

## Reading Group Guide

These discussion questions are designed to enhance your group's conversation about *Easter Everywhere*, Darcey Steinke's stirring memoir of evolving faith.

### For discussion

1. Steinke describes her first attempt at writing a novel: "I was always disappointed with the sentences I wrote. They never conveyed the fullness of my initial idea" (120). How does Steinke's growth as a writer resemble her quest for faith?
2. Young Steinke and her parents visit a family of poor parishioners, and Steinke's mother gives away her white wool coat, "the only thing she still wore from her reign" as Miss Albany (6). What is the significance of this unexpected gift, in terms of the mother's mental state and marriage?
3. Steinke writes that as a child, "I understood that my dad was trying to his part to help stop what was happening in Vietnam" (46). What other causes does Steinke's father take on? What does his activism reveal about him?
4. Why does Steinke enter the Precision Fluency Shaping Program? What does she learn by facing the challenge of her stutter? How does this episode provide comic relief within the memoir?
5. Steinke's religious confirmation and her modeling career coincide. Does Steinke choose between the church altar and the "beauty altar" (95), or is she able to reconcile the worlds of religion and glamour? Why does her father's showmanship during the confirmation ceremony—"He jumped onto the altar like a rock star" (97)—bother Steinke?
6. How does the experience of reporting on David Koresh and the Branch Davidians in Waco affect Steinke? What are the similarities and differences between the Branch Davidians' faith and Steinke's own "spiritual longing" (147)?
7. What is the status of Steinke's marriage, faith, and happiness when she and her daughter live in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1999? Why might Steinke's marriage have ended soon after her return to Brooklyn?
8. Sorrow and doubt seem to be important components of Steinke's spirituality. Sister Leslie says, "Sorrow is a conduit. It is human misery, not pleasure, that contains the secret of divine wisdom" (185). What impact does this philosophy have on Steinke? How, too, does doubt "fuel [Steinke's] faith" (218)?
9. In Part Five of *Easter Everywhere*, the narration switches to the present tense (191). What is the effect of this change on the reader?
10. Steinke writes, "I see the sacred includes not just churches but hospitals, highways, costume jewelry, garbage dumps, libraries, the cruising area of public parks" (220). How does this notion of "the sacred" relate to the title *Easter Everywhere*?

### Suggested reading

Rick Moody and Darcey Steinke, *Joyful Noise: The New Testament Revisited*; Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*; Anne Lamott, *Grace (Eventually)*; Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*; Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*; Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*; Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*; Leslie Garis, *House of Happy Endings*.