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## ***Benefit of the Doubt*** by Les Cowan

### **Book Club Questions**

1. David Hidalgo starts the story reeling from a personal tragedy and coping the only way he knows how. How do you typically cope with difficult life experiences? Would you have done the same thing in David's position or followed a different path?
2. David's trauma causes him to have major doubts about everything he previously trusted in. Do you think we should be aiming for certainty in our basic beliefs or is there any benefit in having a doubt?
3. David and Gillian seem initially attracted to each other but both are nervous of how different they are in their world views and values. How important are shared outlooks in new relationships or do you think that opposites attract?
4. In an effort to get free from drugs Eric latches on to David's faith as a possible source of help. What are the influences that have helped you make a difference in your own life? What has been of most help or have you sometimes been disappointed by unrealistic hopes?
5. Alison does her best as a mum in difficult circumstances but can't stop Jen from being dazzled by Raul's money, power and charisma. What would have been your advice to her to help protect her daughter during these difficult teenage years?
6. Despite his misgivings David agrees to get involved in looking for Jen. How important is helping other people in finding healing for our own hurts?
7. David and Gillian face danger in both Edinburgh and Spain in their quest to rescue Jen and track down Raul. How important is it to "do the right thing" despite the risks? Are there times you have taken risks to do what you felt was right? How did it work out?
8. Crime / Thriller books thrive on coincidences that move the story along like when a Spanish policeman offers to help in the search. Are powerful coincidences like that limited to fiction or have you experienced events that seemed to guide or help you just when you needed it?
9. Alison struggles in Spain partly because of her anxiety for Jen but partly because she feels excluded by David and Gillian's developing relationship and Gillian's growing interest in faith. What's the best way to handle it when everyone seems to be better off or having more fun than you?
10. When Jen is returned and Gillian taken, David feels that history is again repeating itself as people close to him suffer and are exposed to danger. Is he right to feel that way or should he accept that Gillian is an adult and takes her own risks?
11. In his confrontation with Raul, David tries to hold the line but caves in when Gillian is threatened. What are your "non-negotiables" in life - the things you wouldn't surrender no matter what the pressure?
12. David and Gillian return to Edinburgh with an apparently successful mission behind them, both they and Jen significantly changed by what they've been through. What experiences have you been through in life that changed you in ways you hadn't expected? Were these changes for the good?

