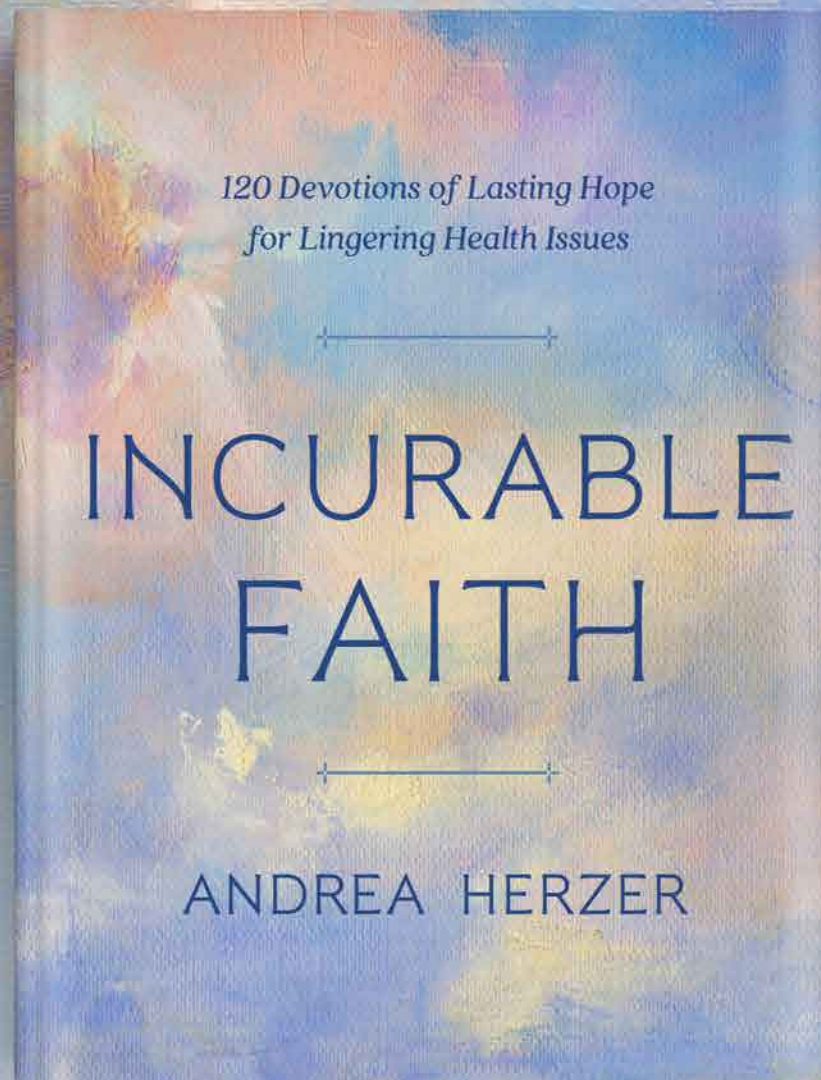


INCURABLE FAITH

Connecting Conversations for Caregivers



*Six-Week Caregiver Study Guide for
Incurable Faith: 120 Devotions of Lasting
Hope for Linger Health Issues*

Incurable Faith: Connecting Conversations for Caregivers

Six-Week Caregiver Study Guide for *Incurable Faith: 120 Devotions of Lasting Hope for Lingering Health Issues*.

How to Use This Resource:

Read the **suggested devotions** before your meeting. Discuss the devotions then answer the questions. If you are using the first set of questions, you and your care recipient may choose to read the selections aloud together.

- The **first question** is for caregivers and care recipients to discuss together. Caregivers are often hesitant to share their feelings with their sick loved one, but gentle and honest communication can alleviate mistaken assumptions that cause additional stresses.
- The **second question** is for caregivers whose loved ones are either unable, due to health challenges, or unwilling to discuss their answers. These questions can be used in a caregiving support group or with friends and loved ones. You might also choose to use them as a writing prompt for your journal.

