

## *Fighting for David* Discussion Guide

### Foreword

1. What are the similarities and differences between the cases of Terri Schiavo and David McRae?
2. Did you follow the Terri Schiavo case in early 2005? If so, how do you feel about the court decisions mandating the removal of Terri's feeding tube? What was your reaction to the intense media attention on the case?
3. Do you think artificial hydration and nutrition (use of a feeding tube) fall under basic human care that Scripture commands us to provide (see Matthew 25:34-36)? Or do you see it as "heroic care" or "extraordinary care" that goes above and beyond what is necessary?
4. What are some steps you might take to make your own wishes for long-term care known to your family members?

### Chapter 1

1. Has your life ever been changed in an instant, as it was for Leone Nunley and her entire family? If so, explain.
2. On the night of the accident, the airline held up the last plane to Lewiston so Leone could make the flight. In spite of the delay, none of the other passengers complained. Discuss the way life-and-death situations put minor inconveniences into perspective.
3. What did those around Leone do to help her cope with the news of David's injury?

### Chapter 2

1. Why do you think the phone call from Linda Sharp meant so much to Leone?
2. What second blow did the Nunley family face when Leone was called to the hospital's business office? How do you think you would have responded to such a problem under already stressful circumstances?
3. How did David's accident impact other members of his family?

### Chapter 3

1. Have you ever had to sit in a waiting room while a loved one underwent major surgery? If so, what advice would you give someone else facing a similar situation?
2. How did the body of Christ rally around the Nunley family during the days immediately following David's accident? Have you ever experienced a similar outpouring of love? If so, do you remember particular actions or words that encouraged you?

3. What do you think of the Nunleys' decision to keep David on life support and a respirator despite the grim prognosis? If you had been in the room with them on the day they had to make that decision, what advice or words of comfort would you have offered?
4. Following one of the worst nights of her life, Leone walked into the hospital and was greeted by Shari Krause, a close friend. Has God ever met your need in a dark hour by sending someone to you? Explain.

#### Chapter 4

1. After David was transferred to Yakima, Leone once again had to decide what life-support measures she would want taken on David's behalf. What stood out to you as you read about her conversation with Dr. Bracchi (see pages 54–55)?
2. How did the family cope during the first Christmas following David's injury? What was the first Christmas or other major holiday like for you following the loss of a loved one?
3. What was your reaction to Dr. Smith's assessment that David should be sent to a nursing home? Was she just being honest—if a little blunt—or do you think she was being inconsiderate? What do you think stung Leone most about her assessment?
4. Contrast the assessment Dr. Smith gave David with the reception he received at his church. How did each affect Leone?

#### Chapter 5

1. How did the nurses support Leone in her fight to get further rehabilitation for David?
2. What were some of the encouraging signs that Cara Anderson, David's nursing case manager, observed?
3. As David's mom, Leone said she felt a particular obligation to nurture and cherish him. If you were the parent of a child in a similar situation, how do you think you would approach his or her medical care and rehabilitation?

#### Chapter 6

1. What do you think of the Nunleys' desire to care for David at home during the daytime? What were some of the challenges Leone faced?
2. Why was David's visit to Dr. Moise a turning point in his rehabilitation?
3. What key advancements did David make during his time at the Good Samaritan rehabilitation unit?

#### Chapter 7

1. What do you think of Leone's determination to continue pushing to see how much David could accomplish?
2. How did the rest of the Nunley family respond to David's rehabilitation?

3. When talking with a reporter in 1991, Leone said, “We do know that we’ll never have the old David back. But the Lord has given us a new David, and that’s the one we encourage and support.” In what major ways had their lives changed since the accident?

### Chapter 8

1. What do you think about Leone’s decision to include patterning in her son’s therapy?
2. What benefits did patterning bring to David? to the entire Nunley family?
3. The movie *Regarding Henry*, Leone says, is an example of how Hollywood can make a difficult situation such as a brain injury seem much less complicated than it really is. In what ways does David’s story have a Hollywood ending? In what ways does it not?

### Chapter 9

1. What were some signs that the Nunley family was adapting to a “new normal” by the mid 1990s?
2. Why do you think eagles have special meaning for David? Is there an image from Scripture that has encouraged you or your family members during a difficult time?
3. Cindy Hart lost her brain-injured son, Adam, after valiantly trying to help him recover after his injury. Do you think she should have held on longer? Or was her action justified? Explain.

### Chapter 10

1. Leone explains that she began thinking more extensively about David’s future as she neared her sixties. How much have you begun planning for the future of any family members who currently depend on you?
2. What role does a caregiver such as Andre play in the life of a person like David? If you were to write a job description for such a position, what would it say?
3. How has God answered Leone’s prayer (pages 168–169): “Lord, please help David to go as far as you want him to go. Guide us as we serve him, and let his example be an inspiration to everyone who sees him”?

### Chapter 11

1. Now that you’ve read David’s story, has your perspective on the debate surrounding Terri Schiavo’s care changed at all? Explain.
2. What life lessons can we learn only from someone like David?
3. Based on the paths they’ve taken in life, how would you describe David’s impact on the lives of his brothers?

### Afterword

1. After reading David's story, what would you tell someone who says a brain-damaged person cannot contribute to society?
2. What factors do you think influence our culture's debate on end-of-life issues? Are there factors not being considered that you think should be?