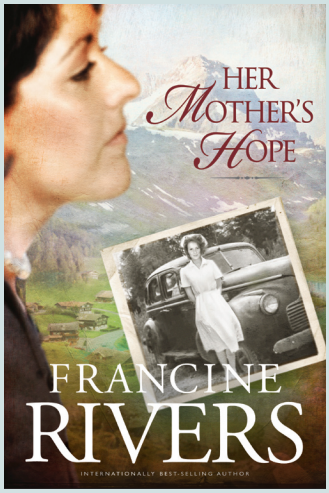
ISBN: 978-1-4143-1863-9



Her Mother's Hope

The first in an epic two-book saga by beloved author Francine Rivers, this sweepingstoryexploresthecomplicated relationships between mothers and daughters over several generations.

FRANCINE RIVERS
Shortly after becoming a born-again Christian in 1986, Francine wrote Redeeming Love as her statement of faith. Francine has published numerous novels with Christian themes—all best sellers—and she has continued to win both industry acclaim and reader loyalty around the globe. Francine and her husband, Rick, live in northern California and enjoy time spent with their three grown children and taking every opportunity to spoil their grandchildren.

discussion questions

1. Marta certainly had a difficult childhood. What factors shaped her the most, for better or worse? How do those influences shape the woman she becomes?
2. How does Marta's relationship with her father shape her early beliefs about God and His expectations? How is it different from the way Mama sees God? What seems to make the biggest impression on the way Marta views God? Does that change throughout the story? If so, what causes that change?
3. At the end of chapter 4, Marta's mother gave her a blessing when she left home to make her way in the world. In what ways, verbal or otherwise, did your parents give you their bless¬ing? If they didn't, what do you wish they had said to you? In what ways did you—or do you hope to someday—do the same for your own children?
4. It has been said that women often marry a version of their father. How is Niclas like and unlike Marta's father? In what ways is Niclas both passive and aggressive? Marta sometimes seems to harbor resentment toward Niclas. Is that fair?
5. Marta has a hard time trusting Niclas because of the way her father treated her mother. How do you think that makes Niclas feel? In what ways—good or bad—has your family of origin affected your marriage or close friendships?
6. Niclas asks Marta to sell the boardinghouse she bought as the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. Is that an appropriate request? What do you think of the way Niclas makes the decision and communicates it to Marta? If you were Marta, what would you have done in that situation? Have you faced a similar decision in your marriage or family?
7. Marta sometimes makes it difficult for Niclas to be the head of their household. Does Marta view herself as a helpmate to Niclas? Do you think he sees her in that way? How is he able to love Marta despite her sometimes-prickly nature?
8. Why does Marta never tell Niclas—or anyone else in her family—that she loves them? How does Marta best show and receive love?
9. In many ways, Marta is like the woman described in Proverbs 31. Which of the qualities described in that passage do you see in her? Which ones is she missing?

discussion questions continued

10. After rescuing Elise from the Meyers in chapter 5, Marta tells her friend, "I swear before God, Rosie, if I'm ever fortunate enough to have a daughter, I'll make sure she's strong enough to stand up for herself!" How do Marta's family dynamics come into play later in life when she has children of her own?

11. Marta loves Hildemara deeply. Yet of all her children, Hildemara probably feels the least loved. Why is that? Is treating children differently the same as favoring one over another? What challenges make it difficult to raise all the kids in a family exactly the same? How hard should parents strive to do so?

12. Have you ever felt, as Hildemara did, that others in your family have unfairly received a greater share of love, financial provision, or some other valuable resource? How did you respond? What advice would you give someone in this situation?

13. After Hildemara's incident with her teacher Mrs. Ransom, Hildemara tells her father that she prayed and prayed, but her prayers didn't change the situation. Niclas replies, "Prayers changed you, Hildemara." What does he mean by that? Have you ever had a similar experience?

14. Why is Marta so averse to Hildemara's decision to attend nursing school? Does she ever change her mind about Hildemara's chosen profession?

15. For several months, Hildemara keeps Trip at arm's length. Why do you think she does that? What makes her finally admit her love for him?

16. Trip, like many men of his generation, has tragic, life-altering experiences in World War II. Have you heard stories from or about men in your own family who were similarly affected? Have any of your loved ones been involved in more recent wars? How has war affected your family?

17. Tuberculosis is much rarer today than it was in Marta's and Hildemara's lifetimes. Yet life-threatening and chronic illnesses have never been more prevalent. How has your family been impacted by serious illness? Discuss the strain illness can place on family dynamics, regardless of the "relational health" a family may have at the outset.

18. If you could change one thing about the way you were parented, what would it be? And if you have children, is there anything you wish you could change about the way you've parented them? What is one step you could take in that direction?

19. At the end of this book Marta is determined, with God's help, to make a fresh start with Hildemara. Do you think she will succeed? Why or why not? How do you think Hildemara will respond? Is there hope for this relationship?

20. If you could sit down with Marta and Hildemara, what would you like to tell each of them? Is there someone in your family you need to talk with about mistakes or misperceptions from the past that are still affecting you today? If you have unresolved issues with a loved one who has passed away, who might you talk with to try to reach some closure for yourself?

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