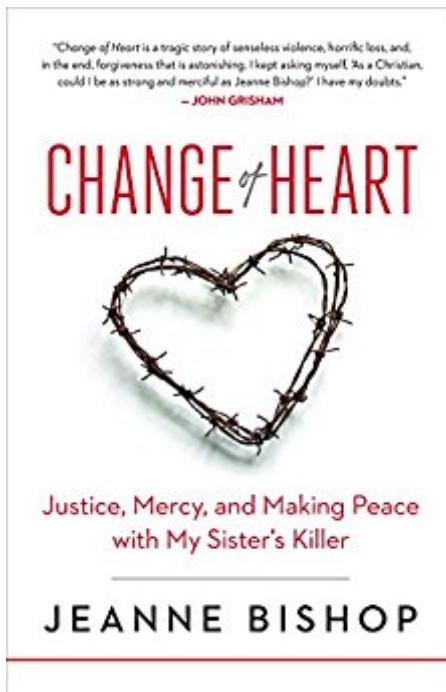


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Change Of Heart: Justice, Mercy, And Making Peace With My Sister's Killer



Synopsis

This powerful, true story of faith and forgiveness shows that all of us are capable of experiencing the healing and renewal that comes with truly forgiving another. Change of Heart follows the transformative journey undertaken by Jeanne Bishop after the murders of her sister and brother-in-law, a journey that challenged Jeanne's belief in the message of Jesus on the cross and eventually moved her beyond simple forgiveness to the deeper waters of redemption and grace. Jeanne's authentic story will guide readers past the temptation of anger and revenge, and help them navigate the path of truly forgiving someone whose actions have hardened their heart. From once wishing that her sister's killer languished in a cell for the rest of his life, Jeanne now visits him regularly in prison and publicly advocates for his release. "It's not okay what you did, but I am not going to hate you. I am not going to wish evil on you," writes Bishop of the murderer. "I am going to wish the opposite. I am going to wish that you will be redeemed." "The criminal justice system in the United States, which deems some people unworthy of redemption--even children who commit serious crimes--urgently needs to hear voices that speak for mercy and restoration. Jeanne Bishop's is such a voice" writes Sr. Helen Prejean, activist and author of *Dead Man Walking*. Change of Heart confronts these serious and pressing issues of restorative justice, juvenile life sentences, and incarceration in the criminal justice system. Ultimately, Jeanne is writing more than a memoir of finding faith through extraordinary obstacles. Her compelling story offers a better understanding of what it truly means to be a person of faith. It is a call to action that is a "must-read for pastors, social workers, caregivers, and all who seek to build community with people relegated to the margins" (Greg Ellison, Emory University).

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Customer Reviews

"To err is human, to forgive, divine." When Jeanne Bishop's sister, brother-in-law, and their unborn child were killed by a deeply disturbed teenager, I recoiled at the senselessness of the crime. When I read about her sister's tragically beautiful attempt to leave behind a message of love before she died, I wept. How do you forgive the "unforgivable?" Even though I never met any of the people in this gut wrenching story, my anger against the "subhuman" who committed these horrible acts exploded. How do you forgive a "thing" like that? Jeanne's story takes the reader through the horror of learning a loved one has been murdered to the divine state of grace that enabled her to forgive him. We live in an age when grudges are held over perceived slights and rage is sparked over traffic mishaps. In our deeply "fallen" world literally no-one expects or anticipates forgiveness for a murderer: Lock them up, throw away the key, and when possible, execute them. But over twenty years later, Jeanne writes to the killer and offers forgiveness. At that point many of us would be asking ourselves, "Is she crazy?" I was certain that act of kindness would be lost on such a despicable creature and when Jeanne received a letter from him in response, I steeled myself for the worst. But that is where this story brings us into a whole new realm; the possibility that the *æ* least of these *æ* (and who but a murderer scrapes the bottom of that pit?) can evolve to the point of genuine remorse. Until recently, it was a concept I could not fathom. As a Christian, I have long believed in redemption, yet somehow withheld applying that possibility to those who committed society's most heinous crimes.

I purchased Ms. Bishop's book after seeing her on one of the weekend shows (20/20 or Date Line or 48 Hours). Her sister and brother-in-law were murdered, a tragedy for the whole family. Families don't recover completely after something like that, you just find a way to go on. Ms. Bishop, who is a devout Christian, eventually came to understand that she couldn't go forward unless she forgive her sister's murderer. I've read and listened to other crime victims and that is definitely a step towards

healing and working towards a new life. However, Ms. Bishop took it one step further. She started writing to the murderer and a dialogue started between the two. She contacted the murderer's father when she decided to go meet the man in prison. The father, who went to visit his son regularly, gave Ms. Bishop "the drill" on where to go and what to expect. Since then Ms. Bishop regularly meets with the man as well. I have read of other victims meeting the perpetrator in prison as part of the forgiving and healing process. But what is different about this case is the murderer was either 16 or 17 when he committed the murders but was tried as an adult and sentenced as one as well. Ms. Bishop is an attorney working in the public defender's office in Chicago. She is actively working on a bill that would give convicts convicted for life when they were not adults and opportunity to appeal out of the initial trial verdict. I respect Ms. Bishop's devotion to her church and her beliefs. And I respect her kind heart, as well. But as someone who has encountered sociopaths and studied them endlessly, it's concerning. Young people who want to kill, just to know "what it feels like" -- well, I seriously doubt they are truly able to be redeemed.

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