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Teacher Study Guide For:

The Circle of Friends, Book IV...Mike By L. Diane Wolfe

Synopsis:

A prisoner of guilt for so long...

Mike Taylor is the epitome of stability. His family is proud of his academic and athletic achievements at Georgia Tech, and despite the temptations of college life, he has maintained his moral standards.

Yet beneath the peaceful surface, Mike is consumed with guilt, fearing condemnation and rejection. A former girlfriend's abortion and the intense love he feels for his roommate's wife constantly remind Mike of his failures. Unable to forget and full of shame, he refuses to forgive himself.

When Danielle enters his life, he realizes he can no longer hide the past. Will she be able to reach him or is Mike past the point of redemption?

Multiple Choice Questions:

- 1) What was Mike unable to do?
 - a) find a girlfriend
 - b) play football well
 - c) forgive himself**
 - d) find a job after college
- 2) Why does Mike refuse to date?
 - a) he's too introverted
 - b) he fears he will repeat a past mistake
 - c) he's fixated on Sarah
 - d) all of the above**



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- 3) Why is Mike unhappy after moving to Albuquerque?
 - a) doesn't like his new job
 - b) feels lonely**
 - c) his co-workers don't like him
 - d) doesn't like his apartment
- 4) What common ground do Mike and Danielle share?
 - a) spiritual beliefs**
 - b) love of the outdoors
 - c) enjoyment of cooking
 - d) a sense of adventure
- 5) Mike proposes to Danielle where...?
 - a) at a restaurant
 - b) near the base of the Tram
 - c) on Sandia's peak**
 - d) in Old Town
- 6) What do Matt & Sarah for Mike out of true friendship?
 - a) name their child after him
 - b) assist Mike and Danielle with finances
 - c) ask Mike and Danielle to be Godparents
 - d) all of the above**

Discussion topics:

- 1) How did Mike's past mistake with Andrea affect him? How did it affect his behavior?
- 2) As much as Mike loved Sarah, he did not want to interfere in his roommate's marriage. Why not? Would you show such restraint in Mike's position?
- 3) Sarah is oblivious to Mike's feelings, but Matt knows. Did this damage or strengthen their relationship? Why did Matt trust Mike not to act on his feelings? Would you have trusted Mike if you were Matt?
- 4) It was difficult for Mike to move away from his friends and supportive family. How would you handle moving halfway across the country by yourself? What would you miss the most?
- 5) Mike's past mistakes eventually cause so much guilt that he retreats from Danielle rather than admit the truth. Was this the right course of action? How could've Mike handled the situation better?
- 6) One of Mike's concerns is that he will lose Matt as a friend. What are some of the reasons he thinks they will grow apart?
- 7) The first month or two of their marriage, Mike and Danielle struggled to adjust. Why was it challenging? Why did Danielle find it difficult?
- 8) How did Mike's past help him to deal with Angel's situation?



9) Mike did not react well to Danielle's pregnancy or layoff from work. What did you think of Mike's behavior? Would you have reacted differently?

Character Studies:

- 1) Consider Mike and Matt's relationship. Why were they so close? What personal aspects did they share? What had each contributed to the friendship that caused it to be so strong?
- 2) Mike's solution to a crisis or problem was to withdraw. Why is this behavior wrong? What were some of the reasons he struggled to deal with the negative situations in his life?
- 3) Danielle was a strong-willed and spirited young lady for most of the story. What caused her to become so passive at the end of the story? What contributed to her change in disposition upon discovering she was pregnant?

Themes of the Story:

Forgiving oneself
Letting go of guilt
Importance of friendship & family
Assuming responsibility
Holding fast to one's morals & values
Being honest
Finding happiness in all situations