

A FREE READER RESOURCE

THE SECOND SHORE

Christian Book Club Discussion Guide



Faith Marlowe

Contemporary Christian fiction about love, loss, family, faith and beginning again.

Designed for church groups, Christian book clubs and readers who want to talk more deeply about grief, forgiveness, relationships, service and faith when easy answers are not enough.

Contains discussion of the full novel and therefore includes spoilers.

Meet Faith Marlowe

Faith Marlowe is an Australian writer of contemporary Christian fiction exploring love, loss, family, faith and the unexpected turns that reshape a life.

Her debut novel, *The Second Shore*, grew from her interest in the choices people make when the life they expected is no longer the life in front of them. She writes emotionally complex characters, fractured relationships and the possibility of beginning again, even when starting over seems impossible.

She is especially drawn to the quiet moments that can change the direction of a life: a conversation left unfinished, a relationship tested, a truth finally confronted, or the decision to take one more chance.

The Second Shore is the first book in the Shore Series. Faith Marlowe is a pen name.

For the group leader

These questions are intentionally open ended. You do not need to use them all. For a 60 to 90 minute meeting, choose six to eight questions and leave room for readers to disagree. The novel treats grief and faith as experiences that do not always resolve neatly, so the strongest discussion may come from allowing different reactions to stand.

A simple opening question

Before discussing details: What stayed with you most after you finished *The Second Shore*, a character, a relationship, a question about faith, or a particular choice?

15 Discussion Questions

1. Nell and the life she did not expect

Nell enters the story carrying grief, family history and unfinished questions. How does her understanding of what she has lost change as the novel progresses? Did you see her journey mainly as recovery, acceptance, reconciliation, or something else?

2. Thomas and the absence at the centre of the story

Thomas's drowning remains an ordinary and devastating loss rather than being explained away by a later revelation. How did that choice affect the way you experienced the novel's Christian themes? What is gained when a story of faith refuses to give suffering a tidy explanation?

3. Ruth's letters

What do Ruth's letters allow Nell to understand that ordinary family memories could not? Did the letters make Ruth more admirable, more complicated, or both?

4. Faith that includes anger

At one point Nell struggles to understand how Ruth could continue believing in God while also sounding furious in her letters. What do you think the novel is saying about anger, doubt and faith? Can anger toward God coexist with trust in God?

5. Diane's grief

Diane makes clear that love for Ruth did not erase the loneliness and hurt she experienced. How did her perspective change your understanding of the family story? Why is it important that Nell listens before trying to defend Ruth?

6. Forgiveness and restored trust

The novel distinguishes forgiveness from pretending harm did not occur, and from automatically restoring a relationship to what it was before. Do you agree with that distinction? What does genuine forgiveness require, and what might it not require?

7. The danger of a single family story

Nell gradually discovers that the version of the past she inherited was incomplete.

Which characters are most affected by being misunderstood, overlooked or remembered too simply? What does the novel suggest about listening to more than one account of the same history?

8. Mark and the work of relationship

How did you respond to Nell and Mark's relationship as it was tested by grief, distance and change? Which moments showed the difference between loving someone and knowing how to support them?

9. Harborlight and practical faith

Harborlight connects belief with ordinary acts of service. How does the novel balance prayer, belief and practical action? Did the service work feel like an expression of faith, a response to grief, a source of community, or all three?

10. Walter and the value of presence

Walter learns that silence is not always a problem that needs to be solved. What does his approach suggest about accompanying someone through grief? When can simply being present be more helpful than offering explanations?

11. Diane, Ruth and recognition

When Nell learns more about Diane's contribution to the work associated with Ruth, the public family story becomes more complicated. What does the novel say about credit, humility and the harm that can occur when someone's contribution disappears from the story?

12. Theo, disagreement and accountability

Theo and Nell do not need to agree about everything in order to listen, correct assumptions and do useful work. What did their interactions suggest about disagreement? What is the difference between changing one's mind and taking responsibility for having been unfair or incomplete?

13. Grief changing shape

Near the later part of the novel, Nell recognises that grief may never be completely finished, but that it can change shape. Does that ring true to your own understanding of grief? How is carrying grief different from being controlled by it?

14. Second chances

The title points toward another shore, another way of living after the expected life has been disrupted. Which character receives, offers or creates the most meaningful second chance? Are second chances something we are given, something we choose, or both?

15. The Christian hope of the novel

By the end, the story offers hope without undoing death, regret or damaged relationships. What kind of hope does *The Second Shore* finally offer? Did you find that hope convincing? How does it compare with the kind of hope Christian communities sometimes feel pressured to offer too quickly?

Closing the Conversation

Choose one of these prompts to finish your meeting.

Reflection: Which relationship in the novel would you most like to revisit six months later, and what would you hope had changed?

Faith reflection: Where did you see faith expressed most convincingly in the story: prayer, honesty, service, forgiveness, endurance, listening, community, or somewhere else?

Personal response: Is there a conversation, apology, act of service or step toward reconciliation that the novel made you think about differently?

About the Shore Series

The Second Shore is the first book in the Shore Series by Faith Marlowe. The series begins with people whose lives have not followed the course they expected, and asks what love, faith and hope can look like after the map has changed.

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This guide is intended as a free companion for readers and Christian book clubs discussing The Second Shore. Add your book purchase link, author website and Facebook Page to the final version when they are live, then share the PDF from the Faith Marlowe Books Facebook Page and your author website.

FAITH MARLOWE

The Second Shore | Book One of the Shore Series