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In a matter of seconds her entire world shifted... An early morning call shatters Caryn Becker's world. Unable to cope with her brother's news that he is gay, Caryn rejects him and disappears into her own turbulent life as a young widow and single mom. But when David is attacked and nearly killed, Caryn is forced to make hard choices about family, faith, and her own future; choices that take her to the very edge of grace.

The Edge of Grace Details

Date : Published August 1st 2011 by Abingdon Press (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781426713118

Author : Christa Allan

Format : 336 pages

Genre : Christian Fiction, Fiction, Christian

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David says

In a matter of seconds her entire world shifted...

An early morning call shatters Caryn Becker's world. Her brother David announces that he is gay, and Caryn completely rejects the one person who stood beside her during her husband's illness and death. Unable to cope with David's news, Caryn disappears into her own turbulent life as a single mom and new business owner.

When David is attacked and nearly killed, his partner asks for Caryn's help. She reluctantly agrees to work with David's lawyer on the case. When her catering business suffers because of David's lifestyle, Caryn is forced to make the hardest choices about family, faith, and her own future, while exploring the grace of forgiveness and acceptance.

The Edge of Grace is a wonderful story of family, enduring the challenges of life and learning to accept differences. The characters are very real, and face genuine challenges to their system of beliefs and perceived "truths." One of my favorite lessons in this very well written book, is to remember that none of us is qualified to judge another human being based on race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. These are only a part of who we are. A very brave author tackles a topic, previously taboo in the Christian Church, with sensitivity, dignity and intelligence. Bravo! I look forward to reading Ms. Allan's previous book, Walking on Broken Glass.

Michelle says

Christa Allen does a great job at drawing a reader in to someone else's world. I couldn't tell you how many times I paused to think about the main character's internal thoughts while reading this book. I really felt bad for her being widowed so young, and being a single mom of a son, and then feeling like she'd lost her brother, when in reality she hadn't. She just lost her image of him and had to reframe everything she'd believed about him.

I loved how the character questioning her assumptions made me think about my own. Especially when it comes to stereotypes. That Lady Gaga reference even made me laugh out loud while I was reading. The weird thing is that this story hit a bit close to home for me because right after my kids went to college last year (like literally the first month they were there) some guys were beaten up pretty badly and two were put in the hospital just because they were gay. The attackers knew this because they caught them leaving a "coming out" type party. That was scary for me because it happened where my kids went to school, and in a pretty "liberal" college town. It can happen anywhere. Hate crimes still happen and they are always wrong. Just like rape is always wrong. Great points there.

Also good points about how knowing something about someone shouldn't make you love them any less. Granted, no one wants to think about what people do privately, but it's true that one of the first things people think about is sex. But we don't think that about other people when we first meet them, right? Good thoughts. Also good ones regarding judging. Only God knows the person's heart and where they really stand with him. It's not our job to decide who He accepts and who he isn't. I still don't know how I feel about the whole faith

thing in regards to sexual relationships, but I am sure many Christians sin in the area in heterosexual relationships, too. Does that mean they won't go to heaven either? I guess that depends on your faith slant. I lean more towards grace and that God is greater than any sin we can commit. He can handle us. Truly. Nothing we can do is new under the sun, right?

Anyway, all in all this was a brave story and well-told. I applaud the author's courage. I like books that make me think and especially make think more about my faith and how I treat people. This book does exactly that. This is one story that needed to be told and she was the perfect person to tell it.

Kathleen Kelly says

The Edge of Grace by Christa Allan is a wonderful story about how a woman comes to terms with her only brother's announcement that he is gay. Her thoughts of "how will this affect my son?", "how will this affect my business?", "what will people think?", "what do I tell my son?". This story is a bit different than some I have read on homosexuality in that it was told by a family member and not the gay person. At times I felt like throttling Caryn and telling her to just deal with it and move on. Well that is easier said than done. It is a difficult situation to deal with as a family member as well as for the person that is coming out of the closet if you will. As a mother in this same situation it was hard for me at first to come to accept the announcement from my own child. As opposed to how Caryn found out, with a phone call, as a mother I always had a feeling, so it was easier for me to accept the situation. Caryn is a caterer and needs all the business she can get and was very worried how her clients would feel about the fact that she had a gay brother. After a scary situation that puts David in the hospital, Caryn gets to meet David's partner for the first time and finds herself slowing changing and coming to terms with the situation. I really enjoyed this novel and I could often sympathize with the all the characters. A novel of overcoming hate and prejudice and the gracefulness of forgiveness and love. I give it 5 stars!!!

