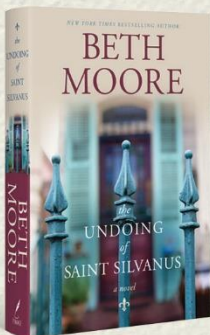




# *The Undoing of Saint Silvanus*

*Book Group Packet*



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# Meeting Preparation

*If you want to play music in the background, try . . .*

## *Zydeco Music*

Originating in Louisiana by French Creole speakers, this form of music is a combination of blues, rhythm and blues, and classic Creole folk music. This unique musical style is characterized by fast beats and a button or piano accordion, often accompanied by a washboard player.

## *The Undoing of Saint Silvanus Sneak Peek*

As one character remarks, “Folks into zydeco have their own special bond. The band starts playing, and if you don’t have a partner, you just look around and see who’s game and get out there and let it whirl.”

## *New Orleans Jazz*

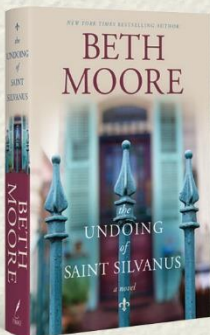
Though the term *jazz* did not become popular until later, this combination of ragtime, marching band, and rural blues music grew in popularity in New Orleans in the early 1900s. This music is known for its collective improvisation done by a varied group of musicians. Popular accompaniments would include such instruments as clarinets, trombones, guitars, banjos, and pianos.

## *Need some mouth-watering appetizers, entrees, or desserts to serve?*

Enjoy a sweet treat together. Or if you’re a little more adventurous, try one or more of these main dishes. Maybe assign recipes to different members of the group and try a buffet! And don’t forget the French press coffee with real cream!

All of the items below can be prepared using the recipes you’ll find at [BethMooreNovel.com/](http://BethMooreNovel.com/).

- Jillian’s Muffins
- Olivia’s Pralines
- Mrs. Bea Brock’s 5-Flavor Pound Cake
- Crawfish Pie
- Nanny’s Chicken and Dumplings
- Okra Gumbo



## *General tips for the host/hostess:*

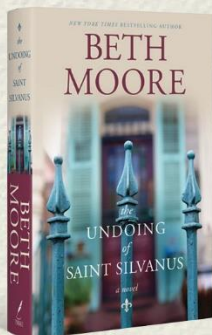
- Let your guests know ahead of time where they can park.
- Give your kids game ideas to keep them busy while guests are over.
- Pack up some sweet treats for your guests to enjoy on the way home.

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- Set up chairs in a circle around the room. Make sure you have enough for everyone. (If you have a big comfy couch like the Snapdragon, try to make it a part of the circle too!)
- Consider asking each member to drop off a favorite family photograph (preferably framed), prior to the meeting date. Decorate a table or counter with all of the photographs and establish the family legacy theme.



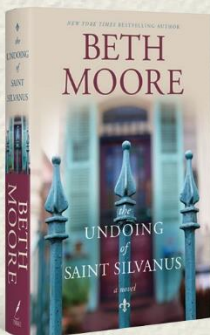
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# Trivia Questions & Icebreakers

1. One of the things Cal envies Frank for is that Frank actually has a life outside the police force. What sport is Frank studying up on so that he can coach at the YMCA? [soccer]
2. What is Jillian's favorite meal at Sigmund's? [black bean burger with a side of sweet potato fries]
3. What image is depicted in the stained glass at Saint Sans? [a wind-tossed wave, the tip of a boat, and Jesus robed and standing on the water, his hand extended to Peter]
4. To what does Mrs. Winsee credit the fact that all the trolley drivers know her name? [her community theatre performances . . . twenty-five years ago]
5. On her way to New Orleans the second time, Jillian has to spend the night in an airport. In what city is she stranded overnight? [Houston] (Bonus points if you have ever been stranded in an airport overnight!)
6. What names do the residents of Saint Sans give the two cardinal eggs? [Egg A and Egg B]
7. What song does Mrs. Winsee perform from memory during the impromptu party to celebrate the hatching of the eggs? ["How Lovely to Be a Woman" from *Bye, Bye, Birdie*]
8. What was the special gift Mrs. Winsee and her sister received for Christmas 1945? [matching pairs of ruby slippers]
9. What kind of music is the band playing at Bully's birthday party? [Zydeco] (Bonus points if you can name the song Cal and Jillian dance to! ["Bow-legged Woman"])
10. What book does Olivia read to Jillian at bedtime after she is discharged from the hospital? [*Emma* by Jane Austen]



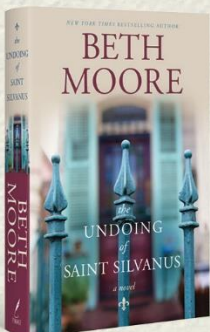
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# Character Discussion

1. What did you like and/or dislike about Jillian? What was your first impression of her? How did she grow or change through the course of the book?
2. What did you like and/or dislike about Olivia? Have you ever known anyone like her? Did you find her transformation at the end of the book believable?
3. What did you like and/or dislike about Adella? How important was her role in the telling of the story and in the relationship between Jillian and Olivia? How might the story have been different without Adella?
4. How did the police officers lend credibility to the story line? Were they believable?
5. Who was your favorite character and why?
6. What, if anything, would you have changed about a character?
7. What relationship in the story intrigued you the most? How so?
8. If you could choose one character from the book to have over for dinner, which would you choose? What would you like to talk about with him or her?
9. Which characters, if any, would you like to know more about? What would you like to see occur in their lives after the story's end?
10. If this book were ever made into a movie, which actors could you see in the leading roles?



