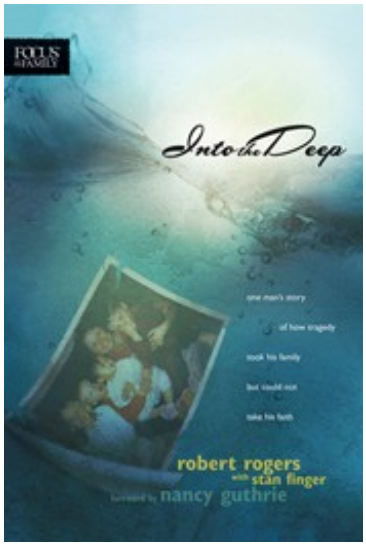


Chapter 1

1. What do you look forward to most in the morning: going to work or coming home? Why? Do you live to work, or do you work to live?
2. What routines or rituals does your family engage in on weeknights or weekends? Is there anything you might adjust in your schedule to make your limited family time more memorable?
3. The author describes how he always included at least one of his children in whatever he was doing, from taking them on business trips to making pancakes and decorating the car. If you are a parent, how true is this of you? What could you do to include your children more in your activities?
4. How evident is it that the Lord is the center of your family? What can you do to give Him the centrality He deserves?

Chapter 2

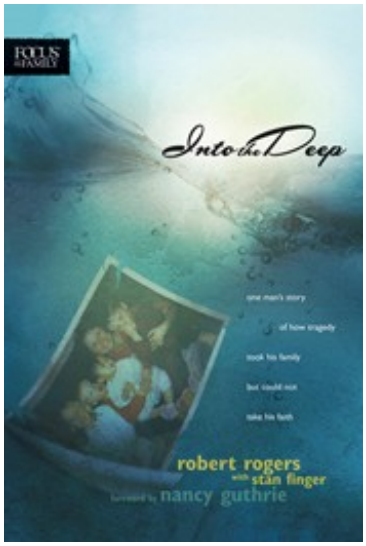
1. The Rogers family always prayed the same prayer for protection when they traveled. Though God answered positively on all their other trips, He didn't this time. Look back at that prayer on page 7 and reflect on God's answer for their trip back from Wichita on Labor Day weekend.
2. Does it strike you as odd that the Rogers family was singing praise songs, quoting Scripture, and praying in the middle of this crisis? When you have been in a crisis situation, what did you do? Was God in your thoughts?
3. Ryan Lane and Al Larsen came to offer help. Al lost his life in that attempt. If you saw others in a life-threatening situation, do you think you would have the courage to come to their aid? Why or why not?
4. Think of a time in your life when you felt helpless. Who or what did you look to for help? Why and how did this work out?
5. Robert describes the peace he felt in the midst of his struggle in the raging waters. Have you ever experienced this kind of peace that defies explanation? When? Why do you think you had this peace?

Chapter 3

1. Robert says that in the hospital he felt completely alone and stripped of his identity. What in your life identifies you? Where do you look for security? How would you react if these things were suddenly gone or taken from you?
2. The questions that Robert raises at the end of the chapter clearly show that he was questioning God. Do you think it's possible to hold fast to your faith even when your heart is struggling with doubt?
3. How do you react when it appears that God has not answered your prayers or has allowed something to happen that hurt you?

Chapter 4

1. How do you explain the peace that Robert experienced despite hearing the news that the bodies of his three youngest children had been found? How did Scripture help him at that moment?
2. Robert spoke these powerful words over the bodies of each of his children: "Father, into your hands I commend his/her spirit." What was your reaction to this when you read it? What does this statement mean to you?
3. Robert recognizes that his children always fully belonged to the Lord. Are there things in your life that you claim ownership of that you need to entrust to the Lord? Why is this important to do?
4. In this chapter, Robert states that the pain would have been unbearable if he hadn't had the hope and comfort of knowing that his children were now safely in the arms of Jesus. If you have experienced the death of a loved one, was this truth something you clung to for strength? What helped you during that difficult time?



Chapter 5

1. The hospital staff went out of their way to assist and support Robert and his family members and friends while they were at the hospital. Has there ever been a time in your life when strangers came to your aid and expected nothing in return? Have you ever had an opportunity to minister to a stranger in need or crisis? How did you handle that situation?
2. It is evident that Robert's parents and upbringing played a crucial role in how he was able to handle this tragedy. Did your upbringing prepare you for how to handle crises? If you are a parent, how are you raising your children to deal with life's crises?
3. Have you considered and discussed organ donation for yourself and/or a family member? If not, take a moment to talk about your feelings on that subject. Have you actually had to make the decision of organ donation in the case of the death of a loved one? How did this help or intensify the grieving process?

