



Blindsided Bible Study

Opening by E. Marie Sanders

Devotionals by Eric P. Sanders

E. Marie Sanders

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Dear Reader,

Thank you so much for choosing to purchase a copy of *Blindsided*. Your purchase has helped *Blindsided* become an Amazon.com Best Seller on the Contemporary Fiction List, debuting at #11! This could not have happened without you, and for that, again I thank you!

The story within the pages of *Blindsided* is near and dear to my heart for the following of reasons. First, I'm concerned about the issues that this book addresses when it comes to teenagers and the romantic relationships they form; secondly, I think there are some key moments that can be reemphasized by various lessons we find in the Bible like dating, obeying authority figures, hearing the voice of God, and accepting wise advice. Finally, the connections between the storyline to the lessons we can learn from in the Bible are too significant to ignore.

I've been fortunate to serve as a youth pastor alongside my husband, Eric P. Sanders, at Faith Tabernacle Christian Center in St. Pauls, NC (www.ftccenter.org), and I asked him to develop a study guide that could serve as a way for readers to address the issues raised in the storyline of *Blindsided*, showing you how the Bible is still a relevant word from God that gives instructions toward solving problems in our lives. Each lesson covers a selected amount of chapters, gives specific scriptures for your reading, provides a short narrative addressing the issue(s), shares key points, and leads you with a prayer you can begin before having personal "chit-chat" with Jesus!

If you are an adult going through this Bible study and find anything specifically tailored for teens, adjust the message to fit your adult life. You may find something that can directly apply to a similar situation in your life (like the "authority figure" on your job) or a nugget of wisdom that you can pass on to someone else.

I hope you enjoy this special gift just as a way of thanking you yet again for purchasing *Blindsided*. Let us know how you liked it by emailing us at either of the email addresses posted at the end. Please feel more than free to share the Bible Study with others and encourage them to pick up a copy of *Blindsided* from www.emariesanders.com, www.amazon.com, or www.bn.com.

God bless you,

E. Marie

Blindsided Study Guide

Marlena Jenkins, Jason Dobbs, James, Tamar, Melinda, and Ronald...wonderful characters. Maybe you see some of yourself in their story. It's amazing what we go through as we seek happiness and fulfillment in life. Maybe like the characters in our story, you have found yourself "blindsided" by events in your life, things that have caught you off guard, and maybe surprised you with the effects from decisions you have made in the past, and how they continue to influence you today. Marlena was caught up in the attention of a new relationship with Jason, stunned by the drama in her family life, plagued by an illness, and confused by the battle between her heart, her emotions, and the influences in her life (both positive and negative). Sound a lot like you and I don't it? Through it all, Marlena learns who she can depend on, who she needs to let go, and to whom she should listen.

That is where this study guide comes in. Challenge yourself to learn your own lessons from Marlena Jenkins' story. We have organized issues from *Blindsided* and invite you to consider how it relates to your life. Some of these questions are obvious, some not so obvious. All of our points are designed to challenge our traditional thinking and prepare us for the challenges facing you daily. Why not consider your responses now? Why be *Blindsided*?

Eric P. Sanders, Youth Pastor

Chapters One through Five

“It’s just nice to know someone sees me as more than a buddy or a girl who can hang with the guys. It’s nice to know someone would even think of making me his girlfriend.”

That last comment took Mom off guard. “We’ve never talked about dating and your father’s and my standpoint on it.”

“No time better than the present.” I readied myself.

From page 18

What you should consider: Proverbs 4:23, I Corinthians 15:33, 2 Corinthians 6:14, I Corinthians 13:4-7

Have you even considered what your parents think about dating? What God thinks about dating? Marlana was in for a ride considering the range and intensity of emotions she experienced because of the institution of dating. Most people would assume that God wants the best for us in every area of our lives. This includes boyfriends or girlfriends. Now steady yourself, because this may challenge you...the Bible doesn’t mention dating. Dating is a cultural issue that our society has endorsed. While the Bible does not specifically address dating, it does make it clear that God’s plan for relationships is based on clear principles to guide us in making decisions about our relationships. If you don’t seek godly influences in your life (parents, trusted spiritual support, pastors/youth pastors, etc.) you may fail to see how dating is a worldly concept that gives many people permission to flirt with activities limited for courting and marriage. It opens a box that is hard to put back into place once you begin to explore. I want you to consider four points and see if you and Marlana pass the dating test.

