

In the Presence of My Enemies

Book Guide

Chapter 1: Seized at Dawn

How do you think you would react if you were kidnapped in the middle of the night as Martin and Gracia were?

In the wake of the kidnapping, Gracia asked herself some “what if” questions, What if she had not suggested a getaway trip for their anniversary? What if they had stayed in a garden cabin instead of over the water? Have you ever been in a situation where you were haunted by “what if” questions?

What were the effects of the prayers and the singing on the hostages? Explain.

Chapter 2: Bright Beginnings

What factors in Gracia’s upbringing helped to prepare her to become a missionary? To deal with the hostage situation?

What personal qualities of Martin’s boded well for his future as a missionary?

Chapter 3: The Nicest Guy

What qualities attracted Gracia to Martin, and Martin to Gracia?

Do you think that they were well suited for each other? Explain.

Chapter 4: Rookies

What lessons did Gracia learn in jungle camp that prepared her for missionary work?

Do you think it’s important for prospective missionaries to undergo the rigorous experience of jungle camp before they are assigned overseas? Why or why not?

Think of an experience that was difficult for you to endure. In retrospect, did you learn any important lessons during that time? Did you experience personal growth that made the experience worth the discomfort?

Chapter 5: Toddlers and Traffic

What are the challenges of bringing up young children on the mission field?

What do you think it’s like for American missionaries to return to the U. S. on furlough after living in another culture for several years? What do you think it’s like for their children?

Gracia describes the ethical dilemma of paying bribes in the Philippines. What is your viewpoint on this topic? Explain.

Chapter 6: The Perils of Palawan

What do you think a tradition like Thanksgiving dinner means to a missionary who is far from home?

What are some of the challenges for people of different backgrounds and beliefs living in tight quarters? What kinds of behaviors ease the conflicts? What exacerbates them?

Chapter 7: Hospital of Horror

At what point did the hostages, in Gracia's eyes, stoop to the level of their captors?

Do you think there is ever a point at which self-preservation justifies violating moral standards? Explain.

Chapter 8: The Threat

Why were Martin and Guillermo considered to be the captors' "prime bargaining chips"? Were they truly worth more than the other hostages?

Why were the captives fearful of being spotted by the Philippine armed forces instead of confident they could trust them as potential rescuers?

Describe some of the ways that God came through to provide for the Burnhams, even in small ways, during this time. Reflect on how they learned to take nothing—not even the smallest kindness or simplest provision—for granted.

Chapter 9: Left Behind

What was the significance of Martin's many talks with Guillermo about his need to accept Christ?

Discuss the captors' inconsistent moral code; for example, their refusal to let unmarried men and women sleep near each other, while taking single women for themselves. What are some ways that each of us can avoid hypocrisy as we seek to live out our faith?

Chapter 10: Surrounded

Describe Stockholm Syndrome as defined near the beginning of this chapter. Why do you think this happens in kidnapping situations?

Why had Martin and Gracia come to the Philippines in the first place? Were they able to carry out any of this work while they were captive, even in small ways?

Chapter 11: A Song for the Jungle

The hostages experienced great joy at receiving letters from home. What is the importance of a letter to a person in this type of situation?

Gracia describes her own crisis of faith. Have you ever been angry with God? If so, what was the outcome? What turned Gracia's crisis around?

Chapter 12: Justice or Mercy?

Describe some of the differences between Islam and Christianity, as discussed by Solaiman and Martin—particularly each religion’s teachings on justice and mercy.

Were you surprised to learn that the Burnhams had been praying for their captors every day? Would you have been able to do that if you were in their shoes? Why or why not?

Chapter 13: September 11

What was the usual Abu Sayyaf response to death? How does it differ from the Christian response?

What was the Abu Sayyaf reaction to the events of September 11, 2001? Why? How did these events increase the kidnapping to a global, rather than local, incident?

Chapter 14: Wedding Time

Why was it important for Gracia to block her emotions? Do you think that this helped her to survive the ordeal?

What did Gracia do to remind herself of the promises of God? How does this reinforce that Scripture memory is more than just an exercise for Christians?

Chapter 15: The Package

Gracia writes, “Human nature seems to find ways to justify its wrongdoing, to move ahead with what serves its self-interests, and then to figure out an explanation so it doesn’t sound so bad.” Do you agree? Can you think of any examples from your own experience where this was true?

Why did Martin and Gracia share their box of treats with the others? What do you think this action said to their captors?

Chapter 16: Silent Nights

What made Christmas good for the Burnhams? Do you think Gracia will ever think of holiday feasts in the same way again?

What was the powerful lesson that God taught Martin at “Camp Contentment”? What made it so remarkable? Was their ordeal any different after that?

Chapter 17: So Close

Discuss the remarks made by Muhammad Ali about Islam in the wake of the September 11 attacks. How did Ali’s view of Islam compare with that of the Burnhams’ captors?

At times Gracia wished she’d never been born. What kept her going?

Chapter 18: Ransomed!

What was the Burnhams' reaction when they were told that their ransom had been paid? Did it turn out to be true?

What signs of God's provision for the Burnhams are listed in this chapter?

Chapter 19: One Rainy Afternoon

What encouragement did the Burnhams receive from the radio broadcast on KNLS? How did it speak to their hearts?

What sorts of emotions must have been swirling through Gracia during and after the rescue?

Chapter 20: The Embassy

How was Gracia's planned speech to President Arroyo different from what she actually ended up saying? What do you think accounts for the difference?

Why was it important for Gracia to talk to her family in detail about Martin's death?

Chapter 21: Going Home

What do you think some of Gracia's worries were as she contemplated her new status as a single mom?

How did Martin's funeral become a time of rejoicing for Gracia, as well as a time for sorrow?

Chapter 22: Reflections

Gracia writes, "People in today's world, whether Muslim or not, will not pay attention to Christians because we can explain our theology in crystal-clear terms. They will not esteem us because we give to charity or maintain a positive outlook on life. What will impress them is genuine love in our hearts." What are some practical ways that you can exhibit this kind of love to people who don't know the Lord?

What do you think it will be like if Gracia's children ever get to stand next to an Abu Sayyaf member who has come to know the Lord?