Chapter 6

1. Robert's boss gave him some advice that Robert took to heart: Don't blame yourself for what you didn't do or could have done. Think of a time when a friend or acquaintance had just the right advice for you at just the right time. What was the advice? How did it help you? Have you been able to pass on that advice to others?
2. Have you ever struggled to move beyond past failures or mistakes or guilt from deeds undone or past sins? Do you believe God wants you to live in guilt? Why or why not? How can living with guilt harm your relationships and negatively affect your life?
3. What are some practical ways we can avoid living in guilt? Has there been a time when you had to release guilt? Did forgiveness, confession, or acceptance play a role in that situation?
4. Has there been a time in your life when your faith was tested to its core? How did you respond? How did it change you?

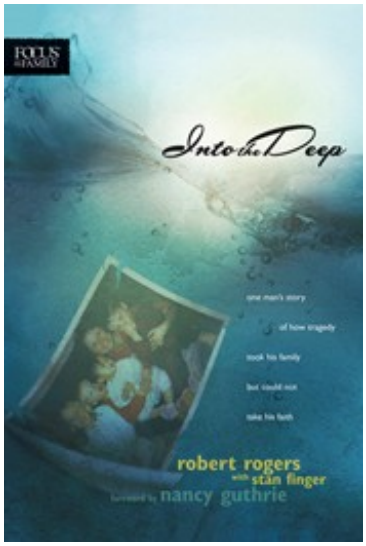
Chapter 7

1. The press conference turned out to be a significant event in Robert's life. The Holy Spirit gave him the courage and the words to deeply impact the observers. Reflect on all that Robert experienced up to that point and how the Lord used it to bring glory to Himself despite the horrible circumstances.
2. What can we learn from Robert's example of taking advantage of an opportunity to speak the name of the Lord with boldness?
3. Have you ever had an experience in which you believe the Holy Spirit gave you the words to speak? Did this experience increase your faith? How?
4. Robert writes, "I surrendered my will, and God took over, lifting me to a level of living I'd never known before." How can you relate to this experience? What does this tell you about yourself and about the Lord?
5. Could you relate to Robert's sister and brother-in-law needing to do something concrete, such as going to the flood site and searching for Melissa? How so? How did the Lord honor those efforts?

Chapter 8

1. Reread Robert's struggle with the Lord on pages 73–75, when he identified Melissa's body. Why was it important for him to voice these questions? What conclusion did he come to?

2. Consider the impact the song “It is Well with My Soul” had on Robert during this time. Has there been a song that has had a similar effect on you during a time of crisis or hardship? What was that song? Do you still feel some of that impact when you listen to it now?
3. During dreadful times in your life, how have you prayed? Are you able to be completely honest with God? If not, why not?

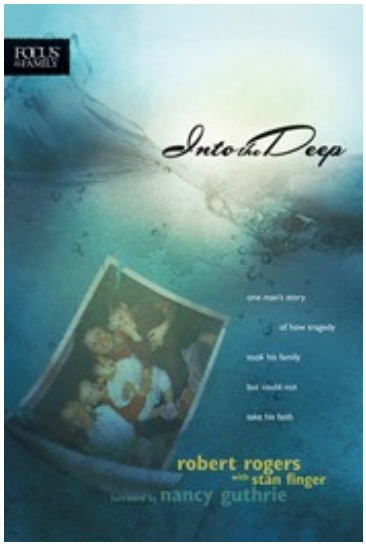


Chapter 9
1. What do you think of the fact that Robert chose to face his fears directly by going to the flood site after Melissa’s body was found? Why was this important to him? Is there something in your life now that you are afraid to face? How can God and others help you to do this? Is God conveying to you that there is a place you need to go to or a person you need to talk to at this time?
2. Reflect on the remark that one of Robert’s sisters made at the flood site: “Your family made everything they did . . . sacred.” What do you think she meant by that?
3. Can you open your heart and allow God to meet you in the darkest times of your life? If not, what can you do to open your heart to Him?

Chapter 10
1. This chapter is one of several that demonstrates how music played a key role in the life of the Rogers family. When Robert returned to his home, he looked at the piano and recalled many sweet memories of family time around it. What traditions play a major role in your family and why?
2. Robert’s prior knowledge of Scripture proved to be a source of comfort throughout his painful situation. If you faced a disaster tomorrow, are you familiar enough with the Bible to know where to turn to for comfort and wisdom? If not, what could you do to become more familiar?
3. How would you describe the “scent” or “aroma” of your home?

