

The Betrayal Discussion Questions

1. Sadie is so overcome by grief at the loss of her baby that she seems unable to experience remorse for her sin. She cannot see how repentance can afford her any peace or comfort; rather, she maintains in Chapter One that "Repenting could guarantee only one thing: a lonely and miserable life"(29). Do we ever feel as though surrendering our whole hearts to the Lord means giving up everything that is joyful to us in exchange for a life of spiritless obedience and sacrifice?
2. Throughout the book, Leah struggles with whether or not to confess Sadie's concealed sin to the elders of the church. Do the close bonds of friendship or family sometimes make it difficult to speak God's truth?
3. In 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, Paul addresses the purpose of sorrow in repentance, noting that sometimes emotional pain and regret spurs our hearts toward reconciliation with God. While Lizzie quotes verse ten of this passage, both she and Leah are reluctant to do or say anything that might cause Sadie more pain or alienate her further. What does the author show about the role of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture in specific circumstances by allowing Lizzie and Leah to wrestle with this emotional dilemma?
4. Throughout the novel, we are sympathetic to Sadie's suffering while holding her responsible for her rebellious and sometimes conniving spirit. How do Sadie's behavior and motives parallel the relationship between suffering and sin that we see in real life?
5. Abram clearly loves Leah with a fierce, protective love. However, in his desire to protect her, he usurps control in the most private areas of her life. What does Abram's fear about Leah's decision to marry Jonas expose about his ability to fully trust and rest in the Lord? What does Psalm 37:25-26 tell us about God's protection and provision for believing fathers and their children?
6. We sense a conflict brewing in Mary Ruth, who is gentle and committed her life to the Lord at a young age, but also feels the pull toward intellectual development. Is it sometimes difficult to discern how we are to submit our talents and ambitions to the Lord? Does submission sometimes mean "denying" our talents, or can God use all instances of excellence and motivation in humanity to His glory?
7. Leah and Jonas are victims of speculation, gossip, and dishonesty, which threaten to separate them permanently. How do the events surrounding Leah and Jonas's courtship relate to scriptural admonitions against idle speech and gossip? (See Proverbs 25:18 and 2 Thessalonians 3:11 for examples).

8. Sadie and the rest of her community fear shunning above all else. As a result, Sadie, Lizzie, Leah, and even Mary Ruth to some extent all engage in different kinds of secrecy to prevent exposing the shameful or different parts of themselves or their loved ones. In what ways do we hide parts of ourselves to avoid the scrutiny and judgment of our peers? Is God's forgiveness really enough for us, or do we also seek the approval of others?

9. The title of the novel is *The Betrayal*. Sadie clearly betrays Leah by attempting to transfer Jonas's romantic attachment from Leah to herself. Who else experiences betrayal? Particularly, how does Sadie see her circumstances as a form of God's betrayal? How does her view of God parallel the emotions of wounded believers?

10. What is the significance of the woods to the fabric of the story? Lizzie and Sadie lose their virtue in the darkness of the woods. Leah ultimately sustains a loss as well, as a result of the "light" not penetrating her innocent activity, leaving her behavior cloaked in confusion. What significance is the author drawing from the interplay between the woods and the plains, the dark and the light, the hidden and the known?

11. Lizzie's secret is finally revealed at the close of the novel. How does Lizzie's compromised past contribute to her nurturing, generous spirit? How is Lizzie's life an example of God's working all things for the good of those who love Him according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)?

12. Leah's future with Jonas is further compromised by her family's and the Masts' anger toward each other. As the author depicts in these family quarrels, unforgiveness can seem justified, and reconciliation appears to be out of reach under certain circumstances. How can our emotions distract us from God's instructions concerning our interpersonal relationships?