

Book Club Guide for Absolution

1. Do you think Jeanie made the right decision in trying to keep her marriage together for so long? If you were in her place, what would you have done?
2. Jeanie reacts to the assault she suffered at the hands of her professor with denial, shame, and feelings of guilt that cause her to keep the event a secret for many years. How have societal attitudes changed since the 1990s, particularly in light of the Me Too movement and recent prosecutions of serial offenders?
3. Jeanie was trained since childhood to pursue a life as a devoted wife and mother, but her commitment to her marriage eventually slams up against the harsh reality of her dysfunctional relationship with Greg. What were the turning points for her?
4. How has your own family of origin affected your romantic or marital relationships as an adult? Do you agree that the values and behaviors we learn in our family of origin can be hard to change once we reach adulthood? Why or why not?
5. Jeanie laments that she was “born between generations” and feels conflicted about pursuing a career versus staying home to care for her children—a dispute sometimes referred to as the “mommy wars.” Have you had personal experience with this? How has the debate changed since your own mother’s era?
6. Jeanie’s best friend Carla is more outgoing and displays more self-confidence than Jeanie often does. Which character do you identify with more?
7. How was Carla instrumental in Jeanie’s decision to leave Greg? Could she have done more to help her friend?
8. What path do you think Jeanie will travel now that she has returned to Adams Mills? If she enters into a new relationship, do you think it will be different from her marriage to Greg, or will she fall into the same old patterns?