



Discussion Guide

About the Book

"Picoult does a spectacular job weaving in all sorts of spiritual elements... The story makes you wonder about God. Just that is a rare treasure on modern fiction." -Dust Bible

JODI
PICOULT

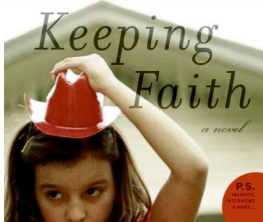
Book Title: *Keeping Faith*

Author: Jody Picoult

New York Times Bestselling Author of My Sister's Keeper and The Pact

Published by: New York: HarperCollins, 1999

Book Website: <http://www.jodipicoult.com/keeping-faith.html>



Author Website: www.jodipicoult.com

Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. With which of the characters did you most identify and why?
3. What did you think of the way the author characterized the various faith traditions... Catholic? Jewish? Athesism? Others? How does that compare with your own takes on various religions?
4. Do you hear God speak to you? If so, have you had any problems like Faith had?
5. Would you say that the book promotes faith or makes fun of it?
6. Have you had any experiences with the types of religious phenomenon that becomes a tourist attraction? Explain.
7. Would you recommend this book for those who deal with depression and suicide? Why or why not?
8. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Other Links...

Summary of Book at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmEXkCSS54I>

Jodi Picoult interview with Katie Couric: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZU9LpdPvuE>



NANCY: “They say that there are moments that open up your life like a walnut cracked, that change your point of view so that you never look at things the same way again.” A lot of gems in this book! Being a student of religion, always a member of a church and nursing heresy most of my life, I found this book to be very inspired in the way it dealt with spirituality and religion. I thought Jody Picoult created an authentic experience of faith in the life of a child, contrasting that to the often convoluted and polluted distortions of faith in organized religion. And beyond that, I thought her story artfully allowed that simple faith to transform both her mother and a self-proclaimed atheist. I need to think to keep thinking about this book for a while. I’m looking forward to a good discussion with the MAMs about it!



SALLIE: “Your daughter,” Dr. Keller says flatly. “I think she’s seeing God.” I laughed when I read this. Children are often close to God. They often see things, believe and know faith in their early years, until adults convince them they don’t know what they’re talking about. I’ve heard it explained that they are close to the life of Spirit when they are born, and then get separated as they get older. I liked this character of Faith. She seemed to take her “Guard”/“God experiences in stride and was fortunate to have a mother who believed in her. But she didn’t seem too upset about the custody battle... which confused me and seemed a little unrealistic. Children usually take this very hard. On the other hand, it seemed her “Guard” arrived to help her when her parents started to fight, so perhaps that was her coping mechanism.



ABIGAIL: “The ability to find sparks may be buried so deep in you that you stop believing there’s a God. Until someone comes along, with so much light in her that you can’t help but see your own, and when you’re together, that light grows even brighter.” I loved the spiritual character Picoult created in Faith. Simple, unpretentious, just relating her experience, being open to receive God and share God with others. And once the crisis passed, the experience seemed to leave also. So often that’s how it is with all of us. We find great spiritual crisis in the midst of the storm and then just live without Spirit in the calm times.



MOLLY: “Let me tell you what you feel like when you know you are ready to die. You sleep a lot, and when you wake up the very first thought in your head is that you wish you could go back to bed. You go entire days without eating, because food is a commodity that keeps you here. You read the same page a hundred times. You rewind your life like a videocassette and see the things that make you weep, things that make you pause, but nothing that makes you want to play it forward. You forget to comb your hair, to shower, to dress. And then one day, when you make the decision that you have enough energy left in you to do this one, last, monumental thing, there comes a peace. Suddenly you are counting moments as you haven’t for months. Suddenly you have a secret that makes you smile, that makes people say you look wonderful, although you feel like a shell-brittle and capable of cracking into a thousand pieces. ” This described how I felt during chemo and why I’m putting my energy into the FARM in Nancy’s next book these days. I feel like even though I might die, I am going to live now!



PRISCILLA: “I close my eyes, thinking that there is nothing like an embrace after an absence, nothing like fitting my face into the curve of his shoulder and filling my lungs with the scent of him.” Ah, the love story hid among the pages of this book. Not a romance novel by any means, but I cheered for Mariah and Ian. Made me think of my love for Moses... Like Ian, he was the bad guy and doing not very nice things on our trip to Turkey, and yet, he eventually came around and confessed. Ian didn’t come around quite as much as I would have liked, but still you could see him changing and giving up his show for Mariah. Nothing like a good love story!



KATHARINE: “Sometimes you can see things happen right in front of your eyes and still jump to the wrong conclusions.” As a professor of religion, once again, I consider assigning this book to my students as a springboard to discuss the life of faith within Judaism and Catholicism. How does a rabbi explain stigma-ta? How does a Catholic priest explain that a Jewish girl seems to be doing miracles? Picoult’s humor shines through the ironies of the story offering more questions than answers. And of course Christians often seem to forget that Jesus was a Jew.



JANE: “If it is possible to die of grief then why on earth can’t someone be healed by happiness?” I know that’s a strange quote to pick out of this book, which seemed to be more full of long faces than dancing and partying. And yet, there’s a sense of triumph here in Mariah’s story. Didn’t she go from suicidal depression to becoming a female heroine? And in the end didn’t she choose happiness? She learned not to let a man define her and emerged to be her true self in the end. So I say “Here! Here!” Let’s toast another feminist story, Mariah comes of age!