

"Change of Heart is a tragic story of senseless violence, horrific loss, and in the end, forgiveness that is astonishing. I kept asking myself, As a Christian, could I be as strong and merciful as Jeanne Bishop? I have my doubts." —JOHN GRISHAM

CHANGE of HEART



Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace
with My Sister's Killer

JEANNE BISHOP

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Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace with My Sister's Killer Jeanne Bishop

When her sister was murdered in cold blood some twenty-five years ago, along with her sister's husband and their unborn child, Jeanne Bishop thought she could forgive the teenage killer and move on with her life. She became a public defender, an outspoken opponent of capital punishment, and a supporter of mandatory life sentences for juvenile killers. But all the while she never once spoke the name of her sister's killer aloud, never once cared what had happened to him after he was convicted of the crime.

Over time she realized that God was asking more of her. Her responsibility as a Christian was not to simply tell herself that she'd forgiven the young man while secretly hoping he languished in prison the rest of his days. As Christians we have an obligation to work to reconcile with those who have harmed us.

"Change of Heart" is the story of this transformation, from someone who actively sought the killer's imprisonment for the rest of his life to one who now visits him regularly in prison. It has not been an easy journey, and at times the personal cost has been high. But this change of heart has brought Bishop to a better understanding of what it means to be a person of faith.

Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace with My Sister's Killer Details

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Author : Jeanne Bishop

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From Reader Review Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace with My Sister's Killer for online ebook

Leigh says

ARC provided via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I have two words to describe this book...powerful and insightful. It is a quick read, but one that will stay with you long after you put it down. Jeanne Bishop chronicles her struggle with the death of her sister and her killer in Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy, and Making Peace with My Sister's Killer. Jeanne describes, in gut-wrenching detail, her sister's murder, the trial, and the impact it had on her family. This is the story of love, loss, anger, faith, but most of all forgiveness. One of my favorite quotes is "We can't determine the response of the one we are forgiving. We can only say to him, "What you did was unspeakable. You have left a hole in my heart that can never be filled. Yet, I forgive you.' He might choose to accept that forgiveness or to reject it. The bottom line here is not success; the bottom line is faithfulness." What an emotional read! Truly inspirational!

Jeanie says

Would you believe after reading a John Grisham novel I changed my belief in the death penalty. In one of his novels he painted an appalling picture of the death penalty. Reading novels like that put you in the shoes of real people and I realized that I could not put another human being created in the image of God to death. In Jeanne Bishop's account I was driven to tears. Another startling fact is the horrendous crimes now being committed by young people and I mean children. It is appalling and terrifying and in all honesty just shows our need for a savior and the evil of all sin.

Jeanne's sister was brutally murdered along with her husband. She was pregnant at the time and the killer actually intentionally shot her in the stomach. The narration is done in Jeanne's voice. She is a lawyer and her passion is for human rights. Her resume is remarkable. She is intelligent, compassionate, and is a woman of great faith. Everything she stood for was tested as she and her family went through this terrible time. Her father found her sister's family, and in a short time, the killer was apprehended because of tip. He had bragged to a friend and the friend turned him in. It was not a stranger that killed but a young man whose family exchanged Christmas cards with Jeanne's family. David Biro was a name that Jeanne wanted to forget and never mention again.

How do you confront evil? How do you walk in forgiveness? The first thing that struck me was Jeanne's statement to herself- "I do not want to hate". She did not want to repay evil with evil. Her story is our story. She does not play the victim-she confronts evil with truth, love and the cross. Playing the victim only puts the attention on self and by confronting the evil, she was able to restore, redeem and rejoice in God's mercy.

Jeanne came to a point where she was able to pray for David Biro and say his name. She is an advocate for juveniles that are sentenced to live imprisonment. She fights for justice but believes that life is precious and if at all possible is redeemable. I really like her because she is like Jesus.

A special thank you, Westminster John Knox Press
and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review

Nancy Jurss says

Moving story of a woman whose pregnant sister and brother-in-law were murdered by a young man who was actually a family acquaintance. She spends 20 years as a public defender gradually changing her beliefs on the death penalty and life without parole for juvenile defenders. This comes about as a combination of experience and her faith journey. She explains how she ends up meeting with the killer monthly and the peace it gives her by being able to give mercy to him.

Patricia says

Bishop's insights and views into "restorative justice" where "the perpetrator's role is to listen to the victim. The victim's role is to tell their story. The community's job is to make sure the perpetrator hears the harm he has done and to decide how to repair the harm." She is a public defender in Chicago and opposes juvenile life imprisonment without parole.

Bishop leaves corporate law to become a public defender after her twenty five year old sister, Nancy, who is pregnant with her first child and Nancy's husband, Richard Langert, are killed in cold blood in their Chicago townhome one night by a neighbor boy, David Biro. The crime was senseless and somewhat random. Biro was just looking for a home to break into to steal cash and a car from the homeowners upon their return. Nancy and Richard's back gate was unlocked so they were the unlucky victims. Biro was sixteen and an inexperienced killer, in that, he had no other thugs mentoring him to avoid all the stupid mistakes he made which led to his being caught.

