

The Centurion's Wife Discussion Questions

Suggestion for discussion leader: you may want to review these ahead of time and mark ones that likely will resonate best with your group in case there is not time for all of them.

What are the possible pitfalls of a novel set in biblical times? Are you immediately attracted to the genre? Why or why not? How did this novel fit with your previous experiences with biblical fiction? Compare to classics such as Lloyd Douglas's *The Robe* and Taylor Caldwell's *Dear and Glorious Physician* or more recent biblical novels such as ones by Marjorie Holmes and Tim LaHaye.

Leah and Alban have contrasting backgrounds, yet there are also similarities. What are the common features, and how do those intersecting points between the two turn up in the story?

Discuss Leah's experience when her fever suddenly left at the sound of someone calling her name. Do you know instances of an unexplainable voice or seemingly supernatural encounters? How should those be understood and interpreted?

Leah's sisters' had extremely unhappy marriage experiences, and Leah had developed a strong sense of marrying only for love. How was that concept unusual and probably unrealistic in the culture of the day? Talk about this in light of current romantic expectations?

The Bible gives little information about Pilate's wife, Procula. How do you think the novel portrays her? What was the source of her dreams and warnings to Pilate? What were her likely motivations for the assignment she gave to Leah?

Pilate and Herod were uncomfortable partners in their efforts to uncover the truth about Jesus. In what ways were their motivations in this quest parallel? Where were they distinct? What do you think Herod thought when Pilate had instructed the banner over Jesus on the cross to read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"? The Jewish religious leaders also complained about it. Why?

In our western culture, the idea of a betrothal that was as legally binding as a marriage ceremony and yet not consummated until some future time when the bridegroom had fulfilled his obligations is totally foreign. Discuss this tradition and what you learned about it from the story. What added to Leah's angst about this particular "arranged marriage" when she knew that was the very reason she had been sent to Pilate's household?

Are there any positives to arranged marriages? Talk about this tradition in relation to Jesus' parable of the bridegroom and the bridesmaids' having their lamps lit and extra oil ready.

How did the concept of Alban being the centurion whose servant was healed by Jesus expand the gospel account for you? Talk about the relationship between Alban and young Jacob. What did each receive from the other?

Discuss Leah's anguish about withholding knowledge of Alban's possible assassination. She could have kept quiet, he would be killed, and she would be rid of this legal commitment with no one the wiser. Does knowledge require action?

Readers are introduced through Leah's eyes to some of the women followers of Jesus. Did their descriptions, interactions and dialogue increase your understanding of these familiar characters? If so, how?

How do the spiritual journeys of Leah and Alban parallel their assigned tasks to discover the truth about Jesus? How was learning to love each other also part of that quest?

Was the truth the two discovered simply the fact that Jesus was not dead? Why did that discovery require something further from each of them?

The Resurrection is a familiar and beloved concept accepted and believed by Christians. Did this novel give you another understanding of the mind-boggling idea that someone could have risen from the dead?