Catherine Richmond says

Excellent!

Caryn's brother calls to tell her he's gay. They've been close - David helped start her catering business and has been the man in her son's life since Caryn's husband died - so the news comes as a shock. Caryn cuts off contact with David and wrestles with big questions: Why did this happen? Will David go to hell? Would her business be affected? Then a second call - David's been beaten, a victim of a hate crime.

This story shows a homosexual couple in a loving relationship, without stereotypes, who attend church and read the Bible. The author did a great job showing we're all sinners: the heroine reads erotic novels, her best friend uses sex as a weapon in her marriage, and one of the heroine's customers was a predatory politician. The issues are heavy, but the writing is not - the story ends on a hope-filled note.

There are discussion questions and resource lists in the back. The Edge of Grace would be excellent for book clubs and adult Sunday school classes.

Patricia says

No sophomore slump here. Powerful and hauntingly beautiful right from the beginning.

I fear this book might not get the review ratings it should because of the subject matter. Homosexuality. In Christian fiction. But Allan examines this topic with the same skill she applied to addiction and recovery in her debut novel, *Walking on Glass*. Every stereotype or belief you've ever heard or had regarding homosexuality is touched upon in this novel. However, Allan is particularly adept at then turning said beliefs on their head to make readers look in the mirror and decide whether the reflection is one with which they can live. She particularly gives attention to the notion of homosexual Christians, what some might consider to be an oxymoron and raises the question on why wouldn't God love these children of His as much as He loves any?

The Edge of Grace is another well crafted novel by an insightful, masterful author.

Elizabeth says

Christa Allan has tackled a weighty topic in her second novel. I think she handles it well in some ways, and not so well in others. My first problem with this novel is that it feels very contrived, almost formulaic. The hate crime seems to be structured as a plot device worked in simply to further the progression of the storyline. The novel drags in several places, too. The main character, Caryn, engages in a great deal of inner dialogue that becomes very tedious at times. The other characters aren't developed fully so it is difficult to connect with them.

My main complaint about this novel is that this is Christian fiction, published by a Christian publisher (Abingdon Press), but it simply glosses over the debate over whether or not homosexuality is a sin according to God's word. Should Christians treat homosexuals with love and kindness regardless of the answer to this question? Of course! And Christa Allan does a fine job of conveying this message. But it would have been nice to see some actual dialogue addressing the verses in Scripture that condemn homosexuality rather than just mentioning the ones dealing with grace. The author also glosses over the debate over whether people are born gay or whether or not it is a choice. The author clearly thinks it is the way an individual is born and can't be changed, but she never engages in an intellectually honest debate over the matter. I would have liked to see the main character, Caryn, as someone well grounded in her faith and someone who was very familiar with Scripture. That could have made for some interesting conversations between the characters.

At one point in the novel, Caryn explains to her 8 year old son, Ben, about his uncle being gay:

"some people are born with brown eyes, some with green, and some people with blue eyes. Even in the same family, different children can have different eye colors. You don't choose eye color. It just is. And blue-eyed people fall in love with brown-eyed ones. Sometimes two green-eyed people fall in love. So sometimes a girl and a boy love each other, sometimes a girl and a girl love each other, and sometimes a boy and a boy love each other."

These are the kinds of explanations you can expect from this novel. I wholly agree with the notion of extending love and grace to others regardless of their sexuality. However, I was disappointed that something labeled as Christian fiction would so deftly sidestep an issue of importance regarding Scripture- Is homosexuality a sin from a Biblical standpoint? After studying what the Bible has to say on the matter, most

would answer this question in the affirmative. I would argue that while this novel gets the love part right, its message that God accepts homosexuality as a valid life choice is simply not Biblically sound.

