

Reading Group Guide for
The Crimson Cord
by Jill Eileen Smith

1. Rahab's story is set in Jericho in 1406 BC. The first chapter shows Rahab's relationship to her husband Gamal. How have the problems Gamal caused put Rahab in a compromising position? How does her relationship to him set the stage for the rest of the story?
2. At the end of chapter 1, Rahab compromises her virtue. What do you think motivates her to do so? How does she feel afterward about what she has done?
3. In chapter 2, Gamal's debts are called into account, but he cannot pay them. Yet the prince chooses to forgive his debts. Why do you think he was granted such mercy?
4. Gamal's gratitude for his undeserved mercy is short-lived. Why do you think he pursues the course he takes? Can a person caught in an addiction ever be freed? If so, what steps should Gamal have taken to start life anew? Have you ever known someone so caught up in addiction that they simply cannot change?
5. When Rahab learns what Gamal has done to Tendaji, how does she react? Considering the consequences of her actions, should she have remained silent? Why or why not? What was the final outcome of Gamal's treatment of Tendaji?
6. Rahab finds herself sold into slavery to Dabir to help pay Gamal's debt. Does she deserve such treatment when the debt belonged to her husband? Have you ever been treated unfairly, taking the blame for another? How did you feel, and what was your reaction?
7. Rahab goes through the motions as Dabir's consort until the Feast of Keret, when things change and she takes on the role of a high-ranking prostitute, favorite of powerful men. How does the Feast of Keret resemble the way the Israelites later marched around the city? Such a feast did apparently exist and could have been known to the people of Rahab's day.
8. How does Rahab use her new role of prostitute to her advantage? When she discovers she is carrying a child, she is forced to have an abortion. Have you ever known someone who was forced into having an abortion? What kinds of emotions might accompany such loss of power over your life and over the life of your child?

9. Once Prince Nahid discovers how Dabir has treated Rahab, causing the loss of the child that could have been his, Rahab gains a little more freedom over her home and her servants. How might this new security and ability to choose her own servants protect her? What advantage does that give her when it comes to hiding the spies from Israel?
10. What causes Salmon's strong aversion to Rahab's profession? What fears might he have that make him feel so strongly? Have you ever despised someone you didn't know based solely on what they did or where they came from? Can we or should we separate our judgment of what we consider sin from the person caught in it? Why or why not?
11. Rahab's family does not live with her at the time the spies make their promise to save her family. How hard do you think it was for her to convince them to stay with her, without telling them the real reason? Have you ever tried to convince someone to do something you know is right, only to be met with resistance? How did that make you feel?
12. Before Israel could take Jericho, the men undergo circumcision and the people celebrate the Feast of Passover. Why do you think these things were important for them to do as a nation before setting out to conquer Canaan? What did circumcision signify? What was so important about the Passover?
13. God performs the mighty miracles of parting the Jordan River to allow Israel to cross over on dry land, and later crumbles the walls of Jericho to allow Israel to conquer that city. Why are these miracles significant? Have you ever seen God work in an extraordinary way on your behalf? If so, could you share that with the group?
14. The Bible tells us that God saved Rahab and her family, but it indicates that only Rahab remained living among the Israelites after Jericho's fall. If her family truly left her, how do you think that made her feel? How might things have been different if they had stayed? What motives might Rahab have had to join Israel and marry one of their men?
15. Jericho is a great victory for Israel, but the very next battle ends in defeat. Why is Achan's sin so significant? Compare his taking of things devoted to God to the story in Acts 5 where Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit about money they voluntarily devoted to God. How are the outcomes similar? How are they different?
16. After the defeat at Ai and the lessons learned from Achan, another problem arises with the Gibeonites—one that shows a failure on Joshua's part to inquire of the Lord before making a treaty with people he does not know. What does this tell us about the fallibility of leaders? As leaders, what can we learn to keep from making similar mistakes?

17. After spending so much time as a prostitute (and we don't know for sure how long that was), Rahab is finally free to live a different life. But she struggles with who she once was and cannot shake the shame she feels over all she has done to offend Israel's God. How does she come to accept His forgiveness? Have you ever found it difficult to accept God's forgiveness for something in your life? If so, why?
18. Salmon struggles over Rahab's past and his attraction to her. Why do you think it was important for him to see his own pride, his own sins, as equally wrong before he could accept and forgive Rahab's past? Has someone's past ever caused you to stay away from a relationship with that person? Have you ever been able to overlook and forgive someone who has wronged you? If so, could you share that with the group?
19. What changes in Salmon's thinking and in Rahab's heart to allow them to finally wed? What actions do they take to find freedom from the things that kept them from the love they both longed for?
20. Rahab and Salmon eventually have a son they name Boaz. Boaz was in the line of King David, who was in the line of Jesus Christ. Rahab was one of the five women listed in the genealogy of Christ. What does this tell us about God's grace? What can we learn of grace and forgiveness from Rahab's life?



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