim walked out on Kari in *Redemption*.

Your situation might be overcoming a shameful past, the way it was for Ashley in *Remember*. Or maybe you've walked away from your faith and just need to understand again that God's still waiting for you, the way Luke had to understand that in *Return*. Perhaps you've been caught up in a tragedy, the way Brooke was

in *Rejoice*. If so, then the lessons there are yours also. That joy always comes in the morning, that only by keeping your attitude of worship and praise will you ever survive a tragedy.

Or maybe you're in the season of losing a parent, the way the Baxters were throughout *Reunion*. The sad experience of watching a parent die, or getting the call that a parent has passed suddenly, is one that most of us will experience. That's why I included it here.

It is my prayer that in reading Elizabeth's story, you might find strength for your own. That you would understand that God's will is always best—even when it doesn't line up with your own. And that yes, trouble will come into our lives, but still, God wins. In the end, he always wins. I'm so grateful for that.

People write to me every day telling me that I've captured their story in the lines of one of my novels. I don't think that's a coincidence. God has given me stories like the ones in the *Redemption* series so that each of you will know you're not alone. Whatever you're going through, other people around you have gone through the same thing.

Sure, we can fight God. We can get angry at him for our sufferings or our circumstances or even our consequences. But in the end, we must be like the disciples of Christ, who once witnessed dozens and dozens of people walking away during one of our Lord's priceless messages. Jesus waited until only the disciples were left. Then he turned to them and said, "What? Aren't you going too?" They answered the same thing you and I must answer, regardless of our situation: "Where would we go? To whom would we turn?"

Another theme I hope you've picked up on in the *Redemption* series is that God has great plans for your life. He loves you because you belong to him, because he made you. And as such, he knows the plans he has for you. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that, and it's a truth you can stand on forever.

Things aren't moving as quickly as you'd like? Ryan knew that feeling in *Redemption*. Confused about the place God has you in?

Landon understood that while he was digging through the rubble of the collapsed World Trade Center. Certain that morning will never come again? Peter knew that sort of darkness after Hayley's accident. Figuring God has forgotten about you? Check in with Reagan and the way she felt raising an infant by herself, a thousand miles from the man she loved. The verdict's in, the diagnosis is made, the casket's closed? John knows how it feels to think all of life is behind him.

But the truth is that for each of these—and for each of you—God still has a plan. A good plan, to give you a hope and a future.

From the beginning, when Gary Smalley asked me to consider writing a series of books that might illustrate his teachings about relationships, my hope and prayer have been not only that you would be entertained. Certainly I want you to feel that the Redemption series is good, clean, moral fiction. But my prayer is that these books have been so very much more.

I love hearing from you, so many thousands of you, who have written to tell me that the books in this series have changed your lives. Marriages have been restored, relationships have been healed, love has been brought back to life. And many times you have told me that the Redemption series introduced you to God, or better still, brought you back to him.

Because of your letters, I know God has abundantly blessed my prayers about these books. The end result of the Redemption series is so much greater than I ever could've dreamed way back when Gary and I had our first meeting.

On that note, yes, I've agreed to write more books for Tynedale, books that will branch off the one you're holding in your hand. Five of the books will be part of the Firstborn series, and four will make up the Sunrise series. All of them will be set in Bloomington, Indiana.

The Firstborn series will involve Dayne Matthews and his search for meaning in his life, and Katy Hart and her role as director of the Bloomington Christian Kids Theater. New families

and situations will be introduced, but Dayne's search—and other issues facing single people—will stand at the center.

The Sunrise series will involve the Flanigan family, Ryan Taylor's assistant coach, his wife, and children. This series is very close to my heart because in many ways it mirrors the lessons about love and life I've learned in these first fifteen years of being a wife and mother.

Like my own family, the Flanigans have six children, three who are adopted from Haiti. Two of the kids will be involved in the Christian Kids Theater, and Katy Hart, the director, will live in a garage apartment at the Flanigan house. So there will be a tie from the Sunrise series to the Firstborn series. The other four kids will be athletes. Dad is a coach, Mom is a writer, and people of all ages tend to wind up on their doorstep looking for hope and a new life in Christ.

Expect me to deal with situations involving a host of family issues including learning disabilities, teenage eating disorders, children who are picked on by their peers, teens at the beginning of dating and driving, teens who enlist to fight for our country, and the effect these types of issues have on a couple in love with God and with each other.

This is the life I live—and though there will be dramatic plot changes in the Flanigans' lives compared with my own—it is still my thrill and honor to use my family as a platform to bring you those four books in the Sunrise series.

The Firstborn series will be first, though. *Fame, Forgiven, Found, Family*, and *Forever* will be the titles in that series. Then I will bring you the Sunrise series—*Sunrise, Summer, Someday*, and *Sunset*.

Please pray for me as God brings the story lines into finer detail, as he makes clear to me the types of situations I should address in each of these eight books. I am truly thrilled and honored by this opportunity. I pray you will find these books as life-changing as my Redemption series.

As always, I would love to hear from you. Those of you who

have book clubs, please know that if you choose to read one of my books and would like me to “drop in” at your get-together, e-mail me at Karen@KarenKingsbury.com. I will try my best to arrange a phone conversation with your group at a meeting time that works for all of us (on speakerphone, of course). Or I will e-mail you a response that can be read aloud to your group.

This is one more way that I can stay in touch with you, the reader, the one I have prayed for as often as I have put my fingers to the keyboard.

