

## Arena

### *Discussion group questions*

1. Callie strays off the road as soon as she enters the Arena. Why does this happen? Whose fault is it? Why?
2. In Chapter 3 (p. 44) Pierce tells Callie there are fourteen identical gates that supposedly lead to the Inner Realm. Why are there fourteen instead of one? What do you think the multiplicity of identical gates represents? Since the gates themselves are the same and there is only one Benefactor, what makes the gates different?
3. What methods do participants use to attempt to scale the cliffs and reach the gates? How do these compare with the way provided by the Benefactor? Why are the other attempts not effective? Are there parallels between the participants' struggles and the ways people attempt to reach God and salvation through their own means and methods?
4. When participants get off the road, why are they not immediately "punished"? Why would Elhanu allow the creation of towns and other places of refuge apart from his roads and Safehavens? How does this relate to the concept of freedom and free will?
5. Some people have settled down in the Arena to stay. Why do you think they would do that? Do you think most make a conscious choice, or does it just happen? How does this relate to people's approach to faith and their relationships with God? If you were to categorize yourself, where do you think you might fall?
6. Though Rowena goes through the gate and is changed like everyone else, shortly afterward she is upset and feeling betrayed again. Why? Sometimes salvation is presented as a way of solving all our problems. In your experience, does it usually work that way? Have you ever felt betrayed or "gypped" by God? Explain.
7. Compare and contrast Morgan, Garth, and Pierce. How are they alike? How are they different? What does each man want? What makes one a hero and the others not?
8. The answers to why the participants have been put into the Arena are not revealed until midway through the book. Was this frustrating for you? Why or why not? Why do you think the answers were not revealed sooner? How does this compare with how and when God provides answers to the questions we have about why we are here and what we are supposed to be doing with our lives?
9. In Chapter 17 (p. 215), during a conversation with Callie Pierce says, "And choosing is what the Arena is about, isn't it?" Do you agree with his observation about the Arena? Is the same true of our lives on Earth? How did the participants' choices affect their experience in the Arena? How do our choices affect our lives?

10. How much control do we really have over the course of our lives? Do you think lack of total control is a disturbing concept for most people to contemplate? Why or why not? What sorts of things do people do in an attempt to gain a sense of control?
11. When the group is waiting for Elhanu's go-ahead to leave Rimlight, they become very impatient. Are there times God deliberately makes us wait for things? Why might he do this? Why do you think it so hard to wait? What does waiting do for us?
12. In Chapter 19, once the group sets out across the Inner Realm from Rimlight, the majority want to return to the road? Why would they want to go back? Has God ever led you away from the route of security and what seems to be "common sense"? How can you know it's actually God who is leading you and not some idea of your own?
13. How did Callie conquer her acrophobia? What were the two options given in the story as things we can choose to think about? How does that translate to your spiritual life?
14. Does Pierce's struggle with fear and self-recrimination make him more sympathetic or less? Did it surprise you when he failed after the first mutant attack? Did you share Callie's disgust at that point? Why or why not? How about later on in the story? Did your feelings toward him change? When and why?
15. When the travelers are in the grotto, why can't they see the triple-circle device that will open the passage to the Safehaven? In the heat of a crisis or difficulty have you ever forgotten the things you know and believe? Do you think this is a common problem? What effect do emotions have upon our spiritual lives?
16. The Aggillon are using basically uninformed humans for their experiment. Can you think of any relationships or situations we commonly enter in real life where we are uninformed? Have you ever made a decision thinking one thing was going to happen and then nothing turned out as you expected? What were the circumstances? How did you feel?
17. The essence of Cephelus' argument in his appeal of his sentence is to question how Elhanu can claim to love all his creatures and then consign them to eternal torment. Doesn't that negate His love? How do free will, divine justice, and love intersect? And how is this demonstrated in what Elhanu did for participants in the Arena?
18. Why did Elhanu need to take on the form of Mr. C? In what ways did he affect the other characters, like Callie, Brody, and Pierce? Did his assumption of this form help you as a reader to like him and relate to him better? Why? What comparisons can you make between his relationship with the participants and our relationship with our Lord in this regard?
19. In Chapter 29 (p. 359) Callie says, "It's not faith that's the issue, it's the object of faith." What does she mean by this? How does this relate to the real world? Are there people who have a tremendous amount of faith in the wrong object? Even if you

became suspicious that you were trusting in the wrong object, how easy would it be to change? What are some of the things that would inhibit change?

20. In the epilogue, Callie reflects that the experiment's brochures had promised she would find herself. Did she? In what ways?