Week One

Finding Inspiration: Let There Be Life (pg. 125), You Still Have Something to Offer (pg. 129), Asking for a Favor (pg. 145)

1. Name someone you admire who has faced tremendous challenges with great perseverance. Discuss how their example inspires you in your life with caregiving or health challenges.
2. Has anyone been an example to you in your life as a caregiver? If so, what do you admire about them? If you are new to caregiving, you'll discover helpful resources and recommended reading in the index of *Incurable Faith*.

Medical Uncertainties: My Doctor is Not My Savior (pg. 190), My Divine Appointment (pg. 236), My Visit to the Cancer Center (pg. 239)

1. What is your biggest worry during medical testing, treatments, or procedures as a caregiver and as the patient receiving care? Do you typically talk to one another about your anxieties? Why or why not?
2. “*Only God can carry all my hopes, dreams, and prayers; my (loved one’s) doctor’s report is too small to hold that much weight.*” Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not? How can trusting God’s love and care for you and your loved one help you amid a devastating diagnosis?

Week Two

Loneliness or Isolation: Homebound (pg. 195), Fellow Travelers (pg. 200), The Garden of Solitude (pg. 229)

1. What is the hardest part of receiving visitors when you are caring for a loved one, and why? What is the hardest part of receiving a visitor when you are ill? Do these difficulties prevent you from receiving much-needed help or fellowship? What steps can you take to ensure you are not isolated in your caregiving or in your health challenges?
2. Have caregiving commitments caused you to feel isolated? How can you remedy this? What steps can you take to create space for companionship and support? Take one of those steps today.

Strength in Serving: Generous Giving (pg. 155), Small Acts of Obedience (pg. 164), Observations from a Chronic Pain Group (pg. 170)

1. *“Sharing the riches of His love when you are experiencing the poverty of poor health brings a wealth of blessing.”* If your loved one can participate in a non-physically demanding activity, have you considered taking up a hobby together? Perhaps you can create blankets for a shelter or NICU. Maybe you can read children’s books to a neighbor’s child or write letters to encourage others. How can you work together to use your gifts and talents in new ways during this season?
2. *“Many small acts of obedience, strung together one after another, lead to a faith-filled life that has immeasurable impact.”* Name one caregiving task that seems small to you but is tremendously helpful for your loved one. What has attending to the myriad of tasks in caregiving taught you about the immeasurable impact of a “small” act of service?

Week Three

Prayer is Powerful: Fragrant Offerings (pg. 42), Prayers are Always Welcome (pg. 47), Becoming a Persistent Pray-er (pg. 151)

1. Praying with other people offers a necessary depth of support when we are experiencing hardship. Do you and your loved one pray with one another regularly? If not, why not? If praying with your loved one is new to you, you can start by reading the prayers in *Incurable Faith* aloud together.
2. Have the challenges and heartaches of this current season hindered your prayers? Why or why not? Jesus teaches us to “always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). How does the Lord’s invitation to be persistent in your requests demonstrate His heart toward you?

Dealing with Disappointment: This Wasn’t Part of My Plan (pg. 36), Disappointed or Delighted? (pg. 111), Rocks in My Suitcase (pg. 174)

1. “*You create a place of peace in your war with health issues when you surrender your frustrations to God.*” Have caregiving challenges or living with health issues ever felt like fighting a battle? If so, how this affected your relationship with God or others? How can you support one another as a team amid these battles?
2. What were some of the dreams you had for your family before your loved one experienced health challenges? How have you grieved those hopes and aspirations? What are some of your new dreams? If you cannot think of any new dreams, pray and ask the Lord to help you discover His mercies in this season.

