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# The Magic of Montford Street

## Church Small Group Reading Guide

*(8-Session Structure with Scripture & Memoir Alignment)*

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### How to Use This Church Small Group Companion Reading Guide

Welcome to our reading journey through **The Magic of Montford Street: A Love Letter to the Valley in the 80s**! This guide is designed to help our group experience the richness of this memoir through the lens of faith, scripture, and Christian community.

- **Read with Openness:** Each session, read the assigned chapters and reflect on the weekly theme and scripture.
  - **Connect Faith & Life:** Use the questions to link the memoir's experiences to your own journey with God, family, and community.
  - **Guide, Don't Direct:** This guide is a flexible tool—select questions and activities that fit your group's interests, needs, and pace.
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### Session Reading Schedule & Spiritual Reflections

#### Session 1: Remembering Our Stories

- **Memoir Chapters:** Prologue: The Day the Magic Ended & Chapter 1: Building Montford: Dreams, Barriers, & Breakthroughs
  - **Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:20-25 ("When your son asks you...tell him the story...")
  - **Focus:** The spiritual importance of remembering and telling our stories, even painful ones.
  - **Discussion:**
    - The prologue opens with devastating loss. How does the biblical command to remember help us tell and integrate the stories of pain alongside the stories of promise?
    - How does the grandparents' journey (Tuskegee Airmen, resisting covenants) mirror the "passing down" of faith and determination in your family or church?
  - **Prayer/Reflection:** Thank God for the stories and ancestors who shaped your faith. Invite personal sharing of a favorite childhood memory.
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#### Session 2: The Village God Gave Us

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 2: The Village That Raised Me & Chapter 3: Family Ties and Easter Highs

- **Scripture:** Hebrews 10:24-25 ("Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...")
  - **Focus:** The Biblical idea of "village" as church and fellowship.
  - **Discussion:**
    - Who were the "uncles" and "aunties" (non-blood mentors) in your childhood faith community? How did they "stir you up" to love and good works?
    - What are the marks of true Christian community—in the memoir and in your church? (Consider the "shared ownership" of the children on Montford Street.)
  - **Community Activity:** Write thank-you notes to an elder, mentor, or "spiritual parent".
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### Session 3: Family, Ritual, and God's Presence

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 4: Streetlights and Montford Legends & Chapter 5: Long Days and Summer Nights
  - **Scripture:** Psalm 145:4 ("One generation shall commend your works to another...")
  - **Focus:** Faith, home rituals, and passing down spiritual wisdom.
  - **Discussion:**
    - How have family rituals (like Grandma's famous Sunday dinners or holiday celebrations) or church traditions shown you God's faithfulness?
    - The memoir is rich with intergenerational stories; what "faith markers" (values, habits, prayers) do you want to pass on to the next generation?
  - **Prayer:** Invite group members to pray for families in transition or children in church.
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### Session 4: Childhood Wonders and God's Protection

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 6: Lemon Trees and Jedi Dreams & Chapter 7: Swimming Pools and Ghost Stories
  - **Scripture:** Psalm 91 ("He will command His angels concerning you...")
  - **Focus:** God's presence in innocence and growing up; balancing nostalgia and reality.
  - **Discussion:**
    - The children face literal dangers (gunfire at the pool, the Night Stalker). Which experiences from childhood make you most grateful to God for His physical or spiritual protection?
    - How has God's protection shown up—sometimes quietly—in your life?
  - **Reflection:** Share a story of a time your faith (or a family member's faith) was an active defense against fear or danger.
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### Session 5: Facing Brokenness—Hope in Hard Times

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 11: Haunted Valley and Monster Masks & Chapter 26: D.A.R.E. Days & Shifting Streets
- **Scripture:** Romans 5:3-5 ("Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.")

- **Focus:** Brokenness, loss, and God's work through suffering.
  - **Discussion:**
    - How does the author's journey through violence, fear, or loss (e.g., the Battering Ram raid, the New Year's Eve shooting) connect with Biblical resilience?
    - Where in your own story has God brought beauty from brokenness?
  - **Prayer:** Pray for healing and hope for all grieving, especially families and neighborhoods impacted by loss.
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## Session 6: Growth, Calling, and Becoming Who God Made Us

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 13: *Skinny Bones, Strong Dreams* & Chapter 15: *Vote For Me!*
  - **Scripture:** Jeremiah 29:11 ("For I know the plans I have for you...")
  - **Focus:** Finding God's call in change and transition—growing up, moving forward.
  - **Discussion:**
    - The author discovers he is "smart and skinny" and finds his voice in the election. How did "stepping forward" look for the author in these moments of self-discovery?
    - What transitions are you or your family facing now? Where is God leading you to use the unique gifts (or even challenges) He has given you?
  - **Reflection:** Each member writes (or prays) a short "love letter" to their own childhood, church, or another mentor.
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## Session 7: Building the Village Today

