



# The Hundred Story Home

## A Journey of Homelessness, Hope and Healing

Thank you for reading *The Hundred Story Home: A Journey of Homelessness, Hope, and Healing*. I would love to be in your living room discussing this with you, your book club, or study group. Below are some questions to get the conversation going. If you have discussed *The Hundred Story Home* let me know! I am eager to know what works and doesn't in this study guide or themes your group discussed which weren't in this guide. Send your comments and suggestions to [kathy@kathyizard.com](mailto:kathy@kathyizard.com).

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One of the central themes in *The Hundred Story Home* is homelessness yet there are many levels to this issue, from those on the streets to the challenge of moving into eldercare. Have you ever experienced actual homelessness or even a temporary loss of place or self that made you able to relate to people like Robert, William, Helen, and Coleman? Have you had to move a parent from their home?

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2

Did getting to know the stories behind how people like Coleman and Chilly Willy became homeless make you feel or think differently about homelessness or homeless people? Do you ever feel compelled to stop and talk to a homeless person and learn their story? Have you? If not, what holds you back?

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3

Did hearing about women like Carolyn (who left the pilot program) change your perspective about how homelessness is different for women on the streets versus men?

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Mental illness is a prevalent theme in *The Hundred Story Home* and something that carries a similar stigma to homelessness. Although 1 in 4 adults will be diagnosed with a mental illness, there is still a silence and perceived shame around the topic. The National Association on Mental Illness encourages people to *See the person, not the illness*. Do you or someone you love have experience with this type of stigma? How does it make you feel? What are some ways we can reach out to people who might be suffering in this way?



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I wrote that I was raised not to “*be* good, but to **do** good.” Along with the message from my grandmother to Love Well, these two messages became driving forces in my life and influenced how we raised our daughters. What were you raised to believe, and how has that influenced your life, and if you have children, your parenting?

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6

In *The Hundred Story Home*, I had rejected religion but discovered I actually had a defining belief in faith. Was there a time in your life when you felt religion, faith, or spirituality was not for you? Has that changed and if so, what are your belief systems now as an adult?

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The idea of renewal and rebirth also recurs in the story, from the junkyard that became a home, to each homeless person housed, to my mother’s affinity with the symbol of the Phoenix. Have you ever been given a second chance? Was there a time in your life where you felt you reinvented yourself to leave something old behind?

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8

The homeless tend to be an invisible part of society and there is a particularly poignant retelling of Coleman asking the high school audience if they could “see” him because for years on the streets, he believed nobody “saw” him. Also, I couldn’t “see” a problem with just giving people soup and programs until Denver made me “see” it differently. Have you had experience with something *invisible* suddenly made visible? What changed your vision?

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There were many instances where I felt a sense of guilt for having lived a relatively privileged life. How do you think class affects how we see the world? Have you felt uncomfortable with your class or perceived status from either having too much or too little?



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Throughout my journey there were God-incidences or circumstances seemingly so impossible to line up that it seemed unlikely that they were random and not somehow connected to something bigger. Do you agree? Have you ever had a God-incidence in your life and how did you explain it?

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I didn't want or expect homelessness to be the "purpose" I was looking for because it seemed it was such a huge, overwhelming problem. For me, connecting to a community that was already doing something was essential in doing this work. Is there a cause you are passionate about or an issue you feel you want to be a part of in your community? How have you acted on that interest and if you haven't, is there a nonprofit you could help or a community you could join that is working for a goal that interests you?