Fay Lamb says

I read this book with an aching heart as I feel that the author, in her attempts to show a loving God, has forgotten that our God is also the very God that sent His son to die for our sins. The particular issue of this book is homosexuality. Scripture clearly calls this act/lifestyle a sin. However, the heroine of *The Edge of Grace* is made out to be the only character who has a lesson to learn--to love her brother despite his lifestyle. What about the lesson the brother needed to learn--that the lifestyle he has chosen is a sin.

The heroine's lesson should not be discounted. We should all love and not hate anyone. We should never judge another individual. Christ is shown through us when we reach out to others who are just like us--sinners.

Ms. Allan's story shies away from any lesson learned by the homosexual brother. He is shown to be "good" because he attends church, he has a New Testament on his bed stand, he does good deeds. There isn't one mention that Scripture clearly tells us that God has a problem with sexual sins: lust, adultery, sex outside the marriage, and yes, like it or not, homosexuality. The real villains of this book are those Christians Ms. Allan portrays. They are likened to those sick individuals who murdered Matthew Wayne Shepherd in 1998, and this truly made me ill. It shows a definite lack of understanding by this author that when someone hates the sin, it is not the same as hating the sinner. And often the most loving thing someone can do for another is to counsel them about their sin--whatever that sin may be.

The book did get me thinking, though. If Ms. Allan's publisher has no problem with publishing a story that indicates God has changed his mind about one sexual sin, if they don't have a problem intimating that a homosexual couple has gone off on a trip to Mexico, what's next for acceptable sins: a heterosexual couple spending time in a romantic locale, a husband cheating on his wife, two teens having a sexual relationship?

Andi says

I could so identify with Caryn. The only difference it wasn't my brother, it was my daughter. I said and did somethings that I am not proud of. In the midst of all that was going on the Lord got a hold of my heart and let me know that He loved my daughter, and I had no right to pass judgement on her. It was a hard pill for me to swallow yet once I did, I felt so free! I was able to accept her for who she was and love her. I have a beautiful relationship with her and her partner and I couldn't be prouder of her.

Caryn had to make a choice in this book whether she was going to accept her brother for who he was or walk away from him. Watching the struggle that Caryn goes through from the moment she finds out about David until she meets Max, David's partner is a powerful journey that God used to bring Caryn to her knees. I highly recommend this book. I give it a lighthouse and shine a light on it for pointing a path to God! Great job Christa!!!!

Casey says

“Edge of Grace” is one of those titles that does not leave you untouched. Even if you don’t completely agree with everything written, you have to agree, this book will make you think and be prepared to be a bit uncomfortable!

The novel has a fantastic literary quality. One of my favorite lines: “...like tap dancing on mud”. What a visual! And there were many such images through the story. I just had to pause often and dwell on the image the word painting evoked.

The novel isn’t so much about Caryn’s brother’s gay relationship, but how Caryn chooses to accept that relationship. I could sympathize with her, because while I don’t have gay relations (that I know of) I could understand her confusion and trying to deal with it.

Where I struggled, is I don’t believe gay and Christian can be synonymous. The Bible clearly states that relations between the same sex is wrong. But we are also clearly told to love and minister to those around us. And this book walked that very fine line.

The ending was very open ended, maybe even a bit abrupt. But can such a story be tied up in a neat little package? Hmm. Not likely.

I think with what had to be tackled, it was done well. Very well written and engaging.

If this book does nothing else, I think you (and me) as readers will not be so quick to judge and faster to show Christ’s love. May they see Him through us.

Mel says

For Christian Fiction, this was a well balanced, thought provoking story dealing with homosexuality. The author stayed away from stereotypes creating flawed, but endearing characters. I thought it was presented very well. My complaint is that the main character sometimes got lost in her thoughts a little too much for my liking. Other than that it was a good read.

J.R. Ortega says

To be honest, I was not sure what I was jumping into when I cracked open this book.

Being gay, the synopsis of "The Edge of Grace" by Christa Allan definitely caught my attention.