- 1) Guard your heart. You should be very careful about giving your affections, because your heart influences everything else in your life.
- 2) You are known by the company you keep. You become like the company you keep.
- 3) Christians should only date other Christians *when you’re mature enough to consider marriage*. Why become especially close to someone who doesn’t share a desire to seek and follow God’s influence and control in their life when you can’t take the next step?
- 4) Is it really love? Are you patient with each other, kind to each other, never envious of each other, humble, and never rude to each other, not easily angered with each other, truthful, and trusting?

It’s a lot to consider, but it is worth the effort. Sometimes we want to be like our friends so much that we make choices that are not in our best interest. Who are you going to commit to? God? Your friends? Your boo? Better make the right choice...

Prayer: God, help me to make choices today that honor You. You created me, You know all about me. Show me Your will for my life in dating. Help me to accept Your will for me, and give me the

courage to follow Your heart. Give me peace, and give me strength to seek You in all of your ways.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter Six through Ten

Great. I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend and I'd finally gotten one. What could I do?...

...Could I have a boyfriend against my parents' wishes? It had been awhile since I'd blatantly disobeyed them...

...it occurred to me my parents said I could go out as long as I was in a mixed group. This was the loophole I'd been searching for! ...My parents didn't have to know...

...After all, what my parents didn't know wouldn't hurt them!

From pages 46-47

What you should consider: Deuteronomy 12:28, Proverbs 20:7, Ephesians 6:1-4, Colossians 3:20

Okay, we talked about the dating issue. You may still have some questions that aren't settled in your heart. So instead of obeying your parents, you decide what they don't know won't hurt them...you are right, it will hurt YOU. God has set you up for blessings if you walk in agreement with authority figures in your life (Parents are number 1; if you are grown, your authority figures are those who you submit to.). This principle always works when you are in right relationship with the authorities that God has placed in your life. The flip side of this principle is that when you disobey these same authority figures in your life, you release judgment, problems, issues, drama, and whatever else you want to call them! You hold the key to what you deal with. It's like stepping into the rain with an umbrella. When you obey your parents/authority figures, you have a covering from the rain (you don't get wet). When you decide to cut corners and disobey those who have authority and influence in your life, you start getting wet. And the longer you stay out from under the umbrella, you get soaked. Consider these four points and see how willing you are to stay under God's covering.

- 1) Keep God's commandments, His Word and His authorities.
- 2) Walk in integrity. Integrity is what you are when no one else is looking. It's also called character.
- 3) When all else fails, obey your parents/authority figures. It's how you keep God on your side. It's got nothing to do with what's fair, it has everything to do with what's right.
- 4) Obeying your parents/authority figures always pleases God. So just do it!

Hard, isn't it? Sometimes you feel like your parents/authority figures are being too hard and rigid. They don't show enough trust in you. Here's the real question: how much trust have you shown in them? How determined are you to honor your parents/authority figures even when it cramps your style? I know your parents/authority figures aren't perfect, but neither are you. This is the system that God has set up for us. This set up is for your success. So stop kicking against what will keep you straight. Do what they tell you, don't open the door to allow your enemy (not haters, the real enemy) to have access into your life.

Prayer: God, thank You for my parents and those in authority over me. You in Your wisdom gave me to them. In spite of every disappointment, argument, and punishment, I trust that You have given me to them and them to me. Help us to communicate in a way that gives You glory. I seek Your help in learning how to trust them and obey them, even when I feel like going against what they have directed. I want to stay covered by their love and protection. Help me to honor You as I honor them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter Eleven through Fifteen

“Mar, love doesn’t always feel good. Sometimes the one you love can hurt you in ways he doesn’t mean to. You’re at an age where you’re discovering why you do things. You’ll be going to college in a few years and you’ll explore what the world has to offer you. Bitterness and regret do not need to be parts of your past. Just think about what I said, that’s all I’m asking.”

