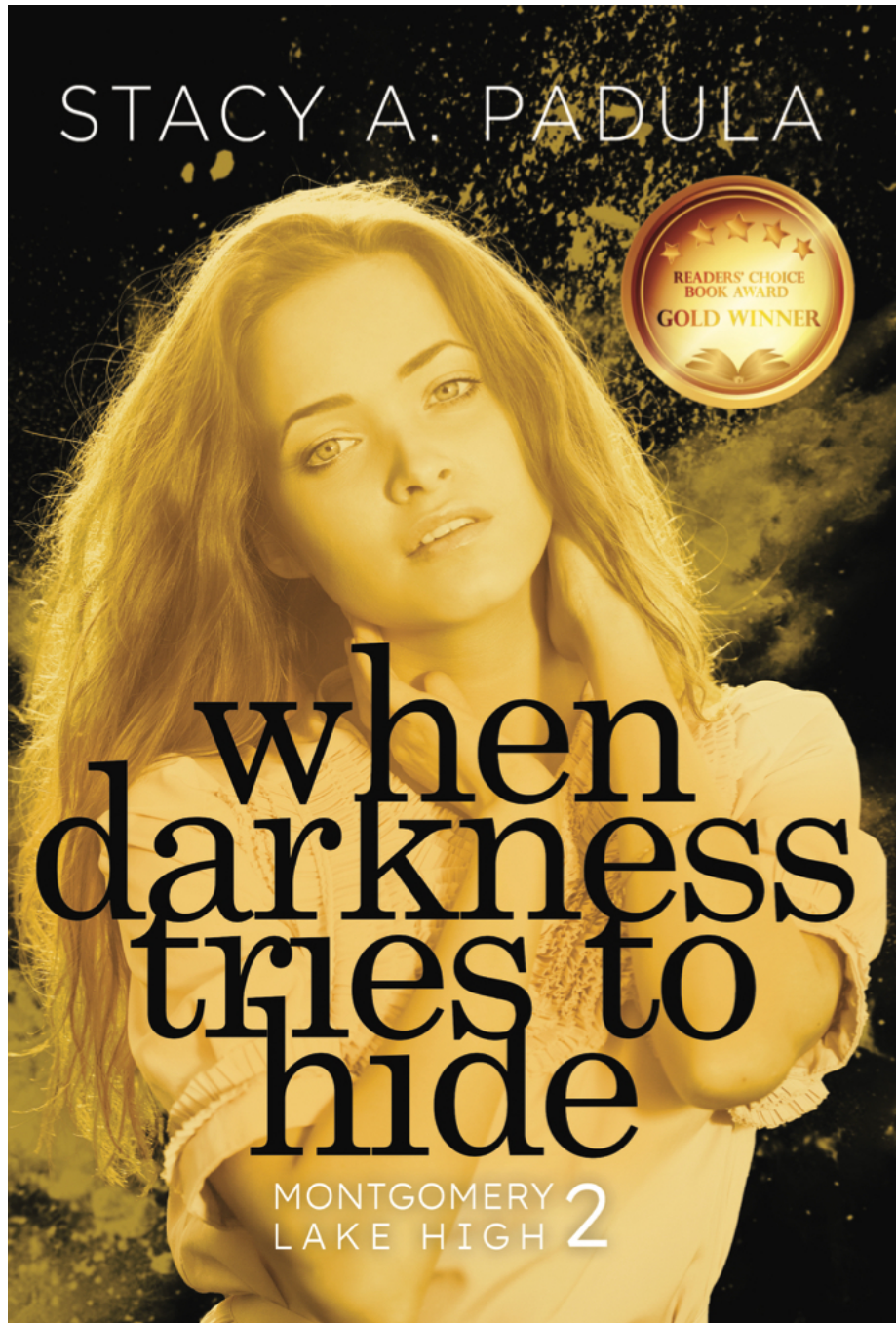


Study Guide for *When Darkness Tries to Hide* by Stacy A. Padula

For Youth Groups & Small Groups

Ideal for middle & high school students



Overview & Why This Book?

A powerful supercell hits Montgomery, Massachusetts, mirroring the internal “storms” in students’ lives. When a classmate ends up in a coma, cliques dissolve, secrets surface, and hearts are tested. At the center is Jason Davids—a popular teen battling emptiness, substance use, guilt, and toxic influences. Through tragedy, friendship, and faith, characters discover that light can break through even the deepest darkness.