Chapter 11
1. As Robert demonstrates with his piano playing during childhood, God has blessed each of us with gifts and talents to be shared. What may keep you from using and sharing these things?
2. How have you seen God use your gifts for His glory in the lives of others?
3. Think about a time in your life when you have had to make a decision or a change similar to the one Robert made to change schools and majors. What prompted you? How did you seek the wisdom of God in your decision? How was your life later affected by this decision?
4. After making a significant decision to change majors, Robert relays that he latched on to a concept he followed from that time forward: “Go where the peace is.” What does this mean to you? Have you followed a decision that was not peaceful? Do you think God would ever take you somewhere that you don’t have a peace about?

Chapter 12
1. Robert was looking for adventure when he moved to Boston. Do you think it is honoring to God when we take a step of faith out of our comfort zones? Why or why not? What might adventure look like in your life?
2. If you are married, think back to when you met your spouse. What memories especially stand out and why? What role do those beginnings play in your relationship now?
3. Think of a time when you made a decision that defied logic but that you now recognize was clearly God leading you in a new direction. How did you feel at the time?



Chapter 13

1. Think about the importance of Robert recalling the details of his first date with Melissa in light of everything that had happened. How does recalling significant moments help someone as they deal with their grief?
2. Melissa escaped many close brushes with death early in her life, and yet God didn't spare her in the flash flood. Describe how you think God's providence allows these sorts of events and contradictions.
3. Melissa was able to forgive her abuser. Is there someone in your own life whom you haven't forgiven, some relationship that needs restoration?

Chapter 14

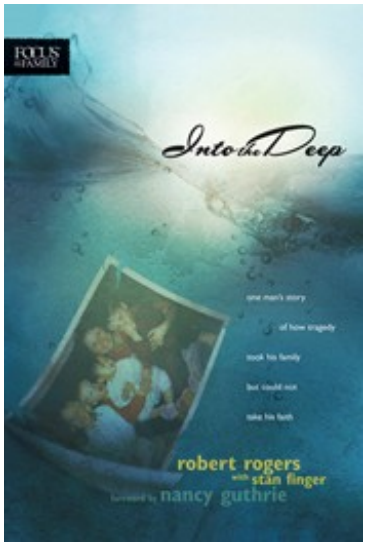
1. Melissa made a difficult decision to drop out of school and move so she could be closer to Robert even though they had no set plans to marry at that time. Was there ever a time in your life that you felt led to make a decision that may have appeared foolish to others but you sensed was right for you? What was the outcome of that decision?
2. Just as Melissa betrayed Robert, we often turn away from God even though we know His love is perfect. Have you ever feared that something or someone was "too good to be true"? How did you react to the situation?
3. In what ways do you think Melissa's background and upbringing influenced her actions and feelings toward Robert?

Chapter 15

1. Robert chose to forgive Melissa when she "cheated" on him during their engagement. Forgiveness is a powerful thing. Discuss a time when forgiveness healed a deep wound in your relationships.
2. Robert says that he had to learn to rely solely on God's love because human love can fail you. What should this look like in our interactions and expectations within relationships?
3. Robert and Melissa's love took time to develop and trials to prove true. Describe an instance in your life when the most precious thing took time to wait for and took a crucible to prove true.
4. Robert and Melissa's wedding day was a memorable event. If you are married, what special memories do you have about your wedding day? If you're unmarried, has there been a wedding you've attended that seemed especially unique? What stood out to you?

Chapter 16

1. How was Robert and Melissa's faith tested and strengthened by tithing? What has God revealed to you about your giving as a result of this testimony?
2. A pastor friend made a significant comment to Robert that affected him for the rest of his marriage and even his life. That comment was, "Family is your first ministry." What changes did Robert make after hearing this? What other decisions can you recall that the Rogers family made because they agreed with that statement?
3. Why do you think the family is so important to God? Would you say that your family is your first priority? Do your actions and choices reflect this truth?
4. Robert and Melissa were not able to have the at-home birth they had planned for; God had other plans. Discuss the importance of committing our plans to the Lord.



Chapter 17
1. How do you see God's presence with the Rogers family through Melissa's ectopic pregnancy and near-death experience? In what ways have you been able to see God's hand in your life during emergencies?
2. Despite the sacrifices involved, Robert and Melissa made an intentional decision to move to the Kansas City area to be near Melissa's family and strengthen those family ties. How did this work out? Do you think they made the right decision?
3. What intentional sacrifices have you made to strengthen family ties? What has been the result?