From page 54

What you should consider: Jeremiah 29:11, Numbers 13:32-33, Hebrews 11:14-15, II Peter 1:3-4

Mrs. Jenkins makes a great point. And it’s not just toward a dating relationship that you need to consider. Many things can distract us and take our mind and our time away from the really important issues of our life. Any relationships, disappointments, family issues, poor choices, and lack of self-control all can short circuit what you are called to do. Everyone is given the gift of life from God. What we do with it is our gift back to God. You were created with gifts, talents, and abilities. It is your responsibility to find out what you are on this earth to do; you can call this “your assignment”. Have you even considered your assignment? Your purpose? Your destiny? Many times we take for granted the seriousness of this assignment in our life because we are young because... we have plenty of time in our minds. Plenty of time? What about those whose time is shorter than we thought? And what is time anyway? It is a part of eternity that once wasted, we never get back. How many relationships and decisions have you made that were a waste of time? You can’t go back and change them, and worrying about them and becoming angry is just another waste of time. So the best thing is to identify your assignment, take inventory in your life, and see what really adds to you completing your life’s purpose, and what in your life is just a distraction from the greatness that you are supposed to be. How do you identify your assignment?

- 1) Go to the Manufacturer of you, the One who made you and seek instructions.
- 2) Ask God your purpose, and don’t be afraid to embrace it.
- 3) Make sure that the things you give your time to contribute the most to who you are to become.
- 4) Connect with people who celebrate your assignment, disconnect from those who don’t.

Your assignment/purpose/destiny is one of the most important things you can discover. It will provide energy to you when you feel tired. It will provide joy when you feel discouraged. And it will provide passion when you feel worn down. Don’t waste your time, discover and pursue your assignment.

Prayer: God, thank You for giving me my purpose. Help me to discover the gifts and talents that You placed within me. I want to honor You through using these abilities for your Glory. Help me to become the person of destiny You created me to be. I trust You, and I believe that Your plan for me is greater

than what I could hope or imagine. Reveal unto me any that would bring distractions in my life. And give me the courage to separate from those who don't help me honor You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter Sixteen through Twenty

Wake up. I know you can hear Me...

I know you better than anyone on this earth, including this boy lying beside you right now. Listen and listen well: everything is happening for a reason and in time you'll understand. But let Me be the one who comforts you, not your so-called boyfriend who your parents told you you couldn't have anyway.

From page 85

What you should consider: I Kings 19:11-12, Psalms 46:10, Psalms 66:18, John 10:27, John 16:7

Marlena finds that her family isn't perfect. She confides in her boyfriend who surprises her with a "gift". But something doesn't appear right even with this relationship, small warning signs...and it gets worse. But at this moment, a still, small voice speaks to Marlena, comforting her. It reminds her that He has always been there and confronts her about issues she has ignored and not addressed. The voice of God: always present, but not always recognized. Because of busyness in our lives or maybe because of disobedience, we don't always hear when He speaks. But like Mar, you and I need to hear His voice. Life is filled with potholes waiting to be sprung in our direction. But we have a real GPS (God-Proven Strategy) which will give directions and options for us to follow. Why not connect with Him and get instructions from the one who made us and everything around us?

- 1) Recognize that communication with God should be two-sided. There needs to be dialogue going on. Speak to Him.
- 2) Slow down, stop what you are doing, be quiet before Him, and let Him speak to you.
- 3) Be familiar with the manner in which God speaks. Spend time in His presence, meditate and study the Word, hear His voice through others, through circumstances, and in your spirit.
- 4) Approach God with a pure heart and listen.

You have to challenge yourself to give God your undivided attention. He talks to us and listens to us as though we were His only child. Set aside a certain time that you will be totally free from other duties and you are not concerned about the things you have to do. When you give Him full attention, He will speak. And don't get it twisted, God doesn't speak in riddles. He gives clear instructions. You will learn this the more that you let the Word take root into your life. And always act on what God tells you to do and in the time He tells you. Remember to act upon what you hear as it aligns with God's Word and His Will.

