

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. The author opens the book with a quote from Thomas Merton. Why do you think the author chose it? Does it set a tone for the book?
2. The author also opens every chapter with a quote from Thomas Merton. Later in the book, Jamie tells Olivia a little bit about him. Do Father Mark and Thomas Merton seem similar? Different?
3. Chapter One is entitled “On Gratitude,” yet Olivia is obviously conflicted about her mentor. The chapter ends with Olivia telling herself to feel gratitude. Should she?
4. Compare Olivia’s first meeting with Father Mark to her first meeting with Jamie. What do you notice about how she acts, reacts, and views each? What does she hope will come of her meeting with Father Mark? With Jamie?
5. Discuss Father Mark’s first invitation to Olivia to meet to go over her work. Why is Olivia uncomfortable with her friends’ teasing?
6. At one point, Olivia says, “I go to everything he invites me to, do everything he asks of me, read everything he recommends, as if it’s my new full-time occupation, becoming all mentored and improved and approved by him, so much so that I almost can’t find time to do anything else, see anyone else.” What does this reveal about the nature of their relationship?

7. Olivia keeps asking herself, “How did everything go from so wonderful and exciting to so awkward and uncomfortable?” Discuss why Olivia is having a hard time understanding the situation. Do you and your friends view the situation the same way? Is it possible for some actions to be interpreted in different ways?
8. Does anyone else question Father Mark’s behavior towards Olivia? Why or why not?
9. How does being quiet about her discomfort with the situation affect Olivia’s behavior and change her? Why doesn’t pretending that everything is okay work for her?
10. Why does Olivia blame God for the situation? Why does she think God might judge her?
11. When Olivia finally tells her friends and family about the situation, she calls it a “leap of faith.” Why?
12. Why was it important for Olivia to write her version of the story?
13. How do you think Olivia will fare after this experience?



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