It wasn't until I was sucked into the book, that I realized this book was also about Christianity. I've never been religious. I choose to believe in a higher power, but I'm not for religion.

But this book has definitely opened my eyes. One of my best friends is a devote Christian and she absolutely loves everyone.

For a while, I held her at a distance - every Christian I had met up until I met her were judgmental hypocrites. But my friend showed me something different.

She didn't preach - she explained.

She is the type to admit her flaws, and she works hard every day at righting those wrongs, but she understands this is part of her walk of faith. She told me that God was about love, not about judging or hatred.

"Why doesn't everyone see it that way," I had asked her, angrily.

Unfortunately, she didn't have the answer, but I realized then that I had been passing judgement on her as well. I fully expected her to be the gay-bashing, hardcore socially conservative Christian, like those I had met before.

The ones that called me a faggot, the ones that made me feel like I didn't matter.

But she isn't that person.

What Christa Allan's book did for me was show me the life my friend lives.

I suddenly understood this struggle she faced as a growing young devote Christian. Being a Christian, she wasn't unaware of the Christians I had encountered. She had to beat that. She had to see the love, not the hate.

Seeing what Caryn was struggling with was something I learned to respect.

Coming out (I came out when I was 19 to everyone, including family) takes an emotional toll on family, and when I came out, I failed to realize that.

Lucky for me, my family and friends were all about love. I'm happy to report that I've been partnered for six years and we go to his house for Christmas first and mine second.

This made me think of the thoughts that might have gone through the mind of my mother, who, though she was accepting and loving, must have been hurt.

Being her only son, she must have realized certain expectations she may have had for me changed. But in the end, she simply said, "As long as you're happy, I'm happy."

I even remember when I came out, my Mom asked me why I would choose "that." I explained how it's not a choice, and how I had known ever since I was young; though I wasn't sure what it was.

This powerful line between David and Caryn in "The Edge of Grace" perfectly summed up my answer to my Mom.

"My being gay is my normal life. Do you ..." He stopped, took a deep breath, "do you think I would choose to live a life that would cause someone to hate me enough to do this to me? The ironic thing is what they did to me because I was gay is what I did to myself inside, every day, for years, trying to live as though I was straight."

Another line I highlighted that gives me hope for the generations of our future was this one, from Ben, Caryn's son. She had just come out for her brother to her son.

"Uncle David and Max love each other. And I love Uncle David and Max. I got it. That was simple, Mom."

Really, shouldn't life be this simple? Kids know it best. Why do we focus so much on trying to understand life?

Let's just sit back, ride this ride called life and love each other.

In all, I highly recommend this book. It definitely helped me learn more about myself and those around me.

Brenda says

Some authors take on interesting subjects that almost need to be told and this author did just that. She wrote of a young widow who has a son and an older brother engaged to be married, all the people in her family, has her brother call her to announce he is gay. She doesn't take the news well, won't speak to him or meet the man he announces is in his life, replacing the fiancé who has just moved out of his life....until she receives a call that her brother has been beaten within an inch of his life, a hate crime. She and her brother are on a journey which the book takes us through. I learned quite a bit about hate crimes with this book. A subject more people should read about. The story is really well written, the book is so interesting you do not want to put it down. I really enjoyed the book, or was really engrossed reading it. The information as found here on Good Reads:

