

Book Club Discussion Questions:  
for *Rachel's Contrition* by Michelle Buckman



At the opening of the story, Rachel hints at her shady past being the main reason for the breakup of her marriage and the loss of her son, and spends much of the story disclosing that past. Do you feel her past had any bearing on her marriage breaking up? (Would her marriage have broken up if she'd been raised in a happy, conventional home and protected from promiscuity and abuse?) Why or why not?

Rachel picks up the holy card of Saint Therese on page three, but the saint's teachings really don't come into play until much later. Why was it important for her to find the holy card when she did?

Lilly is both a victim and savior. How does being a victim arm her for saving Rachel from herself?

Lilly's birth mother, Brenda, chose to leave Lilly behind when she left. How did that affect your opinion of her, and do you think she was deserving of Lilly's forgiveness? What role did the death of her son play in bringing Lilly back into her life?

The first time Father Jay meets Rachel is in the church. How is what he says to Rachel really aimed at himself? How does helping Rachel heal also lead to his own healing?

Why do you think Father Jay was sitting in his car in the alley the last time Rachel sees him?

How important was faith to Rachel's healing? Would she have reached that faith and healing without the intervention/participation of Lilly and Father Jay?

How do you suppose Lilly and Steven were first drawn to the Basilica, and how important was that past to all that unfolded?

Do you think God puts us in the path of people we need to touch and vice versa? What happens if we don't follow God's urging? What if Father Jay had continued rushing out of the church the first time he saw Rachel sitting in front of the statue of Mary rather than stopping to speak to her?

Rachel's perception of her relationship with Sinclair is skewed from the beginning of the story onward. In hindsight, knowing what really happened to Caroline and how crazy Rachel went, in what ways was Sinclair the perfect mate? How deep was his love and commitment to Rachel? To Seth?

After reuniting with Sinclair, how does Rachel's treatment of her friend Amy at the restaurant show that she has grown spiritually and mentally from all that happened?

What is the significance of the wild rose growing on the grave at the end?