

An interview with Kim Vogel Sawyer, Author of *Bringing Maggie Home*



Mother-daughter relationships can be complicated. When secrets from the past are involved, the best of intentions can be entirely misunderstood. *Bringing Maggie Home* (WaterBrook/September 5, 2017) by award-winning author Kim Vogel Sawyer explores the hearts of three generations of women whose lives have been shaped by the 70-year-old unsolved mystery of 3-year-old Maggie Blackwell.

Q: *Bringing Maggie Home* explores the relationships between three generations of mothers and daughters. Do the relationships mirror your own relationships with family members in any way?

I think it's inevitable that personal experience finds its way into every story because writing is an intensely personal activity, and we tend to write from the view of our own "life's glasses." I didn't have the privilege of a relationship with my grandmothers — they both died when my parents were children — but I had Tantie, a dear woman who was an important part of my life until her death on my 16th birthday. She filled the role of "grandma" for me, and much of the advice Hazel gives to Meghan are gems of wisdom passed from Tantie to me. Diane (Hazel's daughter and Meghan's mother) tells Meghan at one point, "I did the best I could with you, and everything I did was out of love." This is so true for me with my three daughters. I loved them endlessly, but that didn't mean I made no mistakes with them. We enter any relationship with the best we have to offer, and we pray it will be enough.

Q: When there are strained relationships in families, someone often gets put in the middle as a mediator. In what ways is this unfair to the third party involved?

Oh, poor Meghan. She loved her mom and her grandma, and the great divide between them was more painful for her than it was for Hazel and Diane.

Can you imagine being the "rope" in a tug-of-war game? Being trapped as the "middle-man" is no less uncomfortable, and it really isn't fair to the individual because they end up less a mediator (guiding two opposing sides into agreement) than a complaint department for both parties. All a middle-man can do is defend one side or the other; they can speculate but not really know the problem at its root. It's best for the two differing parties to come face to face and talk things out—not in an accusatory way, but to illuminate the issues and eventually find a way to forgive and start fresh.

Q: Carrying guilt and fear can be detrimental to ourselves, but how can it overflow to those around us?

I've heard it said we all are products of our past experiences. For instance, after being bitten by a dog, most people are uneasy around dogs. They would then, whether intentionally or unintentionally, convey that fear to others, who become uneasy around dogs, too. Thus, a person who might have loved having a dog as a pet, misses the opportunity because of someone else's fear. We learn by our own experiences, but we also learn from observing others' actions and reactions. Healthy fears as well as unhealthy ones are passed on in this observation process.

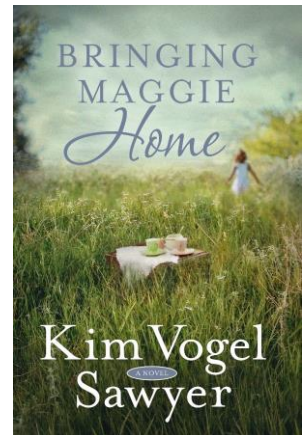
Q: Hazel was a child when her younger sister disappeared one day when they were out together, and she has always felt responsible for what happened. How did she overcompensate for that loss when raising her daughter, Diane?

Hazel vowed never to be so irresponsible again, and she kept careful watch over her precious Margaret Diane. This, in itself, was very loving — she wanted her daughter to be safe. However, the "careful watch" was viewed by Diane as an overprotectiveness that smothered her. When Diane became a parent, determined not to imitate her mother's cloying presence, she did the opposite and gave Meghan free rein . . . so much "free rein" Meghan sometimes questioned whether her mother really cared about her. Extremes in any behavior have the

potential to result in the opposite of what we intend. This was seen in the relationships between Hazel and Diane, and Diane and Meghan.

Q: How did what happened in Hazel's childhood impact her granddaughter, Meghan, and in turn Meghan's relationship with both her mother and grandmother?

