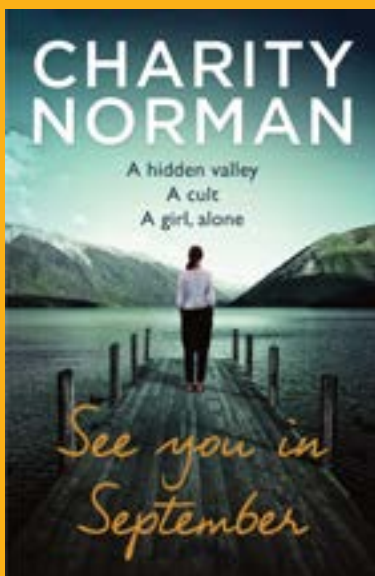




# ALLEN & UNWIN'S

## *Book Group Guide*

### Conversation Starters



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*See You in September* book discussions go very well with whatever organic food you can hunt and gather. Think homemade fruit preserves and freshly baked bread, smoked fish, goat's cheese and nuts. Drink with peach, plum or blackberry wine/cordial or herbal tea.

## Conversation starters ...

- ☞ Why do you think Cassy was so easily recruited into joining a cult?
- ☞ How well do you think Cassy's family handled their daughter joining a cult? Do you think they should have tried harder to get her to leave? Do you think they could have done anything differently? What would you have done if it was a member of your family?
- ☞ On page 205, where Cassy's parents are talking to the expert on cults, he says:

*'A clever manipulator can implant all sorts of ideas in a person's head. It can be a crowd phenomenon. Ever seen a video of the Nuremberg Rallies? Or ... have you been to one of those fundamentalist awakening churches? ... Look on YouTube. Stirring music—like a rock concert—big stage, clever lighting, charismatic speaker promising the earth, often in a singsong voice, lots of repetition, a crowd sky-high on collective emotion. Before you know it people are falling down and babbling and giving themselves to the Lord. And, incidentally, a lot of cash to the church.'*

*'Amazing,' said Mike ... 'So, are you saying there's no line between a religion and a cult?'*

What do you think? Do you think there is a difference between a religion and a cult?

- ☞ When you first started reading *See You in September*, what did you think was going to happen at the end of the novel? How did the actual ending compare to your prediction?
- ☞ How did your perception of the people and customs of Gethsemane change during the course of the novel?
- ☞ At the end of the novel (page 406), Cassy says the following about Justin Calvin:

*'I've heard him called a monster and a murderer but that isn't the whole picture. He was fatally misguided in the end, but he understood the power of love, of real listening, of a simple life ... And anyway, who's to say I was right? For all I know, Justin and the others are laughing at me right now.'*

What's your opinion of Justin's character and his motivation? Do you think he truly believed what he preached?

- ☞ How did reading *See You in September* change or reaffirm your own perception of cults?

## Just for fun ...

- Looking beyond the end of the book, what do you think might happen next for Cassy and her young family as well as Diana, Tara and the other people left behind in Gethsemane?
- Put yourself in Cassy's shoes. If you had been picked up in a van and taken to Gethsemane, would you have wanted to stay? Or would certain rules or the behaviour of the inhabitants have sent you running for the hills?
- Most of the Gethsemane people were renamed after cities. What would you want your city name to be?

## If you liked this book ...

May we suggest the following?

- *The Secret Life of Luke Livingston* by Charity Norman
- *Freeing Grace* by Charity Norman
- *Second Chances* by Charity Norman
- *The Son-in-Law* by Charity Norman
- *Best Served Cold* by Charity Norman (a short story featuring Tara)
- *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult
- *Plain Truth* by Jodi Picoult

## Praise

'... will appeal to devotees of Joanna Trollope and Jodi Picoult. Charity Norman has put down the clearest of markers that she is hot on their heels.' *Daily Mail*

'Jodi Picoult had better look over her shoulder—she's got a new contender by the name of Charity Norman.' *Sydney Morning Herald*

'Easy to read, hard to put down, it'll move you to tears.' *Easy Living*

'... Norman writes with razor sharp perception and deep compassion.' the hoopla

## About the book

*Cassy blew a collective kiss at them. 'See you in September,' she said. A throwaway line. Just words, uttered casually by a young woman in a hurry. And then she'd gone.*

It was supposed to be a short trip—a break in New Zealand before her best friend's wedding. But when Cassy waved goodbye to her parents, they never dreamed that it would be years before they'd see her again.

Having broken up with her boyfriend, Cassy accepts an invitation to stay in an idyllic farming collective. Overcome by the peace and beauty of the valley and swept up in the charisma of Justin, the community's leader, Cassy becomes convinced that she has to stay.

As Cassy becomes more and more entrenched in the group's rituals and beliefs, her frantic parents fight to bring her home—before Justin's prophesied Last Day can come to pass.

A powerful story of family, faith and finding yourself, *See You in September* is an unputdownable new novel from this hugely compelling author.

## About the author

Charity Norman was born in Uganda and brought up in successive draughty vicarages in Yorkshire and Birmingham. After several years' travel she became a barrister, specialising in crime and family law in the northeast of England. Also a mediator, she is passionate about the power of communication to slice through the knots.

In 2002, realising that her three children had barely met her, she took a break from the law and moved with her family to New Zealand. Her first novel, *Freeing Grace*, was published in 2010 and her second, *Second Chances*, in 2012 (published in the UK as *After the Fall*). *The Son-in-Law*, her third novel, was published in 2013. Her fourth novel, *The Secret Life of Luke Livingstone* (published in the UK as *The New Woman*) was published in 2015.