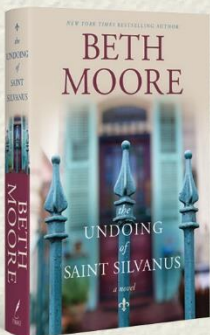
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## Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the story, Adella connives to get Jillian and Olivia together. Do you think she was right to do that? Have you ever been on either the managing or receiving end of a setup like this? What are some of the pros and cons in getting involved in someone else's relationships?
2. We don't see much of Jillian's friend Allie in the book, because their friendship was badly damaged by Jillian's choosing Vince over a commitment she'd made to Allie, as well as refusing to hear Allie's concerns about the relationship. Have you ever been on either the giving or receiving end of painful truth such as Allie tried to share with Jillian? What are some ways we can effectively "speak the truth in love" when we see someone we care about making a big mistake? (See Ephesians 4:15.) Do you think it's important that we do so, or is it better to keep quiet to preserve the friendship?
3. The first time Jillian visits Stella, Stella apparently drugs her. Yet Jillian never seems to suspect this or to follow up on it in any way. On the contrary, she continues to pursue a relationship with Stella. What is it about Jillian that causes her to ignore—or not even to register—warning signs that something is wrong? Can you think of anything Stella did to help this process along? Have you or a loved one ever been in Jillian's situation? What can we do to get out of such a place?
4. Stella uses tarot cards as part of her attempt to control and direct Jillian's thinking. How did that part of the story make you feel? What do you think a Christian's response should be to such things—are they harmless? A dangerous, slippery slope? Or truly evil?
5. How would you describe Stella's motivation in trying to terrorize Olivia and to hurt Jillian? What do you think she was after? What might have been a healthy way she could have approached the problem?
6. Early in the book Jillian fears she might be pregnant and recalls an earlier pregnancy which her mother "took care of" for her by arranging an abortion. Jillian's mother, though, chose to continue her pregnancy with Jillian when she was unmarried and had already broken up with Jillian's father. Why do you think Jaclyn chose to keep her baby? Why did she make a different decision for Jillian? How does Jillian's abortion impact the way she feels now?
  7. Jillian's mother believes a woman is only valuable to the extent she is desired by a man. She advises Jillian to do whatever it takes to hold on to Vince, even at the cost of a close friendship. Have you ever met (or have you ever been) a woman like this? What kinds of things might be at the root of such a belief? In what ways—for good or ill—has this helped to shape Jillian into the person she is when we first meet her?

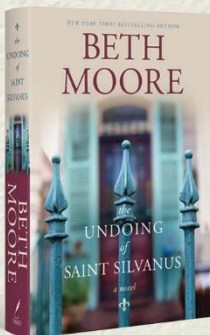


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8. Jillian is like many women whose mothers have taught them (or simply modelled for them) an inaccurate and unhealthy view of themselves. In what ways have you seen this happen in your circle of family or friends? Where have you seen mothers trying to break this cycle? What are some things you can do in your own relationships with children, siblings, or friends to break the cycle?
9. David says he doesn't feel like Jesus could love the kind of person he is. Have you ever felt this way? What kinds of things might make us feel Jesus can't love the kind of person we are? What examples can you think of from Scripture to counter this belief?
10. Did you like the way the historical sections interrupt and inform the present-day action? How do you think Reverend Brashear's experiences and choices affect the residents of Saint Sans?
11. What do you think the title, *The Undoing of Saint Silvanus*, refers to? At what point and in what way is the church "undone"? (Hint: There may be more than one answer.)
12. The present-day characters know very little about the church's history. Did that surprise you? Would you like to have seen more interweaving of the two storylines, or did you like the way this mimics real life, in which we often don't see or understand connections between things?



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## Other Discussion Areas

*Consider offering these questions to your guests in advance of the meeting so members can come prepared to share and discuss.*

### *Family Legacy Theme.*

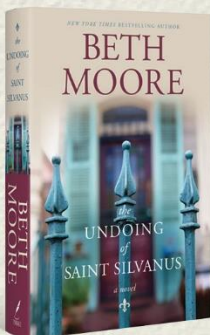
In what ways does the novel illustrate family legacies, both healthy and unhealthy? What family legacies have you experienced or observed in your circle of family and friends? What choices are you making to consciously affect the legacy you leave behind?

### *Photo Show and Tell.*

Do you have any photographs to share that capture precious family moments and memories? Do you have photographs that you keep hidden away because the memories they evoke are too painful? Can you share one photograph that captures a special relationship between you and a friend or family member?

### *Favorite Food and Recipes.*

Cooking, food, and eating together are important elements of the story, as they are for many families. Do you have any “heirloom” family recipes that you make for special occasions? What kind of memories do they evoke? Can you share the recipe (or better yet, samples!) of one of your family favorites?



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