

UNSTUCK STORY HIGHLIGHTS

MEET ARNIE.

For most of his life he was a self-described hippie, beach bum, surfer, partier, social activist, cruiser. He plunged head-first into anything that seemed to make him happy. Add excessive drug- and alcohol-abuse (in his earlier years), an egocentric heart, a cocky swagger ... and you've got a lethal mix. Yet by the world's standards, he was a success. Arnie had achieved his doctorate from Pepperdine University and carved out a comfortable life as a behaviorist. He rubbed elbows with an academic crowd and conducted ground-breaking programs in California's developmental disabilities industry. So why was he miserable? *As a boy, my parents taught me to respect God, he told himself one day. Yet I've grown into a "spiritual loser." My life feels meaningless. Something's gone wrong.*

MEET MIKE.

He headed up a popular youth magazine for a large media ministry and got to wear many hats: journalist, author, speaker, creative team leader. He got to meet interesting people from all walks of life, write books about them, and speak on the radio as a "youth culture expert." Yet he lived his life in a safe "Christian bubble"—cut off from the real problems of the real world. Little by little, he became distracted, bored ... actually disconnected from the God he claimed to serve. Mike's position as an evangelical leader began to swallow up his identity. *What happened to the real person inside, he wondered. What happened to the person I used to be: child of God, servant of the Most High ... Christ-follower? Something's gone wrong.*

MEET THERESA.

She was raised in a legalistic church and was told that if she stayed in line, followed the rules, and steered clear of the "don'ts" in life she'd be acceptable to God. "Read your Bible, go to church, and say your prayers," was her preacher's favorite motto. One night she woke up in a cold sweat: *Is this it? Is Christianity just about rigid rules and checklists ... and striving to be acceptable? Something's gone wrong.*

MEET TIFFANY.

She has what so many other women desire: a loving husband, a healthy son, a fulfilling career. So why can't she sleep at night? Why does the weight of the world seem to press in on her—day after day? *I committed my heart to Jesus at age 5, she explains. I practically grew up in church ... and I even work in one today! I serve as director of children's ministries—a job I love. So why do I battle anxiety? Why am I so full of fear. Something's gone wrong.*

MEET KELLY.

Her family has money and prestige: a palatial home in the nicest part of town, expensive cars, designer clothes, popular friends—all the things girls her age would kill to have. If only they knew what her life is really like: Parents who abuse alcohol—and her. Belt buckles. Dark closets. Nightmares and unthinkable dysfunction. As we fast-forward into the future, Kelly grows up, moves out ... and tries to convince herself that the past is finally behind her. At least, that's what she hoped. *I can't seem to trust anyone—not my pastor, not my husband ... not even God, the 38-year-old tells herself. I'm anxious and angry all the time. I want to let go and move on, but I can't. Something's gone wrong.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Does your story sound like one or more of these? (Please explain.)
- How would you describe your walk with Christ?
- If you feel stuck, what's the biggest stumbling block?
- Are you hiding behind a spiritual mask?
- Do you feel as if you can be authentic at church? (Why or why not?)
- Do you feel as if you can be real with God? (Why or why not?)
- Describe one step that you are going to take to get unstuck.