



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“Faithful” by Alice Hoffman

1. Love manifests in a few strong ways: the love between a mother and daughter (Shelby and Sue, Maravelle and Jasmine); the love between partners (Ben and Shelby; Sue and Dan); friendship (Shelby and Maravelle). Which love brings the characters the most faith or hope? Is there a sort of love in the novel that you find destructive to the characters?
2. Discuss the title, Faithful. In which ways do the characters show their faith? How does this faith differentiate from religious faith? At what point do you think Shelby finally begins to have faith and hope again? Is there another title you and your group members would have selected for the novel?
3. Discuss Shelby’s relationship with Ben. In what ways is this relationship a healthy next step for Shelby? Do you think he has a positive or negative affect on her life? Why or why not?
4. In the first chapter, Shelby says, “I believe in tragedy . . . not miracles” (page 11). Does her opinion change by the novel’s end? What miracles does she experience?
5. The theme of trust is prevalent in Faithful. Discuss the characters who struggle most with trust. Consider the level of trust Maravelle puts in Shelby to watch her kids, Shelby’s father’s infidelity, Shelby’s lack of self-trust, and others who appear in the novel. Where does the lack of trust or ability to trust stem from for the various characters in the novel?
6. On page 201, James says to Shelby, “What they say about saving a life is true . . . You’re responsible for that person forever.” Discuss what James means here and the different ways Shelby’s, or another character’s, life is saved in Faithful. Do you agree with James? Why or why not?
7. To further the question above, discuss Shelby’s visit with Helene toward the novel’s end. What “miracle” do you think she experiences during the visit? What kept her away for so long?

The above questions were taken from Simon & Schuster, Reading Group Guide.

www.simonandschuster.com/books/Faithful/Alice-Hoffman/9781476799223/reading_group_guide

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