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High-powered executive Steven Kerner is living the dream in southern California. But when his bottled pain ignites in anger one night, his wife kicks him out. Then an eccentric mystery man named Andy Monroe befriends Steven and begins unravelling his tightly wound world. Andy leads Steven through a series of frustrating and revealing encounters to repair his life through genuine friendship and the grace and love of a God who has been waiting for him to accept it. A story to challenge and encourage, BO'S CAFE is a model for all who struggle with unresolved problems and a performance-based life. Those who desire a fuller, more authentic way of living will find this journey of healing a restorative exploration of God's unbridled grace.

## Bo's Café Details

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# From Reader Review Bo's Café for online ebook

## Jeff Earnhardt says

I couldn't put this book down, read it in 3 days. That is just NOT the pace at which I read books. I enjoy reading, but it just takes me longer than most.

Having said that, 1) the story was compelling, 2) we rise and fall based on our definitions and his point of view from which he defined some pretty common words was strong, 3) it felt real and true to life.

Here is my net out in three categories. Great quotes from the book, great definitions of some common words, and what I'll take to use in my leadership of other men.

Great quotes from the book:

1. See if this fits: It's like you are stumbling around in a dark room, bumping into furniture. After many experiences, you've learned to memorize paths around the pain. You think you've finally figured out how to navigate in the dark. You almost get used to doing life in the dark. Then the next day, week, month, maybe while you are sleeping, the furniture gets moved, and you slam your shin into an end table. And each time, with each new bruise, you lose more and more hope, more confidence, more sense of purpose. You start reacting to pain more than anything else. You make decision based on what hurts least. You avoid stuff you know you should face. You valid interaction with people you suspect might be moving the furniture. Eventually that list grows to include a whole lotta people. And the worst part is that it feels like almost everyone else can see you tumbling around. It's like they can all see the furniture. They might never tell you this, but you are pretty sure they know. They want to tell you they know. Some of your friends, family, and co workers have actually tried. They want to help but you don't believe they can help.
2. It starts young, doesn't it. People get hurt. Maybe they get hurt real bad early on. And if they're not careful, they learn something that takes lifetime to unlearn. They learn to cover up, to protect themselves. They don't know they are doing it.
3. A way in...has anyone ever had access to the real you? you've managed to keep everyone at the surface level for a long time.
4. We present only what we think we can control, we hide the rest.
5. And until you let someone shine a light into your room, nothing's gonna change. Life gonna get more painful, more confusing, and darker.
6. I have no desire to be your fixer. I want to be your friend. And friends learn to trust each other with their stuff so they can stand together. So the more you can let me know the real YOU and the more I can let you know the real ME, the sooner we can begin to sort things out.
7. In reality, we discover that we still know very well how to hurt others and make crappy life choices. And this realization breaks our hearts.
8. Each of us walks with a profound limp, some have just learned to hide their limps better.
9. "I'm like a sixth grader hiding magazines from my mom!"
10. Bo's - "It's like I got a picture of what things could be like." Preferred future.
11. Greatest lie is that we can fix ourselves.
12. It is NOT about behavior modification!!!!
13. What drives your need to be right all the time?
  1. A deep, innate fear that you aren't enough and others might see it.
14. If you want to someday start to get past that tendency to blow up, there is a really only one solution. You'll have to keep admitting it and let God and some humans who love you begin to protect you. That's

truths' all you got.

15. If you'll keep telling the truth, regardless of how embarrassing, it'll have a profound effect on you. It'll begin to free and heal you.

16. Everyone of us at this table has stories of failure and immaturity like yours. Remember, all of us are learning to be convinced that if we have a safe place, where the worst about us can be known, the cycle of shame from old dead issues can be broken.

17. There is a great secret payoff for all those who give others permission to see behind the mask. You find out the thing you feared the most never comes true. In fact, the opposite happens. You actually get to be known.

18. When we are hidden, everybody was paying or it. Even if they didn't know it. Everybody was being robbed of the best of who I was.

19. Sometimes you just need someone who'll listen to point you in His direction.

20. Be on the intentional look out for the motives behind the behavior

21. I want to be the same cat in a hotel on the road as I am praying in front of people on Sunday.

22. Everything gets strange in the vacuum of privacy

#### Vocabulary:

1. Trust - A right response to another's love

2. Shame - takes a particular violation or several violations from your past, something really got to you, and convinces you the person you felt like in the violation is how you'll always be, for the rest of your life.

