

American Wife

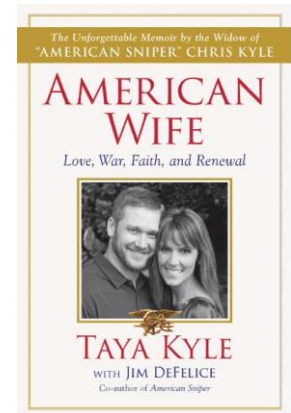
William Morrow

By Taya Kyle

ISBN: 9780062398086

Introduction

The widow of “American Sniper” Chris Kyle shares their private journey, a moving and universal chronicle of love, family, faith, grief, resilience, and purpose that is a model of heroism for us all.



Questions for Discussion

1. Why is the book called *American Wife*? Is Taya Kyle a typical American wife?
2. At the beginning of her memoir, Taya writes, “If I could sum my life up in four words, they would be these: Love War Faith Renewal. Taken together, these have brought me great joy, though with that joy I have also found the deepest sorrow.” Talk about how these four words play out in her life, using examples from the book. What four words would you use to sum up your life so far?
3. Describe the Taya and Chris Kyle you meet in the pages of *American Wife*. If you have read *American Sniper*, what do her memories add to your portrait of Chris and the person he was? How does her viewpoint about their lives together compare and contrast with his? What did you learn about Taya?
4. What makes a marriage happy? How does one sustain that happiness—and can it be sustained? How did Taya and Kyle work through their problems? Did Taya and Chris have a good marriage? What factors contributed to its success?
5. Taya argues that it’s important to honor events like wedding anniversaries. “Trappings—flourishes and celebrations—can help us remember what’s important rather than distract us from it,” she writes. Do you agree? How do you celebrate important events in your life?
6. Years into their marriage, Chris admitted to Taya that he did not count on her sticking it out with him when he first went to war. Why do you think many military marriages—especially those of SEALs—do not last? Have we, as a society, lost the ability to face and cope with adversity, or are we asking too much of the spouses left behind? How did Chris and Taya keep their marriage going during his long deployments abroad?
7. How did Chris and Taya’s lives and their marriage change once Chris was no longer an active SEAL? Taya writes, “We don’t talk enough about what happens to servicemen when they leave the military, especially men like Chris who have seen a lot of action. I’ve come to learn that when these guys get out, they really need a year or two before they’re resettled. It’s bigger than changing a job or moving to a different state—they’ve given up

a brotherhood. Everything about the civilian world is completely different than the one they've left. SEALs, especially. We see these men as so strong and capable, and just assume that when they're home, they'd adjust. It's not that easy." What makes it difficult for these returning warriors to adjust? Do you think it might have been less difficult for previous generations when the whole nation was mobilized?

8. What kind of hardships do military families face that civilians do not? Do you think that most people understand the strains and challenges they endure? What more could—and should—our society do to help military families?
9. Taya tells us, "Getting through his deployments was just what I did. I wasn't a hero; he was." Aren't military wives and families heroes in their own right? What makes a hero?
10. How has her faith helped Taya shoulder the unexpected events in her life, from Chris's absence to his unexpected fame to his murder and the lawsuits involving Jesse Ventura and Chris's company?
11. What impact has fame had on Taya's life? With the success of the book and movie of *American Sniper*, Chris has sometimes been criticized, often anonymously, online. How does Taya address these critics? Have we become a society eager to tear down others' success? "I wonder sometimes if, between negative campaigning and social media and plain old gossip, our society has just gone too far to the negative," she writes. "You have to make a personal decision not to spread bad news about people—and it can be a tough decision when you're involved in a fight. . . . Taking the high road sounds good, but is it possible? More importantly, does it work? You see people lying and you wonder, how can we have a fair society at all?" What answers do you have for her questions? How did we get this way? How can we change this behavior?
12. "All of our stories are really tales of love, struggle, faith, and perseverance. They are all intermingled. Happiness comes with faith and compassion. Success means getting and giving a helping hand. Finding the strength within ourselves to overcome adversity can lead us to the point of recognizing that everyone has done or will try to do that," Taya writes. What has she learned about adversity, first in dealing with Chris's deployments, and then with his death? How did she cope with grief? What words of advice would you give Taya?
13. Taya notes that we often have difficulty dealing with grief and comforting others who are grieving. She says that one of the biggest things you can do for someone who has lost a loved one is simply "show up." Small things -- washing the dishes, doing the laundry -- really mean a lot, according to her. Do you agree?
14. How did Taya eventually come to discover her purpose—what she wanted to do in the wake of her loss? What message does she want to share with *American Wife*? How can ideas like "paying blessings forward" and the "ripple effect of kindness" make us all better people and a better society?
15. "Chris died just shy of his 36th birthday, having left a quiet but important mark on his community, his family, and his friends," Taya writes. Talk about the impact Chris had on his brothers in the military, his family, his country, and especially his wife and family. Learning about Chris, did he leave a mark on you?

16. What did you take away from reading *American Wife*?