

As Soon As I Fell

By Kay Bruner

Discussion Group Questions

Childhood Issues

When researchers design a study so that they confirm their hypothesis, and find exactly what they were looking for, we call that “confirmation bias.”

- What was Kay’s hypothesis about herself in childhood?
- How was that hypothesis formed?
- How did she practice “confirmation bias” with God and other people?
- How do childhood beliefs and experiences influence us in adulthood?
- Consider these statements: "Nobody likes me." "I'm too weird." "I'm too much." "I'll always be abandoned."
- Are these statements or others like them, a hypothesis for you, about yourself?
- How does “confirmation bias” work in your life today?
- “God delights in you” (Zephaniah 3:17) disrupted the confirmation bias for Kay. How has scripture worked to change your heart and mind in significant ways?
- How did performance and perfectionism play out in this book?
- How do performance and perfectionism play out in your life?

Ministry Issues

The Call

- How do we understand “God’s will” and “God’s call” in our lives?
- How do our individual giftings work with “God’s call”?
- Does it seem like there are “higher callings” or “better wills” within the church?
- What happens if your giftings are not the “better” ones? What happens when we try to force ourselves into roles or “callings” that don’t fit our giftings?

Work and Rest in Full-time Ministry

- Jesus said that we should deny ourselves and take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). Jesus also said that we should come to him if we’re weary and he will give us rest (Matthew 11:28). How do we balance these two seemingly opposing ideas?
- Is there a different expectation of work/life balance for those in “regular jobs” and those in “full time service?” Is that okay or not?
- How do you see ministry work-load impacting the full-time workers you know?
- What spoken or unspoken messages does your church give to full-time workers regarding these issues? Are they encouraged to rest adequately?
- What are reasonable ministry expectations for parents?

- If you're a missionary mom, is it enough to just be a mom at home with the children? What difficulties did you see in the book regarding this issue?
- How do we balance ministry and family life?

Missionary care

- What is the responsibility of the Christian community in missionary care?
- What is the responsibility of individual missionaries in their own care?
- If missionaries are put on a pedestal, how does that impact the missionary?
- If missionaries are put on a pedestal, how does that impact the church?
- Why are pedestals so common? What does the church gain from these pedestals? What do missionaries gain from those pedestals?
- What aspects of the missionary community seemed healthy to you in the book? What was unhealthy?
- Do your friends in full-time ministry have provision for mental health care as needed? How are expenses for their mental health care covered? How would they access needed services?
- How have you cared for the full-time ministry workers you know?

Self-Care

- Where is the line between self-sacrifice and self-care?
- How does that work for you, in your daily life?
- What prevents you from taking good care of yourself on a daily basis?
- Does it seem selfish to practice self-care? Is guilt a problem when it comes to self-care?
- What examples of self-care do you observe in your family of origin, church, or among friends?

Mistakes

- How do we know if we're in God's will?
- Is the question of "being in God's will" even the right question?
- What about our free will?
- What happens when we've made bad choices and gotten ourselves into bad places?
- What place does regret have in our lives?
- How do we take responsibility for mistakes without living under a crushing burden of regret?

Marriage and Family Issues

Family transitions

- Think about the normal transitions a family faces: couple to couple-plus-baby, to young family, to family with adolescents, to empty nest.
- How have those transitions impacted you? Either in your family of origin, or as an adult?
- How did life overseas impact these normal family transitions for the Bruners?
- What were the benefits to overseas life for the family?

Conflict

- How did personality differences impact the ability to handle conflict for Kay and Andy?
- What mistakes did they make with conflict?
- What did they learn about resolving conflict?
- How has conflict impacted your life?
- What elements of reconciliation did you find in the story?
- How have reconciliation attempts failed or succeeded for you?
- What do you do, when the conflict is not a personality difference, but instead a sin problem?

Pornography

- How did the pornography aspect of the story impact you?
- How has pornography impacted your marriage or family?
- Do you have a personal and family plan for boundaries with pornography?
- Where would you turn for resources or support on this issue?
- What's your perception of how pornography impacts the church today?
- Does your church talk about this issue?
- If someone in your church struggled with porn, where would they turn for help?

Tools for your toolbox

Resources

For international families: International Therapist Directory (Internationaltherapistdirectory.com)

For pornography help: Covenanteyes.com (filtering and monitoring software); Pure Desire (books, resources, groups)

Best marriage research: *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John Gottman

Most-recommended books: *Boundaries*, Cloud and Townsend; *The Search for Significance*, McGee

Personal processing exercises

(notes from Kay)

The Note Card Exercise

Many times, my clients come in with a lot of bad feelings that seem like a huge, jumbled mess. They don't know where to start, and I don't either.

One of the things I often do help clarify the issues is this index card exercise.

All you need is a stack of index cards, a pen, and a large flat surface. I often use the floor.

We write down every single troubling thing we can think of, one index card per item: events, emotions, thoughts, anything at all that seems significant, from this morning to 30 years ago. Whatever bubbles up, we write it down.

Then we arrange the cards into categories, however they seem to connect.

After the cards are all laid out, we might identify one or two cards that are especially significant, that are perhaps root issues or emotions.

Many of my clients will then journal through the card pack, starting with the events, issues, or emotions that seem most significant.

I have sometimes done a whole separate card exercise if there is one particular, significant emotion that comes up a lot. "Grief", for example, can have a bunch of events attached to it, and you could create cards for each specific loss.

When grief is a significant theme for my clients, I will often draw a tombstone on each of the cards, to recognize and honor the losses that have been suffered.

The Collage Exercise

I find creating a collage to be a very helpful exercise. A collage is just a grouping of items that relates to a single theme. It's so simple, but the reason it works, I think, is because you force yourself to spend time with one thought. The process of creating the collage slows you down from rushing on to the next thought, and allows you to just BE with the that one thing.

I would suggest that you do the note card exercise first, and then maybe choose one of the significant issues or emotions that comes up, like "grief" or "transition" or "healing" or "hope" or "home" or "rest." You could also do a collage around song lyrics that are especially important to you. You could just pick a color that speaks to you right now. Anything at all.

To do the collage, all you need is piece of heavy paper, scissors, glue, and a stack of old magazines.

Go through the magazine, choosing words and images that relate to the theme, arrange them on the piece of heavier paper, glue them down, and congratulations, you've collaged! I think you might be surprised at what you learn and what you feel in the process.

Journaling

Journaling is one of those things you can do every day, for free, no matter where you are. If you're stuck for ideas (after you work through your card pack!) try looking online for a daily journaling prompt. Or check out the book, *Morning Pages*. I also love the concepts at prayingincolor.com, which are especially helpful when you're lost for words but still need to process.