3. Inferior vs superior

1. Inferior - they blame themselves and see themselves as the reason for most of their trouble.

2. Superior - they blame others and see them as the reason for all their problems.

4. Shame - carrying a deep sense of inadequacy that drives us to not fail at all costs.

5. Grace - gift the nonreligious can accept. They're the only ones who can get it. They're the only ones who can use it. Religious folks see grace as soft. So they keep trying to manage their junk with their own wallop power and tenacity. Nothing defines religion quite as well as a bunch of people trying to do impossible tasks with limited power while bluffing to themselves that it's working.

6. Humility - Owning up to something deeper than your behavior

7. Repentance - isn't doing something about your failure. Repentance is admitting you can't do anything about your failure. It's not just agreeing you've done something wrong; it's admitting you can't do what needs to be done to make it right. God waits and yearns of that moment with everything in Him.

8. Integrity is proven when you admit what you cannot do and honor what you say you can.

9. Pretending - hiding my failures from them.

#### LDG Group Foundation:

1. [LDG] Healthy protector:

1. Sees saints who still sometimes fail vs sinners trying to be saints

2. Nothing remains hidden vs getting fixed

3. The value of no hiding is placed above getting the other person better

4. Establishing a healthy relationship so the issues can be solved vs getting your issues resolved.

2. [LDG] What is safe?

1. If safe is just nice and sweet, where everybody's smiling at you and nobody's ever dealing with nothing, that's not safe. That's a retirement home. I like nice. Push come to show, nice wins. But nice ain't enough for

safe. A safe place isn't a soft place.

2. Safe is being loved more for revealing your crap, not less

3. Safe is where I can tell you my garbage so you can enter in and stand with me in the solution of it.

3. [LDG] someone has to break the pattern if anything's going to change.

4. [LDG] What if there was safe enough place where you could tell the worst about yourself and not be loved or respected less, but more???? You know what happens. Hidden junk we've been carrying around for years begins to melt away. People come alive. They start to discover who they really are. They start doing good stuff with their lives. They find their furniture. They stop needing to be right. They stop trying to fix their symptoms, and stop pushing everyone away. They get loved.

5. [LDG] If I give you the answer, you presume you get it, that you have it all figured out. I want you to get it on your own so you'll see that what you've previously believed won't get you where you need to go.

6. [LDG] Warning to LDG leaders. Could be a great lead in phrase before I go transparent with my story.

1. A well-dressed person of maturity like myself can give the false impression of being above the common faults and failings of others. So, I guess it's my turn.

7. [LDG] What if god brought you here to meet an old[er] guy who may be just a little further down the road than you?

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## Noah says

What a wonderful story! Great narrative illustrating the power of effective mentoring. Very real-world and praxrical.

Of course I differ with the author's ecclesiology, but it was not overly critical of the Baptist position and it was easily overlooked. Highly recommend it!

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## Nora St Laurent says

After reading the last page of this book I'm speechless, pondering all that I had read. Where do I begin to tell you the hope this book released in my heart, mind and emotions. The thing I LOVE about Christian Fiction is the fact that it can take you places you'd never go on your own. It can help you explain things that are just unexplainable, and put you in situations where you can see GRACE and LOVE in a very real way.

The opening scene read like the movie Mr. Destiny, where a distraught man heads to a run-down restaurant, meets a man that knows everything about him, then the distraught man makes a wish and lives his dream. No magic here -- only a book filled with hope in the future and a way to live life to the fullest. What does a real loving community of believers look like? You'll meet Andy, Hank, Carlos and Cynthia, just to name a few of the fun loving, real characters; who tell it like it is. It's refreshing and at times painful to read because I found them talking right to my heart!

Here's a clip from the book—Steven and Andy first meet—he asks Andy a question.  
"It starts young doesn't it? They get hurt."

Andy says, "All those people down there, walking and driving around, confused—angry, hurt, wounded, afraid, resentful—they all have something in common."

"What's that?" Steven says.

"...they've learned to protect themselves. Now they're adults and they're discovering this cruel secret: they can't protect themselves. In fact, the last person who can protect them is them." Wow!!

Bo's Café helps me identify some of the lies that I believed about myself, some of the old tapes I had playing in my head until Jesus set me free. Andy takes it a little deeper in a very simple but profound way. I think this is a must read for everyone. I know that I'm going to be reading this book again and again, giving it out to my family and friends. I'm so thankful to the publisher for giving me a review copy of this book.