Hazel's experiences colored her means of parenting; Hazel's means of parenting prompted Diane to choose a different pattern. Meghan was exposed to what she perceived as indifference from her mother and lavish affection from her grandmother. Although she loved both women, she felt more loved by her grandmother and wanted to spend extra time with her, which of course stirred jealousy from Diane. It's interesting that both Hazel and Diane loved Meghan fiercely, but they chose very different ways of expressing it. Each of the women had a different opinion about the way she showed love. We are all unique!



Q: Why do past events affect present situations? How can we make sure we aren't allowing our pasts to influence our future negatively?

Past events remain embedded in our memories and impact the way we view the future. Sometimes life lessons lead us to make better decisions, and sometimes they send us into hiding for fear of being hurt again. It's wise to take inventory of your actions and reactions now and then, to explore if what you're doing/saying/feeling is building you (and others) up or bringing you down. We can't always rely on our own judgment on this, though, so it's good to have one or two people you trust to give you honest observations . . . and to listen to them. I also suggest digging into God's Word. God doesn't give us a spirit of fear, so if fear, uncertainty or any other negative emotion has control, He wants to offer peace and discernment in its stead. Seek Him.

Q: There are things people turn to in order to numb the pain of the past and escape their problems. Why are these comforts only temporary?

EVERYTHING in this life is temporal; only our relationship with God through Jesus's sacrifice at Calvary is ETERNAL. Thus, seeking comfort, joy or satisfaction from any other source is a waste of time and energy. Sure, drugs or alcohol will temporarily mask the pain; obtaining the latest gadget or adding more money to our bank account will give us a rush of pleasure. However, those effects quickly diminish, leaving us needing a bigger binge, a larger acquisition, a better whatever-it-is we're grabbing for. In the end, they all leave us empty. Nothing fills us and satisfies the way the hope of heaven can, and that is found when we become a child of God.

Q: Diane believed God orchestrated certain events in a way to bring the three generations together. Do you believe God plans our pathways or uses the paths we create to bring us to Him?

I believe God makes good plans for His children (see Jeremiah 29:11 and Ephesians 2:10). I also believe He gives us free will — salvation is a gift we can accept or reject — so we can either seek and follow His path or carve our own pathway. However, it's His will all should find Him (see 2 Peter 3:9), so even when we've gone running off on our own, our route doesn't catch Him by surprise. He can use those circumstances to grow us in faith and work good in our lives. That's the wonder of God — nothing is wasted. So, in answer to the question . . . both.

Q: What message do you hope readers take away from reading *Bringing Maggie Home*?

I hope readers will come away with a fresh realization it is never too late to restore broken relationships. God is in the mending business! He's the Great Healer. Whether the scars are emotional or spiritual, He wants us to be whole so we can trust Him to bring us to healing when we place ourselves in His hands and let Him lead.

Q: Can you offer us a tease about your next release?

I'd love to. In March of 2018, I'm returning to "prairie romance" with *Beneath a Prairie Moon*. It's a major twist on the mail-order bride story:

Abigail Brantley grew up in affluence and knows exactly how to behave in high society. However, when she is cast from the social registers due to her father's illegal dealings, she finds herself forced into a role she never imagined — tutoring rough Kansas ranchers in the subjects of manners and morals so they can "marry up" with their mail-order brides. Mack Cleveland, whose uncle was swindled by a mail-order bride, wants no part of the scheme to bring Eastern women to Spiveyville, Kansas, and he's put off by the snooty airs and fastidious behavior of the "little city gal" in their midst. As time goes by, his heart goes out to the teacher who tries so diligently to smooth the rough edges from the down-to-earth men. How can he teach her that perfection won't bring happiness?

I hope readers will enjoy this often humorous, sometimes touching story that brings two very different worlds together in a way only God can orchestrate.

Learn more about Sawyer and her books at www.kimvogelsawyer.com, on [Facebook \(KimVogelSawyer.Author.Speaker\)](#) or by following her on [Twitter \(KimVogelSawyer\)](#).