

On Sale: December 5th, 2023

“An emotional and moving story of family, grief, and forgiveness.”
—SHERYL LISTER, author of *A Table for Two*

the
YEAR
of
GOODBYES
and
HELLOS
a novel
KELLY IRVIN



Hello, readers!

I'm always excited to connect with readers. They're among my favorite people (right behind my husband, kids, and grandkids!) That includes book clubs! This is particular true with my first book in the women's fiction genre, *The Year of Goodbyes and Hellos*, from Thomas Nelson Publishing. This is a very special book to me, born out of my own experiences of living with Stage 4 ovarian cancer for more than seven years. This frightening, anxiety-filled season in my life has also allowed me the opportunity to fulfill my lifelong dream of writing fulltime. I'll always be in treatment for the rest of my life, but clinical trials are now keeping me alive. How or why I've been blessed with more time than many women diagnosed with this disease remains a mystery to me, but I try to honor those women by making the very best use of the time I've been given. Kristen and Sherri's story is one way of doing that.

I know this story will hit home with many readers who've experienced cancer themselves or cared for a loved one living with cancer. It's a life changing experience difficult for anyone who hasn't walked through the season to understand. Writing *The Year of Goodbyes and Hellos* helped me sort through my feelings and gather my wits for the journey forward. I hope it will resonate with readers as well.

I also hope it will made for good discussion in your book club. I've created a list of discussion questions to help kickstart those conversations. I'd love to engage with your book club regarding Kristen, Sherri, and Daniel's story. If your club meets in the San Antonio metro area, an in-person appearance could be arranged. Otherwise I'm open to virtual discussions on platforms such as Zoom and Skype. Feel free to reach out to me to discuss the possibilities. Send me an email to kelly@kellyirvin.com.

Here's the book cover blurb:

“Two sisters work to heal lingering childhood wounds and seek a new balance in work, family, marriage, and love when one receives a diagnosis that sets the clock ticking.

Determined to save Sherri's life, Kristen drops everything to guide her sister on the harrowing cancer treatment journey. When she's unable to balance the strain of caring for her patients, being a wife and mother, and her frantic efforts to save her sister, Kristen's carefully balanced life crumbles, starting with her marriage. Desperate to regain her footing, she vows to rebuild her broken relationships . . . as soon she's sure Sherri will beat the odds stacked against her.

Unlike her sister, Sherri Reynolds has worked to cultivate balance in her life. Her children, her job as a teacher, and her strong faith keep her grounded—until her diagnosis sends her spiraling into the scary world of what-ifs and unknown outcomes. Sherri faces the agonizing realization that family history may be about to repeat itself. With the clock ticking, she's determined to use whatever time she has left to heal old wounds and restore relationships.

Together, the sisters are forced to reexamine their priorities, address the still tender wounds of their childhood, and delve more deeply to discover what it means to live each day to its fullest.”

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I hope to talk soon!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Award-winning author **Kelly Irvin** has published more than 35 Amish romances, romantic suspense novels, and novellas. While the characters, settings, and themes vary widely in these disparate genres, all of Kelly's books feature powerful stories of strong women who struggle with difficult trials. Readers often will relate as they walk through similar seasons. A retired public relations professional, Kelly lives with her husband, Tim, in San Antonio. They have two children, four grandchildren, and two ornery cats.

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REVIEWS & PRAISE

“Kelly Irvin has crafted an emotional and moving story of family, grief, and forgiveness, and reminds us of God’s unfailing love, even in the midst of the storm.”

—Sheryl Lister, author of *A Table For Two* and *A Perfect Pairing*



“A heartbreaking, truth-telling look at the ravages of cancer on the body and soul. Kelly Irvin’s tale will resonate with anyone who has been affected by this terrible disease. Told with compassion and love, *The Year of Goodbyes and Hellos* is a perfect fit for fans of Tosca Lee, Patty Callahan Henry, and Allison Winn Scotch.”

—Aimie K. Runyan, bestselling author of *A Bakery in Paris* and *The Memory of Lavender and Sage*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- 1 | Kristen loves her husband and daughters, but she's also dedicated to helping her patients survive a deadly disease. She's trying to balance family and career. Do you think it makes a difference that she's an oncologist and her patients depend on her for survival? Are there times they should take precedence? Is it harder for women than men to balance career and family? Why or why not?
- 2 | How do you feel about Daniel's decision to move out when Kristen forgets their anniversary? Do you think he's justified in feeling shortchanged by her dedication to her patients? Should he have returned home when he found out Kristen's patient died that evening? Why or why not?
- 3 | Put yourself in the shoes of Maddie and Brielle, who often can't rely on their mother to be there for them in times of small or even big crises. How would it make you feel? Does a "higher calling" profession serve as an excuse for sometimes abdicating from parental duties?
- 4 | Do you agree with Matt's wife's observation that a spouse can be guilty of an "emotional" affair even though it hasn't reached the physical-affair stage? Why or why not? Would an emotional affair hurt more? Do you think men and women see these two affairs differently? How so?
- 5 | Were you surprised Sherri was the culprit who had the affair that ended her marriage to Chance? Did it seem out of character to you? How did she change and grow as a result of this grave error in judgment? Do you think Chance should've forgiven her and taken her back? Would you, if in a similar situation with your spouse?
- 6 | If you received a cancer diagnosis (or if you have received it), how did you think it would change your approach to day-to-day living? Or would it? Why do you think most people don't realize that time is finite and live accordingly until they or someone close to them dies "too young" or receives a terminal diagnosis? Is there value in the philosophy of "live every day as if it's your last?"
- 7 | The "power of positive thinking" and "mindfulness" receive a great deal of attention in the treatment of difficult, deadly diseases and traumatic injuries. Do you believe positive thinking has an impact on how a person's body reacts to treatment for illnesses and severe injuries? If so, why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- 8 Throughout the story, Kristen and Sherri banter over where and how they want their cremated ashes spread. Does their light-hearted treatment of this difficult subject surprise you? Why do you think they handle it this way? Do you think it's healthy? Why or why not?
- 9 Sherri's faith dictates that she will receive complete healing in heaven if her cancer treatment is unsuccessful here on earth. Even so, she prays God will heal her so she can have more time with the family she loves. There's a saying, "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die." Do you think the desire to live longer, to be healed, shows a lack of faith? Why or why not?
- 10 Kristen and Sherri suffered the same losses as children, the same traumas, but Sherri grew in her faith. Kristen lost hers. Why do you think people react differently in these sets of circumstances? Why do some become closer to God while others push Him away?
- 11 Do you think it would be natural for Kristen's faith to shrivel even more when Sherri dies? Instead, she's asking questions about prayer. She's contemplating going to church. Does that surprise you? If you were in her shoes, would you react the same way or differently?
- 12 Were you surprised Kristen gave up her job as an oncologist to work treating women at a nonprofit health clinic? Do you think she made the right choice? Explain.
- 13 Were you surprised Daniel forgave Kristen and agreed to renew their vows? What would you have done in his shoes? Explain.