Disclosure of Material Connection:

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising"

## **Tim says**

An excellent book! Truly living out grace might be the most difficult challenge a follower of Jesus (and a church) faces. Among the pitfalls we find that our own self-protection and fear to truly let ourselves be known frequently sabotage the process and keep us from truly receiving and giving grace the way we want to. These authors are among the best out there at helping others live as authentic people, and this lively and entertaining novel does a great job of putting their insights into a context that mirrors real life. Highly recommended!

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## **Bart Breen says**

Who has your back?

Bo's Café is a book written in a growing genre of reality fiction that seeks to illustrate and demonstrate what in the past has often been presented as doctrinal teaching. Windblown Media is a recently established publishing venture that was formed to publish *The Shack* after it had been rejected by about 14 religious and 14 secular publishers. Since that time, "The Shack" has gone on to be nothing less than a phenomenon that has taken on a viral life of its own through word-of-mouth based upon the impact it has had upon the lives of those reading it.

Bo's Café is not "The Shack", nor is it intended to be. Where *The Shack* is a parable that provides a message about the nature of God and how misunderstanding that nature can lead to many of the elements of organized and institutionalized religion that turns so many people of and away from this misrepresented God, Bo's Café carries on with a related but distinctly different theme. Bo's Café demonstrates through a realistic fictional account how a real Grace community works to bring about healing and restoration in the life and marriage of its primary character. What's distinct about it, is while the book is not to any measure I can observe "anti-church"; the organized church plays a very minimal role in what takes place within the account. This is not about programs, meetings, hierarchical dispensations from on high or anything else that might typically come to mind with how followers of Jesus show love and support to one another. This is about real community where people are invited by other imperfect people to drop the masks, be real, be honest and what is more, trust that within the context of safe and genuine relationship, that baring ones soul and allowing others to see the "crap" in our lives will result in us being loved and accepted more, not shunned and rejected.

The authors of Bo's Café have collaborated before in the past in a more didactic manner, teaching how grace communities can be formed. They can happen within the context of an organized church, but the focus here is decidedly different. Where organized religion, at least as it is manifested in the west and in particular in the evangelical tradition, typically seeks to "teach" its way through any problem with linear steps (eg 10 Steps to Solve Any Problem in Life You'll Ever Face) and where teaching doesn't work, then a counselor, elder or Pastor, then steps in with authority to assist "fixing" a person with the assumption clear that they

themselves have already arrived, Bo's Café models a community of Grace where on some issues some friends may be ahead on one path and able to help, but the grace flows in both directions as those loved, accepted and helped without judgment in one area may just return the favor in another area.

Many things in life are better "caught" than "taught". Bo's Café pitches up a winner that tells an entertaining, compelling and realistic tale that is not difficult at all to see played out in many contexts of our own lives, and shows how genuine love and grace can be experienced. Everyone should be fortunate enough to find an Andy, a Christine, a Carlos or a Steven in their lives. Better yet, everyone should be fortunate enough to be one.

Bo's Café stands on it own. It provides a compelling and at times a very emotionally touching tale of love and grace and does it without clichés, arrogance, judgment or falling into the all too common rut of "niceness" to which Christian Fiction often falls prey. Make no mistake, this is fiction, but more importantly, Bo's Café is a sorely needed and timely truth that will open many eyes to what they've been longing for, but just couldn't adequately describe.

5 stars.

Bart Breen

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### **Angie Golaski says**

I HATED this book. The author came to my church and I really liked what he had to say, but the novel is SO poorly written. Although I agree with a lot of the base elements (friendship, accountability, etc.) the characters are ridiculously simplified to the point that I felt like it was sexist and the solutions the author brought to the problem (you know...go sit down and chat with people at Bo's Cafe and all will be well) made this a novel that I highly recommend you skip. Boo.

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### **Keiki Hendrix says**

*"A safe place isn't a soft place."*

Have some unresolved conflict in your life messing up all your relationships? Feeling exasperated because you give it your best to fix the stuff you carry around but it never really gets resolved?

You might identify with Steven Kerner, the main character in Bruce McNicol, Bill Thrall, and John Lynch's new novel "Bo's Cafe".

Steven Kerner's living the dream with his executive level job, beautiful wife and daughter, and even finds time to serve on Boards for charitable organizations. To look at his life, you'd think the guys got it all.

But wait, if this kind of life is what we all aspire to have then why is Steven Kerner calling the Marriott home and his wife contemplating divorce?

Enter Andy Monroe.



