

Band of Sisters

Cathy Gohlke

1. Why is Maureen so resistant to Joshua Keeton's help at the beginning of the story? At what point does she start to realize that maybe his intentions aren't malicious after all? What still keeps her from accepting his help? Have you ever wrongfully doubted someone's intentions?

2. Olivia had misgivings about Drake from the beginning, even though she had no proof of her suspicions. Keeping in mind the social restraints of her day, do you think she was wrong not to confront Dorothy about him earlier? Have you ever been in a similar situation? Without giving too much detail, how did you handle it?

3. In his book *The Three Musketeers*, Alexandre Dumas made famous the line "All for one, one for all." Douglas Wakefield kept the literary trio (busts of the three musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis) in his study. Do you see a relationship between the philosophy of these characters and the way in which Douglas Wakefield lived his life? How did Olivia and Dorothy understand and embrace their father's philosophy?

4. Much of the distance between Maureen and Katie Rose is initially due to assumptions they've made about each other. What other conflicts and misunderstanding arise as the story progresses to drive them further apart? As the elder sister, should Maureen have handled these situations differently? Do you think it would have made a difference?

5. In the midst of her conflict with Katie Rose, Maureen thinks, "You've made a god of your fear and jealousy, Sister. For what is a god but what we go to again and again?" (p. 276). Do you agree that Katie Rose has made a god of her negative feelings? Have you ever found yourself returning again and again to a similar "god"—whether a person, achievement, emotion, etc.?

6. When Olivia expresses doubts about using her love of writing, Curtis asks her, "Why would God gift you with a love of something—and an ability, I have no doubt—unless He intended for you to use it?" (p. 115). Do you agree with his perspective? Have you seen God bring connections between your abilities and His purposes for your life? Are there passions you possess that haven't yet found an outlet?

7. Do you think most of the women in the Ladies' Circle grasped Olivia's early challenge to ask, "What would Jesus do?" in every situation? If not, what initiated the change, and what factors influenced their decisions about what to do? What do you think about accepting the same challenge? How would it change your life?

8. Many characters in *Band of Sisters* struggle with issues of social justice and



how to personally address them. Do you? How do you think the Lord looks at issues of social justice, and why? Are there Scriptures, Bible stories or principles, or other factors that help you draw your conclusion?



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9. It has been reported that the number of humans trafficked in its many forms today is greater by far than the number trafficked at the height of the transatlantic slave trade. Does that surprise you? Discuss the various forms of modern-day slavery and human trafficking of which you are aware.

10. The characters in *Band of Sisters* operated within the legal and (sometimes) social restrictions of their time and within the opportunities they perceived as theirs. In what ways did they use their influence and opportunities to create change? (Consider the women in the circle, the immigrants, the women working at Darcy's, Curtis, Joshua.) What opportunities do we have that the characters didn't? In what ways can we influence change on a local, national, or global level to end slavery?

11. Among some of the women in the circle there was an attitude that the poor bring their poverty, abuse, and exploitation on themselves and that they should be grateful for whatever they receive from benefactors. The women also expressed fears or reservations about bringing the poor into their lives and homes. Have you ever shared feelings like these? If so, why? After reading and discussing *Band of Sisters*, have your views changed?

12. How did Jesus respond to women who were caught in forms of bondage or were hurting or broken? Consider the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5); the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4); the woman accused of wasting valuable spikenard to anoint Jesus rather than selling it to give to the poor (Matthew 26); Martha and Mary at the death of Lazarus (John 11); Mary Magdalene, from whom seven devils were cast (Mark 16, John 20). Can you think of other examples that display God's heart toward women?

13. Once men, women, or children are freed from slavery, they often need help to heal and adjust to society. What organizations do you know of in your community to help support these individuals? What needs continue? How can you personally contribute?

14. Do you believe the church has a responsibility in working to end modern-day slavery? Why or why not?

15. How did the men in *Band of Sisters* reflect the worth of the women around them—both positively and negatively? What are some examples you've witnessed of the ways men value or demean women? How can we (men and women) help to encourage the boys in our lives and communities toward healthy perspectives on women?





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