

Returning Home By Christie Macdonald



Book Club Discussion Questions

“Thank you for choosing *Returning Home* as your next Book Club read! I picture you holding a comforting drink, taking part in rich & life-giving conversations, learning more about each other, and God’s love for us in the process. If you want to send me a picture of your book club with your books, you may just find your picture on my website! I wish I was with you and am sending you blessings!” -Christie

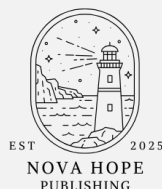
Some questions contain spoiler alerts

Chapter 1

1. The story opens with Sadie returning to church after many years away. Has there been a period in your life when you stepped away from church? If so, did you decide to return, and what was that experience like for you?
2. Were you a planner in your youth, like Sadie was? Are you now? Do you feel better when you’re organized and have an idea of what’s coming, or is your personality more go-with-the-flow?
3. Have you ever attended an organized support group? If so, what was your experience like?

Chapter 2

1. Do you still live in the town that you grew up in? What are the pros and cons of that?
2. Do you have friends today that you’ve had since you were in elementary school? Are those friendships different than the ones that started later in life?
3. Do you have relationships with your neighbors, the people who live next to you? If not, have you ever thought about introducing yourself and getting to know them?
4. Sadie asked Emily to come to church with her for years before she said yes. Is there someone in your life that you continue to ask to come to church with you? Do you remember who first invited you to church? Were you open to attending?



5. Do you have a hobby that you've had since you've been a child? Does it still bring you joy, or have your hobbies changed as you've gotten older?

Chapter 3

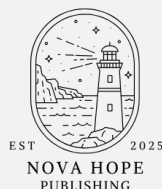
1. Is there an industry that you, or someone in your family works in or has been involved in for their whole life? What's that like?
2. John Gray is financially secure but doesn't show it. If you were in a position where money was not an issue, how do you think you would handle it?
3. What are some causes in your community that are important to you? Are there some that you wish you could dedicate more time or resources to?

Chapter 4

1. Using John's car as reference, have you ever worked on a project with one of your parents or one of your children?
2. Quick. Your favorite coffee and donut combination!
3. Have you ever been able to help someone out of a difficult situation, like John was able to do for Tommy?
4. Have you ever had the opportunity to tell someone about Jesus and see them come to know him through your words?
5. Have you ever had a childhood friend who you realized that you liked as more than a friend? How did that go?

Chapter 5

1. Do you have a special place in or around your home that you go to when you want to experience nature?
2. In this chapter Sadie reflects, 'Do you ever stop and wonder how people can smell pine, see flowers budding, hear the wind rustling through the trees, feel the crunch of leaves under their feet and *still* not recognize that it was God who created it all? I just don't get it.' Are there things, places or events you experience in your life that cause you to wonder over His creation?
3. Do you recall when you first realized your significant other might like you back? How did you know?



Chapter 6

1. Did you attend youth group as a teenager? What was that experience like?
2. Have you ever gone to church simply because someone you liked was going to be there?
3. Sadie recalls her grandmother's words, '*There's hardly anything in this world that straight shoulders, a deep breath, and a talk with the Lord won't fix,*'. Do you have a trick, or saying you tell yourself when you are feeling anxious?
4. What were your favorite bands as a teenager?
5. I think it's so cool that Sadie was the person to continue to invite Emily to church so long ago, and now it is Emily who is pushing Sadie to return. God used Sadie's faithfulness in her youth to bring her closer to Him years later. Do you have a story that shows God's faithfulness through the years?

Chapter 7

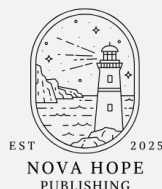
1. What do you think of when you think of Sunday School? Did you attend?
2. Psalms 34:18 was the verse used at DivorceCare to remind attendees that God is with us even when we are sad and it doesn't feel like he's there. Is there a verse you go to when you need to feel comforted and closer to Jesus?
3. Other than this book club, have you ever been a situation when you felt pulled to share in a group?
4. Have you ever felt that God abandoned you? How did you, or are you, working through that?

Chapter 8

1. Do you have an exercise routine that you enjoy? Do you do it alone or with a friend?
2. Do you have a friend who will tell you the truth even if you don't want to hear it? How does that feel and how do you handle those conversations?
3. Sadie feels like she has disappointed people in her family, even though they haven't said that. Have you ever felt that way and were you able to find a way to work through that feeling?

Chapter 9

1. How did you spend your summers as a child? Did you ever attend summer camp? What was that like?



2. How did you spend your summers as a teenager? Did you ever work at a summer camp? What was that like?
3. Making friends as a child is often easier than making friends as an adult. What was the last friendship you made, and how did it come about?
4. Rachel pushed Sadie to think about Mason differently. Have you ever been on the giving, or receiving end, of a conversation like that?