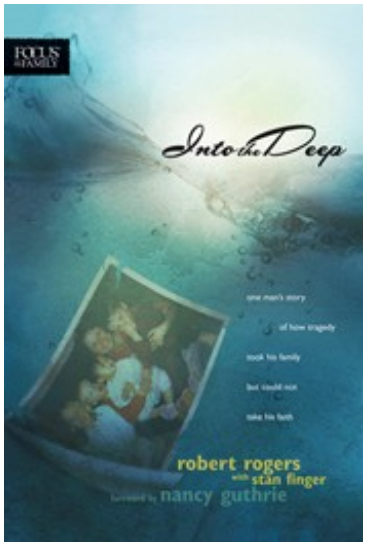
Chapter 18
1. What did you learn about the challenges of raising a child with Down syndrome? How did having Zachary test Robert and Melissa's faith?
2. With each testing of their faith, both Robert and Melissa came back to the fact that God is still good and has a plan and purpose for each of His children. How have you experienced this truth, and what impact has it had on how you live?
3. Think of the amount of care Robert and Melissa put into raising and loving Zachary. How does this situation and their unconditional love remind you of God's love for all people?
4. As recipients of this patient and pursuing love, how should we respond to God? How do we often respond? Why?
5. Reflect upon Melissa's journal entry on Thanksgiving Day 1998 (pages 138–139). How can you relate to what she wrote?

Chapter 19
1. Melissa wrote about being a mother in the beginning of the chapter. Think about what she wrote in relation to your experiences with your mother or as a parent yourself.
2. Melissa was willing to give her life for her children—the greatest sacrifice. What opportunities have you had to love sacrificially? What areas of your life may you need to sacrifice for the sake of others?
3. What was Robert and Melissa's response to their near-death experience in the riptide? How did this experience affect their lives from that point on?
4. Have you ever had a near-death experience when you knew—beyond all doubt—that God spared your life? Describe what that was like.

Chapter 20
1. The adoption process required much work, patience, and perseverance. Yet Robert mentions several times that it was worthwhile. What experiences have you or someone you know had with adoption, and what was learned from this experience?
2. The adoption process was full of pressure for Robert and Melissa. What high-pressure situations has your family dealt with lately? How have you handled them?
3. Take a moment to think about adoption from Alenah's point of view. How are we like Alenah? How have we been similarly adopted when we were helpless?

Chapter 21
1. Robert describes his family's last summer together. What are your impressions as you read this account? Can you relate to some of it? Why or why not?

2. The Rogers family was content to be together during the summer. What would it look like for you and your family to slow down and be content?
3. As Robert reflects back, he sees that God was preparing not only his family for what was to come but also extended family members, with the touching good-byes they had after visits. Think back on circumstances in your life and how the Lord prepared the way beforehand. How does this strengthen your faith?
4. How do you capture priceless moments? Pictures, videos, journal entries?

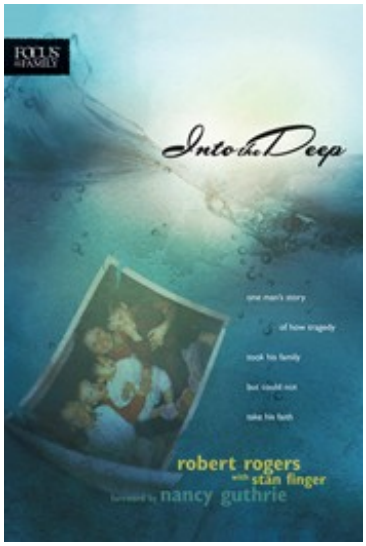


Chapter 22
1. Robert added a qualification to the saying that God never gives your more than you can bear: “God will always give you more than you can bear alone, because he doesn’t want you to bear it without Him.” Reflect upon events in your own life and the applicability of this statement to those events.
2. Recall how you felt when you unexpectedly lost a loved one. Which emotion was strongest: your happiness for them, your sadness for yourself, or your bitterness toward God?
3. Robert describes how being emptied of himself allowed him to be filled up with God. What has this pattern looked like in your own life? How do you struggle to empty yourself?