Prayer: God, I am amazed that You desire to speak to me. Thank You for loving me and encouraging me to live in a way that glorifies You. Please help me to hear Your voice. And help me to place myself in position to hear when You speak. I confess all sin and disobedience in my life and I pledge to keep my heart pure so I can hear You when you speak. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter Twenty-One through Twenty-Five

I heard God speak: *Mar, you've got to expose the devil. The longer you take in sharing this secret relationship with your parents, the longer the devil will have his way in this situation. Tell your parents everything. Don't worry about any punishment you might get from this. You need their protection. They're your earthly covering. They love you and don't want to see anything bad happen to you."*

From page 134

What you should consider: Proverbs 6:20-23, Proverbs 1:8, Proverbs 15:5, Ephesians 6:1-3, Romans 1:30-32

Often we hear that we should be "grown", we shouldn't be a baby. We should handle our problems; man up and handle our business! That type of thinking is selfish because it refuses to acknowledge the relationships God has placed in our lives and the purpose behind them. We are all relational beings; we find meaning in the connection we have with others and we value the same things the people we connected to value. The problem lies in the fact that many of us are connected to the wrong people and value the wrong things. The Bible even teaches that bad company messes up good behavior. So what God did was create checks to keep our hearts, relationships, and values in the right place. That's why we have families, churches, fellowships, and groups that we are a part of. They keep us honest, accountable, and encouraged. Did you know that out of all of these institutions that God made, the first to keep us in check was...the family. That's right, God first made the family to be the unit that would love us, provide for us, and keep us focused on what is right. But instead of looking to the family (and our parents) to give us insight, instruction, and advice, we try to man up and solve our own problems. That was the problem with Marlina, she tried to go around the instructions of her parents and handle her own business on her own terms. You may get away with this in the short term, but you open the door for God's judgment in the long run. So what should we do? Try these four things.

- 1) Be honest. Always tell the truth to your parents/authority figures regardless of the cost. Let them know how you really feel and then be prepared to accept the godly advice that God will speak through them.
- 2) Be open. Don't give the enemy anywhere to hide. He loves the dark places of dishonesty in the hearts of young people and adults. Being open exposes the enemy and gives him nowhere to hide.
- 3) Be truthful. Lying got you in trouble in the first place. You want to be grown? Then, stop lying to yourself, your parents, and to God. Remember Adam and Eve? Lying messed it up for them and for all of us. The truth will always set you free.
- 4) Be afraid. It is not a fair fight to be against God. But when you hide from your parents/authority figures any deception, you set yourself up as an enemy of God. Last time I checked, He hasn't lost a battle...so stay on the Lord's side. Talk to your parents/authority figures often. Be very afraid of the alternative...kicking against God.

The first safeguard against you messing up is the family. God knew what he was doing we he put you in your family. Don't get me wrong, it may seem unfair. It may even appear that your parents don't have a clue and know what they are talking about. But here's the thing. God doesn't make mistakes. When He says to honor your parents so that you may live long and well, He wasn't kidding. Remember, He fixed the rules in His favor. If you honor God, and in turn honor your parents, you benefit from the plans He has in place for you. So make it your business to honor God. Honor your parents and allow them to be the covering for your life God has designed.

Prayer: Father, thank You for my parents. I know that at times I don't understand their instruction and it seems unfair what they insist for me. But I trust You and Your Word. You said that You would honor me if I obey them. Help me to accept the love, the wisdom, and correction they offer me in my life. I confess my disobedience and I ask You to forgive me when I have been wrong. Give me the strength and the courage to be different from others. I need this relationship to be right. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter Twenty-Six through Thirty

Though I fronted like I didn't care, my heart was crushed in a million pieces knowing Jay had moved on so quickly, and with someone I couldn't stand. He knew I didn't like her; I was sure I'd told him about her. And to think all that time he'd known her, and known how I felt about her...He was trying to make me jealous. Unfortunately, it worked.