- **Memoir Chapters:** Chapter 12: *Church Fans and Sunday Dinners* & Epilogue: *Love Letter to Montford Street*
  - **Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47 (The early church—devoted to fellowship and generosity)
  - **Focus:** Creating courageous, caring, and cross-generational Christian communities today.
  - **Discussion:**
    - What qualities from Montford Street's "village" (shared ownership, hospitality, presence) would you want to (re)build in your church or neighborhood?
    - How can your group help newcomers, children, or youth feel part of the "church village" today?
  - **Activity:** Group brainstorm: Plan a service or outreach that strengthens your "church village".
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## Session 8: Legacy—Your Love Letter

- **Memoir Chapters:** Epilogue: *Love Letter to Montford Street* (Revisit)
- **Scripture:** 2 Timothy 1:5-7 (Faith passed down from Lois and Eunice to Timothy)
- **Focus:** Legacy of faith, hope, and love.

- **Discussion:**
    - What's the "magic" (sense of belonging, community resilience, faith) God has entrusted to your family and church?
    - What legacy do you pray to leave for future generations?
  - **Closing Prayer:** Thank God for the neighborhoods and communities that have formed your faith. Bless one another with words of encouragement and dedication.
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## Facilitator's Leader Guide: The Magic of Montford Street (Church Small Group)

This guide is designed for the instructor or small group leader facilitating *The Magic of Montford Street: A Love Letter to the Valley in the 80s* in a faith-based context. Its purpose is to help you lead discussions that foster spiritual growth, community reflection, and application of Biblical truths.

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### Guiding Philosophy and Objectives

The memoir serves as a powerful lens for exploring the themes of **Village, Legacy, and God's Presence** in everyday life, especially during times of struggle and transition.

#### Objectives for Participants:

- **Acknowledge God's Presence:** Help members trace where God's providence, protection, and faithfulness were evident in the author's story and their own.
  - **Identify Spiritual Mentorship:** Use the "village" concept to encourage gratitude and prayer for spiritual parents and elders in their lives.
  - **Inspire Action:** Translate the lessons of Montford Street's intentional community into practical steps for strengthening their church and neighborhood today.
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### Session Management and Spiritual Tone

#### 1. Setting the Sacred Space

- **Tone:** Establish an environment of warmth, trust, and confidentiality. Remind the group that the vulnerability of sharing personal stories (whether memoir or their own) is a sacred act.
- **Scripture:** Always start by reading the assigned Scripture aloud. Use it to anchor the discussion, making the memoir an illustration of Biblical truth, not the central text itself.

- **Prayer:** Begin and end each session with focused prayer. Utilize the suggested prompts (e.g., praying for families in transition, thanking God for ancestors as requested in the guide).

## 2. Pacing the Discussion

- Be mindful of pacing. The core focus is on application and reflection, not summarizing plot. If a session's theme is particularly engaging, feel free to drop a discussion question to allow deeper sharing.
- The memoir is rich in specific stories. Encourage participants to share personal anecdotes that mirror the book's themes, but always transition back to how that story reveals God's character or grace.

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## Facilitating Key Spiritual Themes

### The Weight of Memory and Loss (Session 1 & 5)

- The memoir opens with profound loss (the Prologue) and later explores violence (Night Stalker, New Year's Eve shooting).
- **Strategy:** Frame these discussions with **Romans 5:3-5**. Instead of dwelling on the trauma, ask: "Where does the story show perseverance or character being produced through suffering?" or "How did the community respond to fear in a way that reflected a deeper, if unstated, hope?"
- **Focus:** Use the New Year's Eve stray bullet incident as an example of grace and purpose, as the author felt "spared for a reason."

### The Power of the Village (Session 2, 3, 7)

- This is the memoir's strongest theological connection to the church. Use **Hebrews 10:24-25** to stress the active role of stirring one another toward love.
- **Strategy:** Ask members to identify the "uncles" (mentors) and "Grandmas" (figures of faith and hospitality) in the book and in their own spiritual history.
- **Application:** When discussing **Acts 2:42-47**, focus the group on practical action: What does the fellowship and generosity of the early church look like when applied to your local Montford Street?

### Legacy and Calling (Session 6 & 8)

- The theme of legacy in the Epilogue (what is remembered, what is forgiven) should culminate in a discussion of **2 Timothy 1:5-7**.
- **Strategy:** Ask: "What is the unfeigned faith that has been passed down to you?" Connect the author's discovery of being "Smart and Skinny" and the eventual realization of his calling to God's specific plans (**Jeremiah 29:11**).
- **Activity:** Ensure the group commits time to the Love Letter assignment. This is a chance for participants to actively bless their past and embrace their future spiritual purpose.

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## Integrating Activities and Closure

- **Community Activity (Session 2):** When writing thank-you notes, encourage members to write to someone they haven't thanked recently—a former Sunday School teacher, a bus driver who showed kindness, or a neighbor. This expands the definition of "spiritual parent."
- **Final Session (Session 8):** Dedicate ample time for members to share their prayers for the future legacy of their own church. Close with a physical act of blessing (e.g., placing hands on shoulders and praying words of dedication). This provides meaningful closure to the shared journey.