Bishop is a very religious woman and she puts a lot of her change of heart into her Christian faith and belief. The book is quite heavy with religious views and quoting the bible. As a reader, I chose to accept her belief in faith leading her to her mercy and forgiveness of Biro for its face value. I found her religious journey less interesting but as I am an advocate of wrongful incarnation, discrimination, question the criminal justice system with biased lawyers, juries and judges, and wrongful death sentencing while waiting on death row, I wanted to understand Bishop's thought process.

Like in "Dead Man Walking" Bishop faces Biro as a now grown man. They talk indepth about Nancy, Richard, the night of the murders, why Biro committed the acts, the impact of the murders on Bishop's parents, the impact on Biro's parents, and what Biro hoped for in his life. Juvenile crimes, many often horrific, and subsequent incarceration will be a topic we as a society will grapple with for many decades to come. Thought provoking book.

"He never asked me to take his side if he were resentenced someday. What he seemed to want, above all else, was some sort of understanding-for me to know who he was-and for some kind of connection, for us to have a relationship, human to human."

Mike Morris says

Definitely the most meaningful book I've read this year, if not several. As a person who's greatest challenge to implementing Christian values is my daily commute to work, it's almost otherworldly to experience the grace, mercy, and forgiveness within the pages of this book. It's a tear jerker and a heart breaker, but it is precisely the kind of message conceived from the Gospel that we could all benefit from.

Colette says

Difficult to interpret

A story about redemption, forgiveness and following God's teachings but also a story of murder. Murder of the author's pregnant sister and her brother-in-law. Jesus teaches us to forgive but murder ?

Lori says

I was a goodreads first reads winner of this book. Jeanne Bishop and her family had a horrific thing happen in her family. Her younger sister Nancy, Richard, Nancy's husband and her unborn baby were murdered by a teenager named David Biro. this happened in 1990 when 25 year old Nancy and husband came home and Were murdered in cold blood. The young man showed no remorse for the crime and spent the rest of his years in jail. For 20 years Jeanne Bishop could not even say his name. she became a defense lawyer had a family but had a huge hole in her heart over her sister's death. When Nancy was murdered she lived for a few minutes and in her own blood wrote a heart and a U. this showed the loving heart of her little sister. Jeanne Bishop kept her faith to keep her going. Twenty years after her sister's death she decided to put her faith to the test by deciding to forgive David Biro the man who killed her sister. This was not an easy task. she used bible passages to help her go in the direction of forgiveness. this included deciding to write David Biro. Months later David wrote back. Over the last few years they have been meeting at the jail every other month. to talk and share their feelings. this was a diffucult thing for Jeanne Bishop to do. she used her religious beliefs to try and find a way to forgive ,but not forget. she also used some cases of other families who have lost a family member violence. a good read. a very inspirational read.

Laura Cheifetz says

Pity the colleague who walks into my office while I am re-reading this book in order to write discussion questions...

The writing is great. The story is compelling. The theology and biblical references are solid. Faith, narrative, quotes from relevant authors, are all woven together in this story of the transformation of a family member of murder victims/a Christian/a lawyer.

The first time I saw the manuscript, I couldn't stop reading it. I have had some exposure to the work toward abolishing the death penalty and ending mandatory minimum sentences, and this personal story is an invaluable contribution for those concerned with restorative justice for the good of all the community, not just with punitive justice.

Difficult, beautiful, and worthwhile.

Oona says

An incredible book that should be required reading for every Christian. I am so grateful to my pastor for referencing this in one of his homilies several months ago, and my only regret is that I didn't read it sooner than now.

Barbara says

This is what spiritual integrity looks like. There are passages in the Bible that make no sense until you need them, and then there they are, whether you wanted them or not. And they tell you what you must do. Jeanne Bishop is a very brave person.

Valerie Sherman says

Ordered this by request for one of my prison pen pals and decided to read before I sent it to him. It's an inspiring and difficult story, although I wish the author had explained her shifts in a way that wasn't always 100% tied to Christianity and scripture. I accept that this was her motivation, but it was hard for non-religious people like me to relate to.

Bill says

Imagine: Your pregnant sister and her husband, your brother in law, have just returned from dinner with one another. A kid – not quite 18 – has broken into their home, had sat down, and awaits them, a gun in his hand.

Your brother in law opens the door, sees the kid, and immediately pleads with him not to shoot your pregnant sister, to just lock them in the cellar, take what he wants and leave.

The kid takes them to the cellar handcuffed and then instead of locking the cellar door, stealing what he wants, and leaving, he shoots your brother in law in the head and twice shoots your sister in the stomach.

Would you forgive this kid, especially since he bragged by his killing to a friend and at his trial, tried to blame someone else, showing no remorse?

That's what Jeanne Bishop does – not right away – but over a period of over 20 years – she comes to terms with the killer who tore her family apart, meets him in prison, and forgives him.

Would you be able to forgive someone who killed a member of your family? How did Jeanne Bishop accomplish this astonishing reconciliation? Read this amazing book and find out.

