

## ***The Covenant Discussion Questions***

1. Discuss the inner conflicts within Leah as expressed in the prologue. Have you experienced similar inner struggles between trying to please a parent and longing to make your own choices in life?
2. Leah reasoned that Gideon was a good choice of a husband, but her heart had chosen Jonas. What are the most important considerations for Christians when choosing a marriage partner? (life experiences/culture held in common, good character, romantic love). Can one have a strong and satisfying marriage without romantic love?
3. Can we relate to Hannah's fear of speaking with Englishers or strangers? Who in our lives might be so different that they intimidate us? How can we become more comfortable with others outside of our own society and culture?
4. Note the discussion of temptation and how to avoid it on pp. 39-40. "The most important thing about temptation..." Do you agree?
5. How does Sadie rationalize that her feelings for Derek justify her rebellion against her parents' rules? Does love justify breaking the rules of our parents, society, or church? Can such rules be so restrictive that we are at times justified in breaking them?
6. Discuss Leah's dilemma: Her conscience tells her to reveal Sadie's secret, but Sadie reminds her of her own secret with Jonas. Can we judge another when we are committing a similar sin? Might Leah justify her own sin as being somewhat better because Jonas is still Amish, though of a different order?
7. The issue of sin is complicated when we feel compelled to juggle man-made rules on top of God's clear commands. What man-made rules do we personally have conflicts over that are not spelled out in Scripture?
8. Why do you think the Amish allow their young people a wild time--rumschpringe--before settling down? Is there some benefit in "sowing wild oats" before becoming a responsible adult, or is this a dangerous idea?
9. Discuss Sadie's inner conflict over taking baptismal classes in chapter four. Is she trying to straddle the fence spiritually by not admitting her sins, yet outwardly acting godly? How do we do this in our own lives?

10. Do you think Leah is wrong to keep her sister's secret? Under what circumstances might it be best to reveal a person's secrets to keep them from self-destructive behavior?
11. Discuss some of the different secrets the various characters of this book are keeping (Leah, Sadie, Hannah, Mary Ruth, Mamma, Dat, Lizzie). What does keeping secrets do to our relationships? Are some secrets necessary to keep?
12. Leah has great concern for others' feelings, which makes it difficult for her to make her own choices. Do you find that your concern for other people sometimes makes it difficult to make choices for your own life? Discuss.
13. In what ways did Leah change while she was laid up with a hurt ankle? Is it sometimes a good thing to be forced to rest and think about our lives? Have you ever experienced a period of "forced rest"? Did anything positive come out of it?
14. Read Romans 12:2. Discuss what this verse meant to Dat as he read it to Sadie in chapter 10. What does it mean to you?
15. Sadie consciously makes a false covenant. Why? Have you ever knowingly vowed to do something you knew you did not mean? Discuss if you feel comfortable doing so.
16. Compare Mamma's personal relationship with God with that of others in the story. Why do you think other characters were not very comfortable speaking of God in this way?
17. Ida cries over her letter to Becky as she contemplates the unexpected changes a new baby will bring to her life. Discuss her mixed feelings. Can you identify with her in your own life when you've realized your own life plans will have to change drastically?
18. Sadie decides to copy Mamma to keep her baby healthy. Despite her predicament, Sadie is starting to think about someone other than herself. How can difficult life circumstances--even those caused by our own failures--help us turn our attention to the needs of others?
19. Discuss Leah's first date with Jonas as described in chapter 19. Compare our modern dating practices with those of the Amish. Are there things we could learn from the Amish in finding suitable marriage partners?
20. In chapter 23, by writing in her journal Hannah is trying to develop creativity and individuality, which is strongly opposed by the bishop. Why would the Amish oppose such things? What individual freedoms do we ourselves give up in order

to maintain our own communities and traditions?

21. Abram is shocked at Jonas's strong reluctance to leave Leah behind. Discuss Abram's inner conflict. Have you had a grown child who fell in love with someone who wouldn't be your choice for them? Should parents try to interfere in their children's choices of marriage partners?

22. Leah has to break the horseback-riding rule in order to save Sadie's life. Do we sometimes have to break man-made rules in order to accomplish a greater good? Are there any biblical examples of this?

23. If you had been in Henry's shoes, what would you have done? Did he have any right to not return the baby to Sadie? Discuss how Sadie's lie wound up involving so many others in a lie as well.

24. Our society tends to view sexual sin lightly, but what kinds of complications can it lead to? Give general examples.