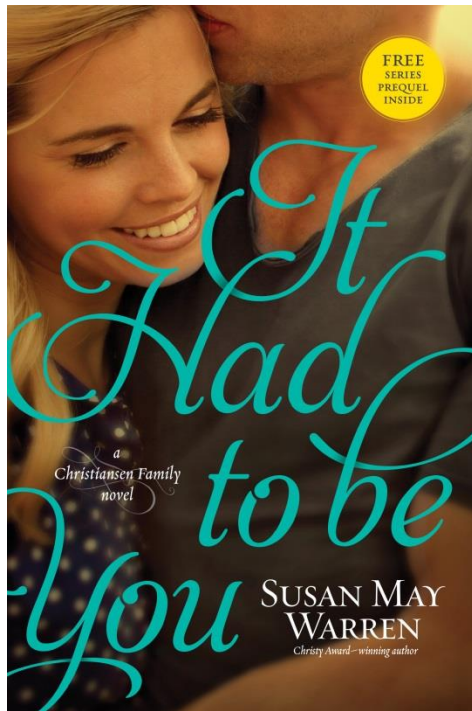


# *It Had to Be You*

## *Book Group Packet*



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## Book Group Meeting Preparation

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Menu—to coordinate with the book and an ice hockey rink theme:

- Option I: Make your own single-serving pizza
  - Have single-serving crusts available with sauce, cheese, and various toppings. Set up an assembly line and pop pizzas into oven while guests assemble and mingle.
- Option II: Ice cream social
  - Have ice cream sundae bar—featuring ice cream, various toppings and candy/sprinkles, whipped cream and cherries
- Option III: Nacho bar
  - Have chips, cheese, and various toppings like jalapeños, beans, peppers, and onions available. Let each guest prepare their own nacho tray on a 12 x 12 inch foil square, place on cookie sheet to melt cheese. Once done, slide into cardboard to-go-type cardboard basket.
  - Provide toppings for warmed nachos like sour cream, guacamole, and salsa
- Pigs in a blanket (hot dogs wrapped in biscuits)
- Popcorn
- “Sno-Caps” candies in small dish
- Hot chocolate
- Warm apple cider

Set Up:

- Set up chairs in a circle around room; leave a few open chairs for late arrivals.
- Consider asking each member to drop off a favorite family photograph (preferably framed), prior to meeting date. Decorate the table with all of the photographs to set the tone and establish the family legacy theme, consistent with the Christiansen Family series.



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## Trivia Questions

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1. In the beginning of the novel, Owen was traded from one team to another. What are the names of the two teams? (Minnesota Wild & St. Paul Blue Ox)
2. What is the name of Eden's date at the hockey game? What does he do for a living? (Russell Hays, undertaker)
3. What game do Eden and Casper play on the iPad in the hospital? (Words with Friends)
4. What do Eden and Jace eat at the hospital cafeteria? (tapioca pudding)
5. What kind of car does Owen own? (Dodge Charger)
6. When Eden borrows Owen's car to drive to Deep Haven with Jace, what animal do they almost hit? (Deer)
7. What is the name of the sledding hill where Eden and Jace tobogganed? (Honeymoon Bluff)
8. What is the name of the band that plays at the VFW in Deep Haven when Jace invites Eden onstage with him? (the Blue Monkeys)
9. What does Eden throw into a Dumpster in frustration? (her white parka)
10. Who does Jace give Eden's notebook to? (Olivia)



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## Character Discussion

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1. What did you like and dislike about Eden? What is your impression of her? In what ways do you see her grow and change? Where does she still have room to grow?
2. What did you like and dislike about Owen? Was he believable? What do you think will happen to him after this story ends?
3. What did you like and dislike about Jace? Did your initial impression of him change as the story went on? Is his transformation authentic?
4. Are Jace and Eden a good match? Why or why not? How do you envision their story continuing?
5. Who is your favorite character and why?
6. What, if anything, would you have changed about a character?
7. How did the characters lend credibility to the story line? Were they believable?
8. Did any characters charm you? Who and how?
9. Did any characters frustrate you? Who and how so?