Melinda Kramer says

An inspirational and thoughtful dialogue on unspeakable loss and reconciliation. Although I'm not a religious person, I felt that the reasoning and journey that Bishop shares from pain and anger to relief and reconciliation is something that everyone can think about. I was struggling with daily anger for the thug who recently shot and killed our beloved Commander Bauer here in Chicago and read this to help me reason with it. This book provides a lot to think about and discuss in this era of mass killings and gun violence.

Melanie says

I honestly don't know if I could be as strong as Jeanne Bishop was in forgiving her sister, brother in law and their unborn child's killer. You really have to do some soul searching and praying in order to be able to forgive their killer. Jeanne is an outspoken opponent for capital punishment. When she forgives the killer, she forgets about him as well. That is all she wants to do, but what Jeanne is challenged to read a book and act as Christians are to act, things begin to change for her.

Could you forgive your sister, brother in law and their unborn child's murderer? I think I would have a really hard time with this one. Jeanne Bishop shows us in this book that it is achievable and you just have to have your heart in the right place to be able to do that. I think this is a great read and could even help those that are in the same position.

Quo says

In reading *Change of Heart: Justice, Mercy & Making Peace with my Sister's Killer*, one feels rather at a distance from the emotional response of someone who has lost a loved one to a random act of violence and Jeanne Bishop lost both a beloved sister and a brother-in-law. Beyond that, her sister was expecting a child, adding further to the tragic loss. It is almost impossible to suggest how one would react under similar circumstances but Jeanne Bishop's life-altering loss in time somehow led to a soul-altering transformation, one that is beyond comprehension for many and which involved not just an eventual forgiveness but a reconciliation with the murderer. For one can forgive at a considerable distance but reconciliation in the case of Jeanne Bishop involved meeting the murderer in prison and learning to form a bond with him as a fellow human being, created in God's eye ultimately of the same material as Jeanne.

Early on, the book involves a reconstruction of the murder scene and an attempt to comprehend the killer's motives, such as they proved to be. This was not an intentional murder as in the famous case of Leopold & Loeb many years ago, two bright, well-off students at the University of Chicago who decided to commit a "perfect crime" for reasons that seemed almost philosophical. However David Biro, the murderer of Jeanne Bishop's kin & also from a wealthy Chicago-area family, demonstrated a similar lack of empathy for his victims, even though robbery & not murder was apparently his initial intention.

While Jeanne was trained as a lawyer, this book is about the power of compassion and the way in which deeply ingrained Christian values are translated into forgiveness and then a much more visceral and apparently beneficial confrontation with the murderer. Following the murders, Jeanne meets with her pastoral counselor, John Boyle, someone who was present at the liberation of Dachau and who provides a visual framework, simple but efficient, for coping with the anger caused by the senseless murder of loved

ones, a method for keeping the tragedy in focus while attempting to gain insight. The insight begins by placing a clenched fist in front of one's face & then slowly lowering the clenched fist, gradually allowing unobstructed vision.

Beyond that, Prof. Mark Osler, author of *Jesus on Death Row*, among other books, introduces the concept of *kairos*, a turning point in one's life or a propitious moment for decision or action as something that Jeanne Bishop can build on, using her deep-seated sense of Christian morality to fuel a search for understanding of the tragedy that befell Jeanne & her family, each of whom reacts differently. Osler contends that

Each of us is somewhere between the murderer and Christ and our common experience meets the murderer in the precise place where it meets the life of Christ. There is elegant symmetry between the life of Christ who is perfect beyond our comprehension & the murderer who is flawed beyond our comprehension. Although Christ & the murderer come from opposite directions, something inside of us compels us to try to understand both.

This represents a tremendous leap for anyone, regardless of religious background or lack of it but it also embodies a profound attempt to deal with one's own flaws in a way that seems both deeply intellectual & exceedingly personal in the case of such an emotional trauma as Jeanne Bishop suffered. The tragedy at the hands of David Biro, who was 16 at the time of the murders, occurred 20+ years ago & resulted in a sentence of a life in prison without the possibility of parole. Remarkably, well beyond forgiveness and after several meetings with David Biro at the place of his incarceration, Jeanne Bishop now argues for his eventual release, in part because he was a juvenile when the crimes were committed and she feels that he has come to a fuller if not a complete consideration of his life-altering crime.

More recently, there is a new phrasing for the kind of transition that Jeanne Bishop has made in her life, "audacity of forgiveness" and it most certainly is typified by the forgiveness of those who lost loved ones at the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina at the hands of white supremacist Dylann Roof in June of 2015. A recent issue of *The New Yorker* refers to this capacity for compassion & forgiveness on the part of many at the church as "spiritual fortitude forged in the crucible of terrorism". In that article, an organizer for Black Lives Matter in Charleston, Muhiyidin D'baha, whose mother is a Baha'i and whose father is a Muslim, commented that those at the Charleston Church where nine were slain "are at a spiritual level that I haven't attained." Jeanne Bishop is quite definitely at that level of compassion & forgiveness and the portrayal of her transformation in *Change of Heart* was both stunning and uplifting to behold.