In a matter of seconds her entire world shifted... An early morning call shatters Caryn Becker's world. Unable to cope with her brother's news that he is gay, Caryn rejects him and disappears into her own turbulent life as a young widow and single mom. But when David is attacked and nearly killed, Caryn is forced to make hard choices about family, faith, and her own future; choices that take her to the very edge of grace. "This sophomore effort deals sensitively and gracefully with a difficult subject for many Christians, exploring a woman's response to her brother's disclosure of his sexual orientation honestly while never shirking from the issue of justice and forgiveness." - Library Journal, starred review "Powerful and hauntingly beautiful right from the beginning, THE EDGE OF GRACE is another well crafted novel by an insightful, masterful author." - FreshFiction.com "A beautifully written book, The Edge of Grace is a powerful story of the true meaning of grace and love. A brilliant mix of dark and light, laughs and gravity, The Edge of Grace is a must read." Jenny B. Jones, award-winning author of Save the Date and A Charmed Life series "Christa Allan's new book, The Edge of Grace, is an excellent book for folks who love and are loved by their chosen family. Christa's painful honesty is a crucial part of the story. In the end, the love of family wins out, just as we believe in PFLAG, and she expertly shows that sometimes family goes beyond those we were given to those we choose. And what a happy family we can be if we accept our family members for who God made them to be!" - Randy Trahan, Board of Directors, PFLAG New Orleans "Christa Allan takes her character on an emotional journey to a new understanding of acceptance and the joy that comes from forgiveness." Sandra Robbins, author

Nicole says

Let me preface this review by stating that I normally do not read and review Christian fiction, but for some

reason this was a book that I kept coming back to and when I had the chance to be a part of the blog tour, I jumped at the chance. I can honestly say, I am glad that I did. Christa Allen tackles what is a very difficult topic with tact and sensitivity. The book did not leave me feeling like I was being preached to, but rather left me thinking about some of my own long standing beliefs and ideals. While this book does have religious overtones, I don't really feel that it is limited to a Christian audience. It really speaks to basic human understanding of themselves and those around them.

Caryn is a single mother trying to raise her child and build up her own business. She gets the shock of her life when she receives a phone call from her brother David to inform her that he is gay. Struggling to reconcile her beliefs with her reality, she chooses to cut her brother out of her life due to his lifestyle. Her world changes once again when she receives a phone call informing her that her brother has been the victim of a hate crime. She decides to help work on the case with her brother's lawyer and soon her business begins to suffer as a result of her brother's lifestyle. She ends up being forced to do some soul searching in order to make some very hard choices about her faith and her family.

While the circumstances may be different, the general idea of something happening that is at odds with who you are and what you believe in is not so far fetched. It something that happens to people everyday. Therein lies the appeal of *The Edge of Grace*. Not only does it take a topic straight out of a news headline but it does so in a non-judgmental and meaningful way.

Camille says

I often get excited about books I review

But hands down, this book is one of the best I've read this year (and I've read 80 so far...)

I'm talking about

The Edge of Grace by Christa Allan

This isn't your mother's Christian fiction (though it should be!!)

But, it most certainly is Christian fiction.

In fact, this may be the best Christian message I have ever read in any book, EVER!

So, don't judge the book by it's blurb...

The Edge of Grace by Christa Allan is the story of Caryn, a single mom whose husband died when their son was very young. Now, forced to care for him all by herself her brother has stepped up to help out. She couldn't be more grateful.

But one day, her world comes crashing down around her. Caryn gets a phone call from her brother that not only is he not going to marry his fiancée, but he is going on a trip. With his boyfriend. Caryn just cannot understand what is happening, how can her brother be gay!?!?

So Caryn does the only thing she can handle: she runs away from the problems. She stops answering his calls, she doesn't visit him, and she doesn't let him visit her, or her son. Caryn figures that he's turned his back on religion and is probably doomed to hell.

But Caryn's life is falling apart in other areas too: she has too much work, not enough time for her son, but the only way she can barely scrape by financially is all the work she is doing.

Yet another horrible event occurs when she finds out that her brother has been hospitalized. Though initially told it was an accident, it turns out it was very much on purpose. Her brother was attacked because he is gay. Caryn feels there is no option but to help care for him as he recovers, which means meeting his boyfriend, something she has been dreading.

But now that this gay bashing threatens to hit the news how will it affect Caryn's catering business? How will people treat her son when they find out her brother is gay? How will people look at her in church?

As Caryn reconnects with her brother, stereotypes begin to crumble, and Caryn gets a new view on everything. All the beliefs she held are challenged and she is forced to reexamine them all and find out the true meaning of being a Christian...

Read *The Edge of Grace* to follow her incredible journey...

I cannot say enough good things about this book!!!!!!

This book's message mirrors what I have been saying for years: being gay and being Christian are NOT mutually exclusive. It is humans that make them seem that way, not God.