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## Discussion Questions

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1. In her letter, Ingrid remembers that Eden has been a storyteller all her life. Do you think Eden recognizes that trait in herself? Why or why not?
2. Ingrid tells her daughter, “My prayer for you is that you would believe God has a good story for you, too.” Have you ever struggled to believe that for yourself? If so, why?
3. Eden fears that she doesn’t measure up to her talented siblings, that her only value is in being the family cheerleader. How would you describe the role you play in your family or the role you played while growing up? Do you think others would see it the same way?
4. Jace has lost some of his passion for hockey and knows that continuing to play poses serious risks, but he feels unable to do anything else. How would you have advised him in this situation? When you have faced a crossroads in your own life—whether in a career, a relationship, etc.—how did you decide what to do?
5. Despite warnings that she’s too invested in Owen, Eden feels responsible for her brother, believing it’s her duty to watch his back. How much responsibility should family members have for one another? Where do you think Eden goes too far?
6. Jace struggles with his role as an enforcer for the Blue Ox, wondering if the violence of his position makes him a monster—especially because he admits to sometimes enjoying the fights. John Christiansen suggests that Jace might like the applause and approval he receives better than the fighting. Do you think he’s right? What makes fans cheer for the violence in sports?
7. Max Sharpe, one of Owen’s teammates, worries he was the one who caused Owen’s injury. Jace tells Max to keep this news from Owen. Do you think that is wise advice? What do you imagine would’ve happened if Max had confessed to Owen?
8. In chapter 9, after Owen is injured, his father talks with him about the role of suffering in our lives. Do you agree with John’s perspective? In times of pain or difficulty, do you tend to get angry with God, as Owen does, or lean into Him?
9. As Maddy gets sicker, Sam has to consider whether he can provide for her in the way she needs or whether she would be better off in a medical foster home. What would you do in



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his situation? Do you think he ultimately makes the right choice?

10. During his visit to Deep Haven, Jace concludes that despite all she says, Eden *wants* headlines, wants to be part of Owen's and Jace's limelight. Yet when Jace gives her the chance to share the spotlight with him, Eden runs. Why do you think she reacts this way?
11. Eden denies her feelings for Jace, insisting she wants a "normal" man. Why does Eden believe herself unworthy of a man like Jace? Have you ever felt undeserving of someone's love or affection? What words of wisdom would you give to Eden as she struggles between what she wants and what she believes she deserves?
12. While Jace knows he's been saved, he doesn't believe God could favor or even like him. Similarly, Eden feels as though she's "not necessarily God's favorite." Do you think God favors some people over others? What does it take for Jace and Eden to feel liked or favored by God? Have you ever struggled with similar questions about how God feels toward you?
13. Sam nearly makes a desperate, illegal decision out of his fear that God will let Maddy die. Has there been a time when you were tempted to take matters into your own hands on behalf of someone you love? What was the result?
14. When he sees an article about his migraines, Jace jumps to the conclusion that Eden is involved, damaging their relationship. Has a misunderstanding or snap judgment ever hurt one of your relationships? What does that relationship look like today?
15. Eden, Jace, and Sam all have to learn lessons about holding on too tightly. How does each character act on the realization that he or she needs to let go? Have you had to learn a similar lesson in your own life? Describe that time.
16. Eden feels that her attempt to help Hudson failed, but nurse Becky tells her, "You were God's plan to show Hudson that he was loved." Olivia and Jace also echo the idea that Eden was handpicked to find Hudson, connect him to his family, and tell his story. Do you think they're right? Have you ever felt that you were singled out by God for a particular task? What was it?
17. In her story about Hudson, Eden asks, "Is it possible to have a remarkable life by simply caring for someone else?" In your opinion, what makes someone heroic? How is heroism achieved? Through a person's actions, the way he or she lives, one's character?
18. By the end of *It Had to Be You*, both Eden and Jace have made decisions about the future of their careers. Were you surprised by their choices? Why or why not?



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## Other Discussion Areas

Consider offering these questions to your group in advance of your meeting so members come prepared to share and discuss.

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**Family Faith Legacy Theme Discussion**—What examples from your own life demonstrate the passing on of faith from one generation to the next? Who has modeled this well? How can you continue the legacy of faith in your own family?

**Book Theme/Life Lesson Discussion**—How do this book and its themes resonate with you and your family's experiences? What similarities do you find between your family and the Christiansens?

**Photo Show-and-Tell**—Do you have any photographs to share that capture precious family moments and memories? What about those moments or memories capture the essence, the true heart, of your family?

**Family Theme Song**—Author Susan May Warren uses titles of songs for each of her books in her Christiansen Family series. What song best represents your family's story? What song do you aspire to?



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## About the Author

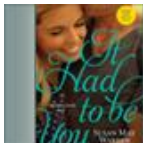
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Susan May Warren is the bestselling, Christy and RITA Award–winning author of more than forty novels whose compelling plots and unforgettable characters have won acclaim with readers and reviewers alike. She served with her husband and four children as a missionary in Russia for eight years before she and her family returned home to the States. She now writes full-time as her husband runs a lodge on Lake Superior in northern Minnesota, where many of her books are set. She and her family enjoy hiking, canoeing, and being involved in their local church.

Susan holds a BA in mass communications from the University of Minnesota. Several of her critically acclaimed novels have been ECPA and CBA bestsellers, were chosen as Top Picks by *Romantic Times*, and have won the RWA’s Inspirational Reader’s Choice contest and the American Christian Fiction Writers Book of the Year award. Her novel *You Don’t Know Me* won a 2013 Christy Award, and five of her other books have also been finalists. In addition to her writing, Susan loves to teach and speak at women’s events about God’s amazing grace in our lives.

For exciting updates on her new releases, previous books, and more, visit her website at [www.susanmaywarren.com](http://www.susanmaywarren.com).



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