Week Four

Freedom in Forgiveness: The Provider Always Provides (pg. 8), A Greeting Card for Chronic Illness (pg. 107), The Burden of Offense (pg. 121)

1. If you have ever been treated unfairly or in a hurtful manner due to a lack of support or false assumptions about your/your loved one's illness, how have you responded? Have you forgiven this person? If not, how is holding onto the offense helping or hurting you? Holding onto slights will sap your strength; pray that God will help you release the offense to Him.
2. Sometimes, well-intentioned friends or acquaintances wound us deeply by making ill-conceived remarks about our loved one or our caregiving skills. How have you handled inappropriate questions and remarks in the past? Plan a ready-response so you can preserve your peace.

Finding a Healthy Balance: Accommodate Hope (pg. 76), Lies Like Snowflakes (pg. 84), Keeping Healthy Days Healthy (pg. 143)

1. *“Acceptance opens the door to finding ways to live well despite illness; resignation closes all doors in an attempt to safeguard against any further illness, pain, or fatigue.”* What is the difference between accepting your limitations and giving in to fear of greater health challenges? *Caregiver:* How does it feel to see your loved one struggle to accept the limitations of illness? *Care Recipient:* What is one way your caregiver can help you to embrace a healthy balance?
2. Why is it important to find a balance between caregiving and caring for yourself? What is one realistic change you can make to find a healthier balance? How will you begin working that change into your daily life as a caregiver?

Week Five

Dealing with Shame: You Are Radiant (pg. 22), My Power Source (pg. 223), The Hidden Cost of Medication (pg. 246)

1. *“Shame and condemnation will never be part of my prescription for healing.”* Share one time you experienced embarrassment or shame during your health issue or caregiving journey. How did that experience affect the way you felt about yourself? Discuss whether that circumstance can take away your dignity and worth as a precious child of God.
2. *“When I am grateful for my provision, I will no longer feel ashamed of my need.”* Have you ever been hesitant or embarrassed to ask for help with your caregiving tasks? How does recognizing God as your provider free you to gratefully receive His provision for you, even when it comes through others?

Creating Healthier Habits: Complaining is Draining (pg. 26), It’s Never Too Late (pg. 127), Stop, Look, and Listen (pg. 205)

1. *“We often complain when we want compassion or understanding...from those around us. But a heart that overflows with grumbling has no room to receive comfort.”* Has complaining become a frequent communication style in your relationship as caregiver and care recipient? If so, name one thing you hope to receive (understanding, attention, help, etc.) when you grumble. Brainstorm and discuss some healthier ways to meet that need.
2. Sometimes, caregivers hesitate to share their feelings about the challenges of caregiving. We can feel guilty for feeling overwhelmed or having needs when our loved one is suffering. Yet, Scripture tells us to share one another’s burdens. How is sharing your burdens with someone so they can support you different from complaining about your loved one? In what ways does receiving support from an understanding friend or family member enable you to be a better caregiver?

Week Six

Help for the Weary: Every Moment of Your Life (pg. 25), Are You Exhausted? (pg. 48), Desperate for Answers (pg. 53)

1. Share one way your caregiver encourages you or helps you to keep going when you are weary. Ask them to share any memories of times when you encouraged them during their own difficulties. How does reflecting on the ways you have supported one another in the past help you to face the future together?
2. *“Spiritual pursuits strengthen your spirit to endure the exhaustion of (caring for someone with) illness.”* How does caring for your peace of mind benefit your patience as a caregiver? What practices help you to find restoration when you are weary?

Pathway to Peace: Resting on My Foundation (pg. 16), Good Medicine (pg. 109), Hearing the News (pg. 113)

1. *“Trusting a dependable God during a difficult diagnosis is the pathway to peace.”* How does trusting God’s goodness and sovereignty help us to endure hardships? Which of God’s attributes are you most thankful for in this season, and why?
2. Sometimes contentment and peace seem beyond our reach when our loved ones are suffering. The process of [lament](#) is how we move from the pain of our difficult circumstances into restored hope in God’s promises. Have you trusted God by expressing your sorrow, grief and disappointment to Him in prayer? Try reading and praying one Psalm every day.