Chapter 23
1. Melissa’s mom relayed in a conversation with Robert that she regretted not spending more time with their family. As he listened, Robert reflected on words he had just used in his latest press conference—that he had no regrets. If someone asked you today if you had any regrets about your family time, what would your response be and why? What one or two things could you change now so that later you could look back and have no regrets in that area of your life?
2. Despite the tragic circumstances, the Lord was glorified with every opportunity Robert had to speak to the public: press conferences, television interviews, the candlelight vigil, and so on. When you face difficult times, are you able to look to God and see His hand and feel His presence? Do you recognize opportunities to witness God’s grace and sovereignty in the circumstances? Are there areas in your life you would like to change so that when difficult times come you can respond in healthy ways?
3. Consider and discuss times in your life when you knew that God unmistakably restored your soul as described in Psalm 23.

Chapter 24
1. How do you react when you visit a funeral home? How can you relate to Robert’s experience?
2. What was your reaction when you read that Robert’s family would be buried in a setting very similar to the one where they died?
3. What was your reaction to the CBS technician’s comment after seeing Robert’s interview?

Chapter 25
1. What were your thoughts and feelings as you read about the private viewing at the funeral home?



2. Writing notes to each other was a regular activity for the Rogers family. Robert was able to leave one last SHMILY (See How Much I Love You) for each of his family members. All these notes over the years are especially precious to Robert now. Have you ever written a note to a loved one just to tell them you care? Ask the Lord to show you whom to write a note to in the next few days. If you have trouble writing it, ask Him to help you come up with the words.
3. As Robert consoled his family at the funeral home, he was consoled. Describe times in your life when by giving, you really received; and by consoling, you were really comforted.
4. Think about Robert and his extended family singing joyful songs after the viewing. Discuss what you have learned about the nature and power of joy in a believer's life.

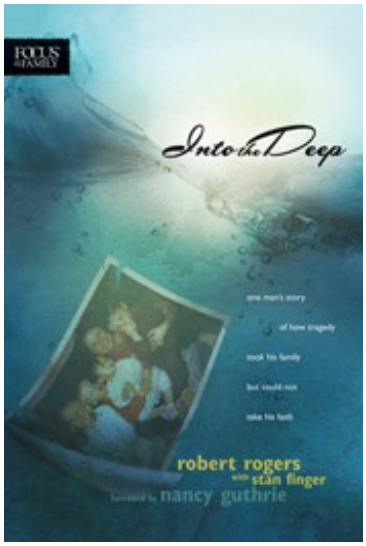
Chapter 26
1. On the morning of the funeral, Robert continued his habit of daily prayer. He even thanked God for his blessings. How did an attitude of thanksgiving help him through this? Do you have an overall attitude of thanksgiving? If not, how can you cultivate one?
2. How did the examples of Abraham and Job strengthen Robert? How have examples of faith, endurance, and patience in the Bible helped you?
3. Do you live your life with an eternal perspective? Do you live for what is really going to last? What are those things that might tempt you to focus on them, rather than on those things that will last?

Chapter 27
1. After reading about the "God-incidence" of the picture Makenah drew, we see that God works in mysterious ways in the lives of His people. Do you limit the way you look for the presence of God in your life? How so?
2. Robert conveys that the picture of the calendar that Makenah drew and the photo from the wedding were gifts from God. What did he mean by this? Think about a time when you felt you were given a similar gift that allowed you to see God's hand in the middle of circumstances.
3. Robert released balloons as a symbol of releasing his family members. What tools of surrender have worked for you in releasing your pain and your past?

Chapter 28
1. Robert recognizes that he will always be filled with something—either the world or God. Which do you think most characterizes you? Why?
2. Robert quit his job a few weeks after the deaths of his family, since his main purpose for working was to support them. He was not defined by his career. Can you relate to this? Why or why not?
3. The cross-country train trip Robert took was painful and healing at the same time as he visited many of the places he had been with Melissa and the children. How did this trip help his grieving process? What was the result?

Chapter 29
1. Have you witnessed examples of great misery blossoming into ministry? How did you respond?

2. Robert made the conscious decision to be alone that first Christmas Eve, Christmas morning, and New Year's Eve (his wedding anniversary). Over and over again, we read that Robert faced the pain and the memories head-on. What does this reveal to you about him? What pain and memories are you afraid to face at this time? How can Robert's example help you begin to face those issues?



Chapter 30

1. God's Word was revered, read, obeyed, and memorized by the Rogers family. Robert writes, "The foundation of my family's lives was our faith. And the foundation of our faith was Scripture." What role does God's Word have in your life?
2. Have there been times when things other than God have filled your emptiness? What was that like?
3. What does it look like to worship God with our lives, not just in song?
4. Robert made the deliberate choice to continue to trust, obey, worship, and be filled by God. Have you made that choice? Will you trust God today with your life and your circumstances?

Notes