Chapter 10

1. Sadie loved her time working at camp and felt bad for others who didn't get to experience what she did. Have there been times in your life when you knew while you were in it, that you were a part of something really special- a group, club, or a staff?
2. Do you remember your first kiss? Was it special, awkward or an experience you want to forget forever?
3. Did you have a high school sweetheart? How did the relationship turn out? What is the status of it today?

Chapter 11

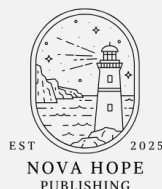
1. What is your favorite season and what would be your dream climate to live in?
2. Thinking of Diya and her medical situation, how do you answer the question to yourself, or to others, of why terrible and unfair things happen to people?
3. If you've ever been through a divorce, have you felt judged by others? If you haven't, have you ever felt yourself judging others? (Book clubs are safe spaces!)

Chapter 12

1. Do you have a talent that you have thought about turning into a small business?
2. Have you ever met a lobster fisherman? What stood out to you? Have you ever taken part in Dumping Day in Nova Scotia, or something similar to it? What was your experience like?
3. Sadie runs into Mason after years of not seeing him. Were you shocked by Mason's invitation to dinner and learning about Nick?

Chapter 13

1. Caroline can feel Sadie getting older and starting to pull away. What has your experience been like if you've had children who are growing older and discovering their independence? How have you handled it?



2. Caroline missed Sadie before she even left the house, and was already planning for her return. Do you have routines or traditions in place when you know your children are coming home to visit after being away?
3. Sadie found herself horrified at her moms singing in the front seat. Have you ever panicked in a situation with your kids, or unintentionally embarrassed them?

Chapter 14

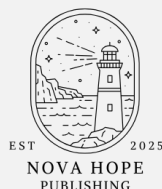
1. Did you have strict rules in place for your children who are dating?
2. Have you taken road trips with your church youth group? What memories do you have from those times?
3. Have you ever been offered an opportunity, like Mason was, that is exciting for you, but that you know could impact someone else negatively? How did you navigate that?
4. John advises his son, 'I want you to think about what *you* really want, not what someone else wants for you, whatever that may be. It's your life- your school year, your living arrangements, your future.' Is there a time in your life when you wish you had received that advice?

Chapter 15

1. Do you have family around who helps you raise yours? Have you ever thanked them? Are you in a season where you could be that help for someone else?
2. Do you have a favorite sports team? The love of which has been in your family for generations?
3. Would you want to know about how and what love-interests from your past are doing? If someone had information about them, would it be helpful or harmful for you to receive unprompted updates?
4. Sadie is a worrier, many of us are. Are there things you worry about that you know you shouldn't? if not, do you have any tips for other worriers in the room?

Chapter 16

1. Mason thought that he was doing the right thing by breaking up with Sadie, even though it broke him too. Have you ever made a decision you didn't want to, but made for someone else's benefit? How did that turn out?



2. Do you have a specific place you and your partner meet at when you have to have difficult conversations? Or even just to recap how your days have gone?
3. Do you think Mason's decision to break-up with Sadie was self-sacrificing or self-serving?

Chapter 17

1. Did you further your education after High School? If so, what did you study? Is there something you wish you would've taken instead?
2. Many women remember their first heartbreak. What advice would you give Sadie if she was your daughter?

Chapter 18

1. How do you spend early quiet mornings, when you are up before anyone else?
2. Do you journal? What does your process and regularity with it look like?

Chapter 19

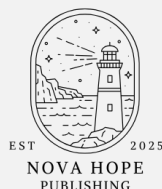
1. Do you have a type of music, or artist, that you listen to when you want to feel calm?
2. In this chapter we learn that Caroline wasn't a fan of Nick. Have you ever received feedback on someone you were dating that you didn't want to hear? How did you handle it?
3. Do you have a specific space in your home that brings you peace?

Chapter 20

1. This was a difficult chapter to write, and likely to read. Have you ever been in a position where you've had to stand up for yourself when the situation didn't feel right? If so, do you wish you would have done it sooner, or waited longer?
2. The impact of break-ups is often unknown at the time. I didn't want to minimize the impact of divorce and the end of this chapter outlines areas in Sadie's life that will change, ones that she isn't even aware of yet. Are there other significant changes that you experienced after a break-up that you wish a younger version of yourself would have been better prepared for?

Chapter 21

1. Do you have a go-to spot where your friends meet? What do you love about it?
2. How often do you get together with friends? Do you wish it was more? Or less?