So many Christians are only Christian in appearance. It's disheartening to me that if I call myself a Christian people assume I am as bigoted as the Westboro Baptists...

So few Christians shine through with a picture of the truth of Christianity: loving others no matter what. Judging no one, and leaving all judgments to God, in the end.

As Caryn begins to take a hard look at her life she notices the hypocrisies. While she keeps adult-themed romances beside her bed, her gay brother keeps a Bible. While she stopped going to church because of her fear of people talking about her, her brother and his boyfriend go every week and have invited her many times to go. They do not live together, an assumption she made. They do not engage in PDA of any form. And they are not flamboyant in any way.

How could it be that she got it so wrong?

Simple, stereotypes.

This book adhered to Christian morals at all times and shows that Christianity is not applicable only to heterosexual people but that faith runs much deeper, at least true faith. As Caryn learns and grows she truly develops and sees that all of her fears were selfish: how would his being gay affect her? As she grows she realizes this is about her brother, and his happiness and his ability to be himself... It's not about her.

It's a beautiful story of forgiveness, growth, and stretching the boundaries of thoughts and stereotypes.

Any and all Christians should read this. It may either affirm what you already believe, or it may challenge your beliefs and cause you to open your eyes to new thoughts, and new ways to think about things...

I want to include a few passages which I thought were so poignant and beautiful.

One incidental character talking about her gay brother: "At first, I tried to be an expert on [gay rights issues] and go in armed with statistics and research. Finally, when I heard about Matthew Shepard and read about other hate crimes I realized I didn't have to be an authority on anything except loving my brother."

Same incidental character again talking about her gay brother: "I learned with Ethan [character's gay brother] we could agree to disagree and still love each other. But, on the other side of that, I came to recognize that I wouldn't always feel comfortable. You learn to live with your uncomfortableness. Besides, the number of straight people who make me uneasy far outweighs the number of gay ones."

And lastly, the main character, Caryn, talking to her brother: "I realize now I measured you against a code I wasn't willing to use against myself. When you first told me, I was more worried about being the sister of a gay brother than your being gay . . . I didn't tell you that Harrison [her now-dead spouse] and I started having sex long before we were married. I'm bashing unwed moms and stocking early pregnancy tests because we had so many close calls. Or that after he died, I hid books in my bedroom so I could read about the romance and sex I wasn't having . . . And God is teaching me, maybe in very small steps, that He is the final judge, not me. And that my job, for as long as I am here, is to reach out and love. There's still so much I'm struggling with, but I wouldn't want to risk losing you or your never hearing me say I love you."

Just think about these things. And give this book a chance. I think it will strengthen anyone's faith, and open anyone's heart to loving others.

If I could I would give this more than 5 stars, easily.

Read *The Edge of Grace* today, and I don't think you'll regret it!

Kim says

Reading some of the other reviews makes me realize I have a newer edition, as some continuity errors seemed to have been fixed, but not all. The lack of quotations, and misplaced quotations were irksome. Please, authors, I know when you get so close to being published you just want to do it, but take the extra time to cross all "t's" and dot all "i's". As I reader, it makes a huge difference.

On the subject matter of the book itself: it's bound to be polarizing. As someone who loves Jesus and gay and lesbians just as much as straight, I appreciate the view the author took. Not sure why churches are making this their cross to die on, but perspective is needed. Do I understand Caryn's hesitation? Sure. Growing up in a strict Protestant background makes it difficult to have a different view on how homosexuals are treated. While Christian fiction may not be my favourite genre, I think this does what very few contemporary Christian books do, and that's to bring homosexuality down from being the "worst sin ever" into a "guys, really, it's not a big deal. Or any deal". I can appreciate that. Sure, the book is formulaic. As soon as romantic interest was introduced, I knew he was there for one reason only. The ending was contrived, and I think

(perhaps unfairly) she went on and on too much about the loss of her husband without any effort to move on. She was happy for about 86% of the novel to wallow in self-pity and stereotype. All in all, good job, and I appreciated her listing some foundations/support groups.