From page 148

What you should consider: Psalms 13:5-6, I John 4:18, Galatians 6:4-5, Isaiah 48:17-18

So you heard God speak, you tried to get the relationships right in your life, and you have attempted to expose every act of disobedience and asked for help from God. But then you see your hater and all the old feelings keep bubbling up to the surface. Congratulations, you now realize that it takes time (process) to be healed and to get free from mess and drama in our lives! You need to remember that God has always had a plan and a purpose for your life. Living is the process of discovering what you are called to do. In the process of discovering you always encounter someone (the Bible calls them giants) who stands in the way of your purpose. You call them haters! Haters are the sign that you are on the path to greatness. But unfortunately, most people want to get in a situation with their haters (Traci in our story). Don't waste your time! You need your energy and your passion directed toward things that help, not harm you. Wasting your time and energy arguing and fighting with haters is time you should have spent making yourself better. Drama robs you of energy. It drains you of joy. And it steals your peace. And like Marlina, it can also lead to jealousy, yet another way to make you insecure. So stop the drama. Stop giving others the right to steal your joy by focusing on the negativity of others. Stop the violence, stop the hate, stop the jealousy. Consider the following.

- 1) Personal insecurity leads to strife. Oftentimes, we base our security on the opinions and acceptance of other people. The only opinion that should matter to you is God's and the people God has placed in your life.
- 2) Fear can be the start of jealousy. A life of fear can blow up in your face. Hanging on to fear makes you give up the things that are really important in life. Don't fear haters, because there is no purpose in fear.
- 3) Deception can play a role in jealousy in your heart. We talked about this already. The truth will always set you free.
- 4) Covetousness is a sin. You know what that word means, don't you? It means a desire to have other people's stuff, stuff that's not yours or isn't good for you. This one is so big that it's mentioned in the Ten Commandments. It means you are not satisfied with what God has blessed and provided for you. Try counting your blessings and keep your eyes off of others.

The enemy would love nothing more than to keep you out of your promised land. He will send anything and anyone (Jason, Traci, etc.) to block you from your destiny. Why waste time from the greatest thing you could ever have? Keep your focus. Trust that God has your best interest at heart and

follow His leading. Let His ways become your ways. Please Him, honor Him, and serve Him. Don't let others stop you from having what belongs to you.

Prayer: Father, thank You for reminding me that people will stay in the way of my success. I am sorry for the times I have walked in anger and jealousy. Please take away any bitterness in my life and give me the joy I need to make it. I thank You because Your love removes every fear. Thank You for removing the pain and the shame, and giving me happiness and peace again. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Still don't get the Bible part of this?

It may be due to the fact that you may not have a relationship with God. The good news is that this relationship is not hard to establish! He's waiting on you, anticipating when you'll come to Him and invite Him in to your life. If you'd like to experience God's covering, protection, restoration, and joy in your life, simply pray the following prayer in faith and allow God to get in the middle of your everyday issues:

"Heavenly Father, I come to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus. You said in Your Word, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved" (Acts 2:21), and "if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shall be saved" (Romans 10:9-10). You said as a result of my salvation Your Holy Spirit would come to live in me giving me new life (John 3:5-6, 15-16; Romans 8:9-11).

Right now, I call on Your Name and I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord of my life. I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead, and I receive my salvation. Thank you for coming into my heart and for forgiving me of all my sin. Thank You for filling me with Your Holy Spirit. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer in faith, right now you are saved! Congratulations, and welcome to the body of Christ! There are three things that we always encourage new believers to do once they get saved: #1: Join a bible-believing church that will help you grow in the things of God (This may take some time, but once you find that church, it's worth it); #2: Begin to read the Bible so you can learn all that God has for you (Side note: you can skip around from chapter to chapter, book to book!); and #3: begin to fellowship or hang out with other saved people (You'll be able to encourage one another and hopefully, learn from one another).

Don't be Blindsided

Life is filled with lessons to be learned. We hope this study has given you reasons to reflect on what you can do and be even better. Our hope is that you consider the truths we have discussed and apply them to your life. Let us know how you are doing. Keep reading and listening for the voice of God in your life. Always be aware of the enemy and his devices. Keep your eyes focused on God and the people He has placed in your life. Don't be *Blindsided*.

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