By the way, my Web site has become something of a ministry. Please visit the Guest Book, the Reader Forum, the Prayer Ministry, or the Dear Karen section so you can share thoughts, make friends, get connected with a prayer partner, and find other people like yourself who are being touched by what God is doing in their lives.

Contact me at www.KarenKingsbury.com, or write to me at my above e-mail address.

Blessings in his light and love,

Karen Kingsbury

A WORD FROM GARY SMALLEY



HOLDING A REUNION is something most families do from time to time. But have you ever considered why it's important to get together, to gather in one place for a set-apart time? The reason is honor.

We show that we value our relationships when we make them a priority. That is what honor is all about—making the people we love a priority in our lives. The message Pastor Mark gave the Baxter family at the end of *Reunion* is one that stands for all of us. We don't own the people in our lives; rather we borrow them. They are gifts from God that we have for just a moment.

Since they are gifts, it is even more important that we realize how much our special people need to be honored. Yes, reunions can be chaotic. They can be costly, crazy, and sometimes corny—depending on who's telling the jokes. But the fact is, when people you love grow up and move away, getting together for a reunion is crucial. The following is a brief list of the benefits that can come when you go to the trouble of honoring those you love with a family reunion.

THREE BENEFITS OF HOLDING A FAMILY REUNION

1. Renewed Closeness

One way to honor someone you love is by listening to them. When that person lives far away, phone calls and letters—even instant messages—are rarely enough to maintain a strong bond. It is honoring to a family member to make the time for a family reunion, because then whole days can be spent sharing the experiences that have happened since the last time you were together.

2. Revitalized Memories

Since most reunions involve hours of talking, not only are experiences shared, but memories are brought up. People at reunions tend to take the past, dust it off, and hold it up for everyone to laugh and cry and marvel at all over again. In doing so, this keeps the sense of family alive and well, not only for your generation but for the one to come. It is honoring to everyone in the family to make your memories and your heritage something worth investing in.

3. Rekindled Love

There's nothing like taking someone in your arms and holding them to let them know they are loved. The best part of a family reunion is the time spent simply being close to the people you care about. Holding hands with your son or daughter, bouncing a grandbaby on your knee, getting reacquainted with an aunt or uncle. All of it shows that you have made family a priority. This is honoring to everyone involved.

Reunion shows the importance of taking time for each other. This, of course, is just one aspect of keeping strong relationships in your family. The other Redemption series books illustrate many others.

If you or someone you love needs counseling or other resources to improve a key relationship, contact us at:

Smalley Relationship Center

1482 Lakeshore Drive
Branson, MO 65616

Phone: 800-84TODAY (848-6329)

Fax: (417) 336-3515

E-mail: family@smalleyonline.com

Web site: www.smalleyonline.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions for individual reflection or for discussion with a book club or other small group. They will help you not only understand some of the issues in *Reunion* but also integrate some of the book's messages into your own relationships.

Note: Those of you who have book clubs, please know that if you choose to read one of my books and would like me to “drop in” at your get-together, e-mail me at Karen@KarenKingsbury.com. I will try my best to arrange a phone conversation with your group at a meeting time that works for all of us (on speakerphone, of course). Or I will e-mail a response that can be read aloud to your group.

1. How did you feel when you realized Elizabeth Baxter's cancer had come back? Explain.
2. Describe a time when you received bad news. How did you handle that news?
3. Describe how Elizabeth and John handled the news of her cancer. How did that response change as her disease progressed?
4. What emotional process did Erin and Sam go through as they yearned for a child, and then experienced a failed adoption?
5. Have you ever adopted or do you know someone who has? Why is it wonderful that certain women and girls put their babies up for adoption?
6. Describe the blessing of an adopted child. What are some of the issues that can make adoption both a source of joy and sorrow?
7. How did God lead Erin and Sam through the process of loss and unknown circumstances? What specifically did they do or decide to do that brought them peace and miraculous changes in their situation?
8. John Baxter has been strong through most of the Redemption series. Explain why he was afraid in *Reunion*.

9. Have you or has someone you know ever grown fearful after being strong, after having an unshakable faith? How did this person deal with the fear?
10. How did John Baxter deal with his fear? How did his emotions and attitude change as Elizabeth's disease progressed?
11. Elizabeth prayed for a miracle healing; instead God gave her a series of other miracles. Explain these.
12. Describe what you think a miracle is. Do miracles still happen today? Explain.
13. Tell about a miracle that happened in your life. Did you recognize it as a miracle at the time?
14. Ashley has loved Landon Blake for years, but things between them never seemed to work out until *Reunion*. Describe the highs and lows of their relationship.
15. Have you ever experienced a relationship or a situation where the process of growing closer and more serious took far longer than you expected? Tell about that time, and how God led you through it.
16. Dayne Matthews has everything the world tells us is important: good looks, fame, and fortune. Why wasn't Dayne happy?
17. Is there someone in your life who is feeling empty about life? Why do you think they feel this way? What can you do to help that person know God's truth better?
18. Have you or has someone you know lost a parent recently? Describe the feelings you or that person went through during the process and afterwards. What hope does God give us in this situation?
19. Describe a favorite moment from a family reunion. If you can't tell about one, maybe it's time to get out the calendar and plan one.
20. What are the greatest lessons you learned from *Reunion*? Explain what Elizabeth meant in her letter when she said that redemption was their family's theme.