

## Discussion Questions for Paradise Road

1. Marilyn opens her memoir with a theory that everyone's childhood has a moment that shows who we truly are. Do you agree? Can you think of a moment like this in your own life, or your siblings' or children's? Do you think the moment Marilyn shares is an accurate depiction of who she becomes?
2. Paradise Road has a linear chronology, and Marilyn's story essentially follows a series of relationships that give shape and direction to her life. Is this how you'd tell your own story? By what other markers might you structure your own life journey as a narrative?
3. Marilyn introduces her best friend, Laura, as her "first angel". Why does she view her this way? Miss Russell, her school counsellor, is her "second angel". Who are other angels in Marilyn's life, perhaps some less obvious ones? Who might have been an *actual* angel?
4. Mother-daughter relationships are often fraught with conflict, and Marilyn's is no exception. How did reading about this relationship make you feel? Do you think Marilyn had other options besides running away? What might have changed this mother-daughter trajectory, which determines the course of her life?
5. Chapter 3 tells the story of Marilyn's father's attraction to another woman. Why does this register to Marilyn as abandonment? How do you think this secret episode affected her future relationships, as well as her relationship with God?

6. When Marilyn describes her running away, her arrests, and her stints in juvenile detention, did anything surprise you? Do you think the streets are more or less scary for teen runaways today? As a parent, what would you do if your child ran away?
7. Marilyn's time in the Maple Ridge Home for Girls turns out to be surprisingly positive. What made you smile or laugh over her depiction of those years? Did anything make you feel shocked, sad, or disappointed? How does Marilyn's return to visit, four years later, show how quickly—and irrevocably—a remembered place can change?
8. How would you describe Marilyn's relationship with Blair, which starts on shaky ground but lasts three and a half years? Have you ever stayed in a relationship because you didn't want to break your partner's heart?
9. Marilyn's relationship with Jack unfolds over time, and when they finally get together, they enjoy only a short golden period before cancer clouds the picture. What did you appreciate about this relationship? Why do you think Marilyn fell so deeply in love?
10. Before departing on her solo bike trip, Marilyn writes a list of her greatest fears. Do you think this helped or hindered her journey? Is 'listing your fears' before facing a challenge something you do? Why or why not?
11. When Marilyn returns from her initial solo trip, she faces a period of grief and loneliness as she readjusts to life in Edmonton. If you were in her situation, how do you think you would have coped? Do you think her serial relationships help or hinder her recovery?
12. As Marilyn describes the events that lead to her conversion, she intuits that God is behind the details, even engineering the weather to get her attention. Do you believe

God works this way? What circumstances and details in your life has God used to get *your* attention?

13. What are some of the 'breaking points' that led Marilyn to consider Christianity? Have you ever imagined your future self and been afraid of what you picture? How did Marilyn's New Age background factor into her conversion?
14. In her epilogue, Marilyn comments that her next memoir, THE BOX MUST BE EMPTY, will be a much harder story to tell. Why do you think she says this? What turns do you imagine her life taking after she marries Henry and goes into the fulltime ministry?