Discussion Questions for *Ben Is Back* (2018)

103 minutes (1 hour, 43 minutes), R-rating for language and drug use

Summary: Julia Roberts plays a mother, Holly, whose 19-year old son, Ben, surprises her by returning home for Christmas. Ben is newly in recovery; his addiction has placed a tremendous strain on the family in the past. Ben's younger siblings are happy to see him, but Holly, fearing that he is not ready, is somewhat apprehensive. That evening, the family attends church. When they return, they find their home burglarized and the dog missing. Ben blames himself, believing someone from his past took the dog to get his attention. Ben and Holly visit a few of the people he suspects and learn who took the dog; Holly gets a large amount of cash out of an ATM. Ben then takes off with the car at a gas station, leaving his mother stranded. He drives to a pawn shop and hands over the money to pay an old debt. He is asked to do "one last favor," a drug deal. The deal is successful, and the dog is returned. Ben leaves with the dog, along with a baggie of heroin. Meanwhile, Holly attempts to track Ben. Eventually, she ends up at an abandoned barn where she finds her son on the floor, unresponsive. The movie ends with her administering Narcan to Ben.

1. **Ben's family had mixed reactions when he surprised them by coming home. In your opinion, what did they say/do that was helpful, and what was potentially harmful to Ben's recovery?**

2. **Ben's mother attended a 12-step meeting with him. Would you like a family member to accompany you to a meeting from time-to-time? Why or why not?**

3. **What were some of Ben's triggers and warning signs?**

4. **Ben stated that getting high provided him with what no one else can make him feel: "Safe. Loved. Alive. Whole." Can you relate? What are some of the reasons you got high?**

5. **When Ben's mother is at the pharmacy, the pharmacist makes a stigmatizing remark about "not encouraging irresponsible behavior." Describe a time you experienced stigma.**

6. **Do you believe Ben planned his relapse prior to coming home? Why or why not?**

7. **Do you believe Ben intended to die? Why or why not?**