



Jodi Picoult

Book club discussion questions

Keeping Faith

1. Much is said in the story about Mariah not being a good mother. Do you think this is valid? Does Faith think she is a good mother? Is motherhood truly a "work in progress", as Millie describes it?
2. In the early pages of the first chapter, Mariah describes her marriage as perfect, yet moments after she and Faith discover Colin with another woman, Mariah says, "Oh God, it is happening again." Are there other indications in the story that Mariah refuses to see the truth that is right in front of her?
3. Mariah makes miniature dream houses, and Colin makes Exit signs. Are there similar clues to other characters' personalities through their career choices?
4. Colin's indiscretion brings on Faith's anger. Soon after, Faith has her first vision. Do you think there is a psychological basis for the appearance of Faith's "Guard"? Why do you think Faith was "chosen"?

5. As you read the story, did you trust Ian Fletcher? Discuss his multi-leveled personality: Harvard educated, yet working for a "trash" TV show, he's hiding as much in his life as he uncovers in others. What is he so afraid of? What is he trying to prove?
6. Discuss Faith's first image of her "Guard." How does it compare to your own first image of God?
7. Faith is seven years old, called the "age of reason" in the Catholic religion. It is the age of the first confession. Do you think Faith is old enough to know what is happening to her? As you read, did you think that she was directing what was happening?
8. Why is religion so difficult for some people to discuss? Would this story be different if it took place in the South or any other part of the country?
9. Millie Epstein says, "I always wondered why God was supposed to be a father. Fathers always want you to measure up to something. Mothers are the ones who love you unconditionally." Do you feel this is true? Discuss the connection between religion and family.
10. What most concerns the clergy who examine Faith: the fact that she is Jewish, the assertion that she is spouting heresy, or the fact that she sees God as a woman?
11. Why do you think that almost every adult who examines Faith thinks at some point that it's all a hoax, one that Mariah is behind? What do you think the author is saying about faith and about truth?
12. How big a role does the media play in the public's response to Faith? Does the public's right to know justify broaching Faith's privacy?

13. What is the difference between religion and spirituality? Does Faith have more of one than the other?
14. There is a shift throughout the narrative from third person to first person (Mariah's voice). One would think we'd learn more about Mariah from the latter, but is this true? Do we learn more from what she tells us, or from what her actions show us?
15. At what moment does Mariah begin to believe in Faith? How about Millie? Ian? Dr. Keller? Who must take the greatest leap of faith?
16. Mariah says, "You can't be a mother, can you, if your child is taken away."As you read, who did you want to win custody of Faith?
17. There are two mother-daughter sets in this book: Faith and Mariah, and Mariah and Millie. Discuss Millie. What are some of the good things Mariah learned from her? Some of the bad things? In the beginning of the story they seem to be very different people. Is this true at the end?
18. Kenzie says: "The issue in this custody hearing is where the best home is for Faith. That doesn't leave a lot of room for God."Do you agree?
19. Did you read the book as fiction or nonfiction?
20. Does the Catholic Church have the right to examine Faith, a Jewish girl?
21. If God were to appear in 1999, would He intervene, or observe?
22. Toward the end of the story, Mariah is tugged across the yard by an exuberant Faith, "following in her daughter's footsteps."Who did you learn the most from in the story? Who is the main character of the book: Mariah? Faith? God?

