

## Different Discussion Questions

### Chapters 11-13

Today we wrap up our discussion questions for Different. Is your Mom Heart group enjoying the new relationships and levels of sharing that this incredibly vulnerable book has brought about? I pray that the Lord has blessed your conversations and that mothers are being drawn to Him, especially in their deepest, lonely struggles with different children.

#### Chapter 11: Naming the Enemy

At the beginning of chapter 11, Nathan shares his struggles with accepting himself as God created him, with his differences and challenges, and at the same time, seeking to grow. "And so I justified my unhealthy behavior and anesthetized the pain I felt with escapes and distractions that made me feel better temporarily but hurt me more in the long run. My so-called self-acceptance was mostly just a justification to remain in my own darkness." Page 168

This is a struggle most Christians face. How do you balance self-acceptance with personal growth? What escapes and distractions are temptations for you?

How do you encourage yourself to grow instead of remaining complacent or stagnant?

The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,  
He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord,  
They will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age;  
They shall be full of sap and very green, To declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Psalm 92:12-15

The next section covers some of Nathan and Sally's journey into counseling and medication to help Nathan's brain operate more peacefully. This can be a very sensitive subject for many families. Please be gentle and refrain from offering advice in your groups. Instead, pray for and with the women and point them to Jesus and His Word.

On page 177, Sally shares, "Nathan's dreams were so big, so expensive. He wanted to be an actor, a screenwriter, to make Hollywood films that reflected the Christian worldview. And his differences could be so daunting. I had trouble imagining his prayers being answered in the way he expected. But Nathan was my son. So I prayed for his dreams because he wanted us to. I prayed because *he* kept on praying. As the years went by, I would be reminded again and again that the Lord hears not just my prayers, but also the fervent prayers and hopes of my children."

Do you ever feel like you need to discourage your children's dreams? How can you encourage them instead?

#### Chapter 12: Beyond "Why Me?"

“The truth is, we live in a deeply fractured world, and we don’t always have a choice about being broken. But we do have a choice about where we let our brokenness lead us. We can follow it into escape or addiction. But we can also follow it straight to God. To the One who knows us inside and out- with all our mistakes, broken parts, insecurities, and battles- and who still loves us. To the One who can not only handle our anger and our frustration and our questions, but can use them to transform us. As we practice running back to our Creator in times of trial, we find ourselves in the place where healing begins.” Nathan, page 186.

We all have broken places and have lived through broken life circumstances. Where has your brokenness led you? Share a time you saw God work through your brokenness. When did God work through Biblical characters’ brokenness? (For example, see Psalm 51, David’s prayer for forgiveness after his sin with Bathsheba.)

Page 193, “God had ordained that I would be the mama of these unique children, tasked with shepherding them through life and teaching them what unconditional love meant. It was my stewardship to parent my sweet little ones with all the faith and joy I had chosen as my foundation for the other areas of my life.”

Sometimes in mothering, we don’t choose the faith and joy that we choose in other areas of our lives such as church ministry, careers, and hobbies. What is one thing you can do to bring more faith and joy to your parenting?

On page 194, Sally says, “If I had not been given [my children] to love, I might never have learned that it’s possible to be content even when life feels out of control. That as long as we assume we cannot be happy until we can control all the circumstances of our lives, we will continue to be unhappy. That freedom can be found in surrendering to God’s transcendent purposes, which are infinitely greater than our finite understanding.”

How have you found contentment in difficult circumstances or relationships that are out of your control?

### **Chapter 13: Watch Me Fly!**

This chapter is a wonderful story of God’s faithfulness to Nathan and Sally. Have someone read pages 214 and 215 aloud. Spend some time encouraging the mothers in your group about how they can be proud of themselves and the choices they have made to continue to love their children, especially the different and/or difficult ones. Share stories of how God is working even now.

We pray that God has used this book to encourage your heart toward your children as well as the mothers around you.