This book is perfect for youth groups because it tackles real teen issues (peer pressure, addiction, identity, and guilt) while pointing to hope, redemption, and God’s grace. It sparks honest conversations and shows faith in action.

Main Themes: Light vs. Darkness, Redemption, Community, Forgiveness, God’s Plan in Trials.

Key Scripture Ties: John 1:1-5, Romans 8:28, and Psalm 27.

Suggested Format (4–6 Weeks)

- **Weekly Structure** (60–90 minutes):
 1. Icebreaker / Check-in (10 min)
 2. Review key plot/characters (10 min)
 3. Discuss questions (20–30 min)
 4. Scripture connection & prayer (15–20 min)
 5. Application / Challenge for the week (10 min)

Materials Needed: Book copies, Bibles, notebook/paper for reflections.

Session Breakdown

Session 1: The Storm Hits – Crisis & Community

Focus: The tragic event that changes everything.

- Key Chapters: Early sections (storm, accident, initial reactions).
- Discussion Questions:
 1. How does the literal storm mirror the characters’ internal struggles?
 2. Why do cliques start to dissolve after the accident? What does this teach us about crisis and unity? (See Galatians 6:2)
 3. Have you ever experienced a “storm” that brought people together? How did it change relationships?
- Scripture: James 1:2–4 (trials produce perseverance).
- Challenge: Reach out to a friend who might be struggling this week.

Session 2: Jason’s Struggle – Emptiness & Bad Influences

Focus: Jason’s battle with substances, popularity, and toxic relationships (e.g., with Cathy).

- Discussion Questions:
 1. Why does Jason feel empty despite his “perfect” life? Where do teens today look for fulfillment?
 2. How do Jason’s friends influence him—for better or worse?
 3. What warning does this give about the company we keep? (Proverbs 13:20, 1 Corinthians 15:33)
- Scripture: Psalm 42:11 or Matthew 6:33.
- Challenge: Identify one “dark” influence in your life and one positive one. Pray about it.

Session 3: Light Breaking In – Friendship, Guilt & Hope

Focus: Chris’s role, the prayer/service for Andy, and Jason’s shifting perspective.

- Discussion Questions:
 1. What does Chris’s patience with Jason teach us about friendship and tough love?
 2. How does guilt affect Jason? How can we bring our mistakes to God? (1 John 1:9)
 3. Describe a moment when “light” entered Jason’s darkness. When have you seen God’s light in a hard situation?
- Scripture: John 1:5 (“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”)
- Challenge: Encourage or forgive someone this week, as Chris models.

Session 4: Redemption & Transformation

Focus: Jason’s turning point, Pastor Mark’s influence, and the last chapter’s reflection.

- Discussion Questions:
 1. How does Jason’s opinion of faith and light change? What surprises you about his growth?
 2. What does the book say about second chances and God’s forgiveness?
 3. How does the theme of light vs. darkness play out by the end?
- Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:6 or Ephesians 5:8 (“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”)
- Challenge: Share your own “light” story or start reading Scripture daily.

Optional Sessions 5–6: Character deep-dives (Chantal as moral compass, community response) or full-series connections to Grippled.

Reflection & Application Prompts (for Journals or Small Groups)

- What part of Jason’s story feels most relatable to your life right now?
- Where do you see “darkness” trying to hide in your school/friend group? How can you bring light?
- Write a prayer for someone who might be struggling like Jason.
- How has this book changed how you view God’s role in hard times?

Leader Tips

- Create a safe space—emphasize no judgment, just grace.
- Pair with worship songs about light (e.g., “Light of the World” or “You Are My Hiding Place”).
- For larger groups: Use the book for a read-aloud or buddy-reading system.
- Follow-up: Watch for signs of students needing extra support (e.g., substance issues) and connect with counselors/pastors.

Additional Resources

- Full series reading order on stacyapadula.com.
- Video author Q&A (contact Stacy through website for custom options).
- Pair with youth events like retreats or service projects.

When Darkness Tries to Hide isn’t just a story—it’s a mirror and a map for teens seeking light in the darkness. Use it to disciple, encourage, and point your group to Jesus, the ultimate source of hope.