



For Such a Time as This: Hope and Forgiveness after the Charleston Massacre

Sharon Risher

Sherri Wood Emmons

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Sharon Risher and Sherri Wood Emmons's *For Such a Time as This* is about an individual, her family, and the tragedy that changes them.

On June 17, 2015, a white supremacist murdered members of a Bible study group inside the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina. At the time, Risher, a minister, was in Dallas consoling a grieving family. Then she learned that her mother was among the victims. The aftermath left her learning how the senseless tragedy forever affected all those who were connected to the victims.

Risher's memoir goes beyond the headlines, fleshing out the shooting victims. In the process, Ethel Lance, Risher's mother, becomes as familiar as a next-door neighbor, as her approaches to work, religion, and family are brought to life and her deepest secret is revealed.

The book shows how families react to tragedies. Though news accounts may present them as unified, they are shown experiencing interpersonal conflicts and inner turmoil. When Risher's sister publicly forgave the killer, she ignited an emotional firestorm that revealed the deep, lingering effects of the violence.

Risher's distinctive voice is heard in interior dialogues that reveal her struggles with depression and extreme emotions. She rages at her sister for forgiving the murderer and at the press for hounding families for comments. Going to court is going into battle, and facing the defendant is facing "pure evil."

As it progresses, the book comes to read like a series of sermons, its writing tightening and delivering clear messages. In a chapter titled "We need..." that begins with a litany of actions necessary for controlling gun sales, the book shifts to focus on Risher's new mission: reform around gun laws.

For Such a Time as This is an inspirational memoir that moves through harsh realities in the wake of the Charleston shooting.

GERALDINE RICHARDS (July/August 2019)

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