At first glance Steven sizes Andy up as an old Jimmy Buffet groupie with his Dodgers ball cap, ragged blue jeans and loud Hawaiian shirt. Looks can be and often are deceiving.

Steven is compelled to allow a friendship to develop mainly because Andy is a friend of his fathers. What follows is novel about true friendship which delves deep down to the heart of all our issues.

Andy, along with several of his friend's, provide Steven with conversations that begin to shape his view of himself and of all others around him. The big question is whether he will accept the Truth and begin to live freely for the first time in his life.

I won't give the main storyline away, suffice it to say that you will identify with the issues, your mind may be opened to many of our human 'defense mechanism', and perhaps you may find the answer you've been looking for all your life.

*"Safe is a place where you can get out the worst thing about you  
and they don't run you off, talk you down, or head for the hills....  
Safe is where you are loved more for revealing your 'problems', not less."*

I recommend this novel highly, for the theme, for the revelation of the process and for the colorful characters that come in and out of the story.

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## **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Grandma Bev for TeensReadToo.com

Steven Kerner and his wife live the good life, but things sometimes get edgy, and one night his anger explodes. His wife, Lindsey, kicks him out, and he retreats to a hotel. Then Andy Monroe extends a hand of friendship, but Steven is not trusting of that friendship, and carries a massive chip on his shoulder.

Lindsey does not accept Steven's apology. She just doesn't feel that he will be able to change on a deep enough level without outside help. Help that Steven is reluctant to seek.

Andy introduces Steven to a group that meets at Bo's Cafe who try to steer Steven to an acceptance of God's grace, and to allow himself to trust. They each have a story to tell in their conversations with each other, much like an Alcoholic's Anonymous group.

Steven does eventually begin to unravel his pent-up feelings, and learn to cope with life without temper blow-ups.

Windblown Media published THE SHACK, which turned into a publishing phenomenon, and this is their follow-up inspirational book, designed to encourage and challenge readers who struggle with problems in their personal life.

It is a message that we can all profit from. It teaches you to give, receive, and to trust, opening yourself up to self-realization, and helping you to experience God's grace.

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## Mark says

I just want to know when these guys were privy to my life! Okay, I am not a high-powered executive on the fast track to corporate superstar, but the life experiences and situations described could easily be mine. This was a powerful look, in non-threatening novel form, at the role of grace and how it can transform our lives when we understand just how much we are loved. This was about shame and how it can manifest in destructive behaviors that can threaten our marriages, our careers and our very lives. All of our efforts to hide the shame only cause it to ferment and fester until it explodes in uncontrolled anger, or other self-destructive behaviors. Only when we find a place of safety within community where we can be real and not be condemned by those who know us best, can we finally find healing and build honest, mutually beneficial relationships. For Stephen, it took a failed CEO, an aging hippy friend of his father to bring him to that place. May we all find the place where the healing can start.

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## Sheila says

I really enjoyed Paul Young's *The Shack* so when I realized Windblown Media had finally brought out another book I was very keen to read it. *Bo's Café* is certainly an interesting book; very different from the *Shack*, but with a similar grace-filled message. While the *Shack* starts with solid real-world tragedy then slides into mystery, *Bo's Café* opens with a mysteriously meaningful encounter, only to slide its way into everyday pain.

The main character, Steven, is a person that many men might easily relate to, and a spouse that many women might recognize. He means well. He tries. But he knows his job is to provide and somehow he forgets there's another provider, and that he's also supposed to be present and part of his family.

As Steven repeatedly reasons himself out of guilt, I find myself feeling sorry for him, then sorry for his wife, then guilty for my own mistakes—yes, wives make mistakes too. Meanwhile the angel in the truck-stop turns out to be a very real man with his own history and faults, as are all the other people Steven meets at *Bo's Café*.

I enjoyed the characters and their interactions. I valued the small insights into how their lives went downhill before they changed; they were changing still. But the story itself felt more preachy than *The Shack*—more determined to give me answers than to inspire me to seek for myself. *The Shack* had a lighter touch it seemed, filled with a sense of the wonder and otherness of God. But *Bo's Café* is the other side of the same coin, heavier and more firmly grounded, with a God who is passionate about right relationships and attitudes.

If Men are from Mars and Woman from Venus, then *Bo's Café* might make a good sourcebook for translation. Mars and Venus strike sparks and fly apart, till they finally learn a way to live in balance with self and others. The book gives a fascinating insight into the male mind, and into God's love. I enjoyed this it; just not so overwhelmingly as I enjoyed *The Shack*.

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