3. Sadie struggles with what the bible says about divorce and being able to move on. Are there areas of your life where you are struggling, and where you feel the bible speaks directly to it; or is silent on it, and you wish it wasn't?

Chapter 22

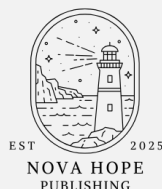
1. Have you ever sat with your parents, or elderly people in your life, and asked them how they experienced certain events?
2. Stephen had to push Caroline to make amends with Judy. Have you ever had someone you love apply tough-love to a situation you were going through that you were later thankful for?
3. One of my favorite lines in the book is when Sadie is reflecting with her mom and says 'What if God still wants me to talk to him? Maybe I've been so unsettled for so long *because* I stopped talking to Him.' These are words that I wish everyone who feels away from God could reflect on. Has there been a period of your life in which you've felt far away from God? Is there someone in your life who may benefit from a gentle conversation like this one?

Chapter 23

1. Sadie marries Nick because she believes that will please God and help her keep his instruction to save yourself for your spouse. In turn, she marries someone who is not a Christian, which goes against what God says is best for us. Have you ever made a huge decision about your life that you didn't feel good about at the time, but thought you were doing the right thing?
2. Is there a person in your life who you can share with, and with whom you know you won't be judged?
3. How do you guide your children in making the best decisions for their future? What's the best advice you've ever received regarding this?
4. Often one person is judged for the being the person to end or ruin a relationship, when this is very often not the case and both parties have played a part. Do you have a practice of looking at a situation from both perspectives, or do you always take the side of the person you are closest with?

Chapter 24

1. Do you enjoy the Halloween season? Are there 'holidays' that you wish you could bypass?



2. Sadie speaks to wanting to close doors to be able to move on. Are there open doors that you know you need to close?

Chapter 25

1. The Police have an important role in our community. What are some views you've heard, or experienced, with that career? Is there a policeman in your life that you can cover in prayer?
2. Mason and Sadie arranged to go on a date after years apart. Have you ever made plans with someone that you haven't seen in years? How did it go?

Chapter 26

1. Sadie mistook her dad's silence for disapproval. Is there someone in your life that may benefit from a dose of transparency from you?
2. Stephen was proud of Sadie for how she stood up for herself. What would hearing words like from someone you love mean to you? Is there someone in your life who may need to hear those words from you?

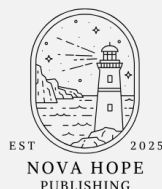
Chapter 27

1. Is there a band you used to listen to but haven't heard in years- but if their song came on the radio today you would remember all the words to it?
2. Tess overhears that her mom has plans with someone else. Have you ever had to have difficult conversations with people who rely on you?
3. Sadie pulled over and crawled into the back seat with her daughter to talk to her. How would you rate yourself at having uninterrupted and focused conversations with your friends and family?

Chapter 28

1. Have you ever had the experience of going to counseling? How was it? Would you recommend it to others?
2. God showed up for Sadie in her first counselling session. Is there a time in your life that left you no doubt that God was with you in your time of need?

Chapter 29



1. Sadie was excited and nervous about reuniting with Mason. Have you ever thought about reaching out to someone you used to be close with and would like to be close with again?
2. Mason has a quality where he doesn't hold back in sharing how he feels. Is there someone in your life that you hold back with to protect your feelings, or theirs? Could the relationship be strengthened (or dissolve) from increased clarity in how you're feeling?

Chapter 30

1. Have you ever made a grand romantic gesture? Has anyone ever made one for you?
2. Should Mason have stayed and talked to Sadie in person? Given the situation of finding someone else in Sadie's apartment, would you have?

Chapter 31

1. This chapter is the reunion we have all been waiting for. Have you ever found your way back to a place that felt like home after being away?
2. How important is physical connection in a relationship? Does it trump everything else?
3. Can a relationship survive without mutual attraction?

Chapter 32

1. Sadie was asked to reflect on what a younger version of herself would feel about where she is today. Would that exercise bring you peace or encourage you to make some changes?
2. James 4:8 promises 'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you'. Sadie starts attending church, praying regularly and journaling and says she hasn't felt this good in a long time. Are there practices that when you start or stop, have an impact on your well-being?
3. The Doctor says that the world is hard and that we need to take time to enjoy our blessings. Is this a practice you have, if so, how do you do this?

Epilogue

1. What future do you hope to see for Mason and Sadie?



2. What challenges do you foresee in their relationship, and do you believe that true love can conquer all?
3. If there was another book in this series, who's story would you want to hear more about? (PS- Don't just discuss it, let me know!)

