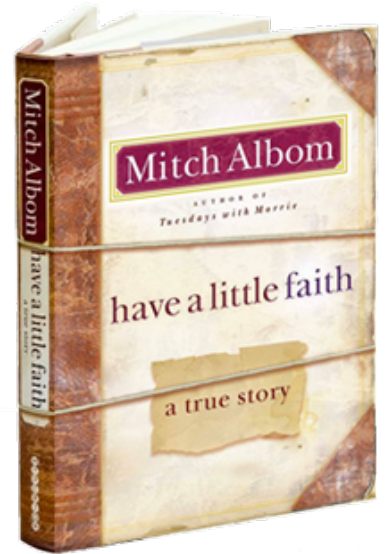


have a little faith

by Mitch Albom

READING GROUP GUIDE

In his first nonfiction work since the publication of his international bestseller *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom turns his keen observational eye and journalistic gifts toward one of the world's most complex, yet universal, subjects. In *Have a Little Faith*, Albom explores the unifying power of religion as he plumbs the lives and callings of two “men of the cloth”—Albom’s childhood rabbi Albert Lewis (“the Reb”), who asks Albom to write and deliver his eulogy upon his demise; and Henry Covington, a Detroit inner-city pastor struggling to keep his mostly impoverished and disenfranchised congregation together as their dilapidated church crumbles around them. At the same time, *Have a Little Faith* is the deeply personal story of Albom’s journey of faith, as he examines why he strayed from his Jewish roots and, through the inspiration of the Reb and Pastor Henry, how he comes to find his way home once more.



As a result, this is a book filled with many fascinating themes, such as the power of resilience in the face of adversity, the true meaning of faith, and how belief can lift us in surprising ways. The below questions are designed to help guide your reading group’s discussion of this thought-provoking and uplifting book.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. *Have a Little Faith* asks, “What if our beliefs were not what divided us, but what pulled us together?” How would you begin to answer this question? Which of the world’s ills could be healed, what wrongs could be made right, if religion was more of a unifying force?
2. How would you react if someone you knew asked you to write their eulogy? How would you go about doing so?
3. In describing the journeys of faith taken by the Reb and Pastor Henry, Mitch Albom discusses his complicated relationship to his Jewish beliefs. Talking about one’s religious faith is a personal endeavor; do you find it easy or difficult to talk

to others about religion, specifically your relationship to it? Are you comfortable discussing religion with someone with different beliefs?

4. In continuation of the above question, do you think anyone can ever “win” a religious argument? What do you think lies at the core of disagreements about religion?
5. How can many faiths coexist? If different faiths have different beliefs, how can they all be correct? Does one faith have the right or obligation to convert the other? When Mitch asks this of the Reb, he explains that just as there are a variety of trees, multiple faiths all come from the same God (page 160). What do you think about the Reb’s explanation? Can dialogue and debate about different beliefs, as the Reb argues, really enrich one’s own faith?
6. Compare and contrast the Reb and Pastor Henry. How are their stories similar, different? Did you identify with one man more than the other?
7. Were you uncomfortable with Henry’s troubled past, especially when he admits his violation of the Ten Commandments? What did you think of Mitch’s hesitation towards him? Do you think that someone who turns so far away from God, even though truly repentant, can really be a “Man of God”?
8. Think about some famous eulogies delivered in recent memory: Charles Spencer’s eulogy of his sister, Princess Diana; Oprah Winfrey’s of Rosa Parks; Cher’s emotional tribute to her former husband Sonny Bono; President Obama’s stirring remarks about Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Re-read Albom’s eulogy of the Reb at the end of the book—what does it have in common with other eulogies you’ve heard or read? What makes a eulogy truly memorable—does it rely solely upon the personality of the person who died?
9. Have you ever experienced a crisis of faith? How did you approach it? Was it resolved? Was there a lesson you took away from it?
10. In “A Little History,” Albom describes his early religious education, and his resistance to it. Did you receive any religious instruction as a child? If so, did you enjoy it, or did you experience the same way Mitch did, going to lessons feeling like a “dragged prisoner?” (page 11).
11. Albom talks about his ambivalence toward his New Jersey childhood home, characterizing it as being “too small for what I wanted to achieve in life, like being stuck wearing your grade school clothes,” (page 25). What do you think of your hometown now? Why are hometowns so pivotal to how people are shaped?

12. Consider what the Reb says to Albom in the chapter “May: Ritual”: “‘Mitch,’ he said, ‘faith is about doing. You are how you act, not just how you believe.’” Do you agree with the Reb’s sentiment?
13. Re-read the anecdote that Albom relays on page 76, about his interpretation of the story of the parting of the Red Sea. What does this story mean to you?
14. “It is far more comforting to think God listened and said no, than to think nobody’s out there” (page 82). What do you think of what the Reb says here? Do you agree?
15. Both the Reb and Pastor Henry describe what they believe to be the keys to happiness. What do you think the secrets to happiness are? Where might faith fall on such a list?
16. In “September: What Is Rich?” Albom explores the Reb’s childhood as an impoverished son of immigrants living in New York City. At the end of this chapter, how do you answer the question asked in its title? What does “rich” mean to you?
17. At the end of the chapter “Church,” Albom describes the Hindu celebration of Kumbh Mela, a gathering that’s been called the world’s largest single act of faith. In your own life, have you ever been a part of something big while doing something small? How did it make you feel?
18. Opposite the start of “The End of Autumn,” Albom chose a quote from the Robert Browning Hamilton poem “Sadness” to appear. What did this verse mean to you? How does it relate to the themes Albom explores in the book?
19. After reading *Have a Little Faith*, were you inspired to learn more about religions other than your own? What are some commonalities between different religions?
20. Have you read any of Mitch Albom’s works, such as *Tuesdays with Morrie* or his novels *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* or *For One More Day*? What does *Have a Little Faith* have in common with Albom’s other books?
21. If you had to write your own eulogy, what would you say about yourself? How would you most like to be remembered?

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