



Dear Reader,

When Kevin was writing *The Letters*, he had many questions that helped formulate the storyline. More questions popped up as he wrote the book, causing him to delve into more research.

Now, he has made these questions available to his readers. Book clubs and reader groups can use them to spark discussion. Friends could enjoy a healthy talk over dinner. Even one person using them in a quiet time, can benefit from tackling these questions, based on Rachel Hamar's journey.

He hopes you enjoy discussing these as much as he did wrestling with them in the production of this novel.

Book Club Discussion Questions for *The Letters*

- Were you ever in love in high school? How did that make you feel? Did that prove to be an issue, especially with your parents?
- Did your parents try to interfere with that relationship? If so, how did you respond?
- Imagine you are in love at the age of fifteen, like Rachel. Your boyfriend, like Billy, is eighteen. What ramifications would that have on your relationship? Your family? Your school work? Your friendships with other girls?
- If your name was the equivalent to Hatfield, and your boyfriend's name was the equivalent to McCoy, would that cause any stress? Explain your answer.
- Do you have any family members like Abigail Baldwin and Henry Hamar? How has their improprieties affected the lives of family members living today?
- What if your father got into an argument with your boyfriend, like Elmore Hamar did with Billy Baldwin, and in the heat of the verbal altercation, your father struck your

boyfriend, causing his eventual death? How would you react? How would that affect your relationship with your father? Your mother? With others in general?

- What emotions do women feel when they go through the process of having an abortion? How would those feelings manifest themselves? What factors would cause these feelings to differ, from one woman to the next?
- How long do you think it takes for a woman to come to terms with such a decision (having an abortion)?
- How do you think holidays, like Mother's Day and Christmas, affect women who have endured having an abortion?
- If your friend, like Joanie Harrington, encouraged you to have an abortion, how would that decision affect your future relationship?
- Of course, we know now who wrote the letters to Rachel (SPOILER ALERT: that's if you have read the book). Describe the early letters. What do you picture in your mind's eye? What was Mary portraying with her drawings?
- In the later letters written in dear diary form, Mary was describing heaven. If you had to describe heaven to someone, how would you do it? What scripture references would influence you the most in your portrayal of what heaven is like?
- Have you ever encountered a person like Dorothy Hamar who says she (or he) talks to Jesus? And if she continued by saying she also talked to Joseph and Mary, how would you respond to that person? Would your actions toward that individual change? If so, why? Have you ever had a similar experience in your own life? How did you respond then? After reading this book, would your response change if it were to happen today?
- Have you ever met a person who talks to Jesus—and possibly other individuals, like Dorothy Hamar does—and thought to yourself, “That person belongs in an institution”? If so, why? Explain your answer.
- Have you ever wondered how many people in psychiatric institutions are there because they have been wrongly diagnosed, like Dorothy?
- When Dorothy was discussing “her culture” with Dr. Hausberger and Detective Bowen, what were your thoughts as that conversation unfolded? Does culture play a part in who we are? If so, how much of a part should it play? How much should culture influence a believer's walk with Christ, and vice-versa?
- What was your initial impression of Rachel's encounter with Mary? Did it seem farfetched? If so, why? If not, why?
- What is your belief about passages like the one in Hebrews that states we entertain angels “unawares”?
- Salvador Jesus Rey, the man in the wife-beater t-shirt, a.k.a. Malachi, stated earlier in the book that he and his boys had to look out for widows and orphans. Why did he say that?
- Did your perspective of Malachi change once it was revealed who he really was? Why? What did you think of him prior to the big reveal?
- What does Salvador Jesus Rey's name mean in Spanish?

- Joanie Harrington’s character was designed to be somewhat of an allegorical character. What personage do you think she best fits? Explain your answer.
- In Dorothy’s case, who was really “nuts”? Explain why you think what you think.
- Do you believe there is a spiritual world around us, just as real as the physical world we see, hear, taste, touch, and feel? What encounters with this spiritual world have you had personally? Please describe your experience (Oh, and by the way, does anybody in your group now believe you are “nuts”?).
- Do you believe that “with God, *all things* are possible” (Matthew 19:26)? Or do you find yourself limiting that list a little? If so, why? Doesn’t “all” mean *all*?
- Do you believe in angels? Do you believe angels walk among us? Have you ever encountered an angel? Explain your answers.
- Do you believe an aborted child is immediately ushered into the presence of God? If no, where do they go? If yes, how do you imagine that process works? Explain your answer.
- Reread Isaiah 65:17-25. How does Isaiah 65:17-25 relate to Revelation 21:1-8? What relevance do these two passages of scripture have with the story of Rachel Hamar? To our lives today?
- Rachel said in the beginning of the book that this was going to be “*an account that will baffle the imagination of many. A story no one will want to believe. It will be dubbed a legend by some. A fairy tale by others. A lie by most. However, what you are about to read is a story of passion...And a story of deceit. A story of rejection...And a story of redemption.*” What did she mean? Does her story relate to you at all? Or a family member? Or a friend? If so, how?