

# Rachel's Prayer: A Novel

by Leisha Kelly

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## About the Book

Nothing has been the same for Samuel and Julia Wortham since the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. All around them young men are enlisting for the service, leaving the safety of the rural community that has sheltered the Wortham family since the Great Depression.

Now their own beloved son Robert has gone to fight for his country, along with three of the Hammond boys. Julia's heart aches for the boys while Robert's girlfriend, Rachel Gray, offers a prayer that changes the lives of all who hear it. Those left behind struggle to find their place and God's plan amidst the chaos of war.

As the letters from Robert and the Hammond boys slow to a stop, can those at home find God's peace?

## Discussion Guide

1. Throughout the depression and war-torn years, the Worthams and Hammonds have become as close a two neighbor families can be. Describe the type of community they share. What does this say about their relationship? How and why is this community different from the relationship you have with your neighbors today?
2. As the Hammond and Wortham families hustled to prepare for the good-bye party, there was an unusual stillness in the air. Why was George Hammond so quiet? What was Julia thinking about? Was Franky having the same thoughts? Why or why not?
3. At the beginning of **Rachel's Prayer**, Julia observed something about Rorey and Sarah's relationship. What? How has their friendship changed since you first met them? How does it change throughout **Rachel's Prayer**?
4. What is Julia's attitude toward George Hammond? Why does she feel this way? Have you ever felt this way about

someone? How did you deal with it?

5. Mr. Hammond seems quite upset about his sons going off to war. Is it because he is worried about their safety or is there another reason? His mood becomes more and more intolerable as the story continues. Why?

6. How did the other characters deal with their loved ones leaving them for war? Julia and Samuel? What about the kids?

7. How does Franky feel about the war? How did he feel about watching his brothers and friends head off to fight when he could not? How does Franky deal with his feelings?

8. How does Sarah feel about Rorey's attachment to Lester Turrey? How does she show her feelings to Rorey? Does Rorey listen?

9. How does Franky's disability play into the story? How does his disability affect his relationship with his father and the other children?

10. George Hammond seems to have resumed his old drinking problem. How is it evidenced throughout the story? What made him fall back into his old habits? How does his addiction affect his family?

11. On page 87, Julia voices a concern about an uneasiness that had begun to settle over her. "?? dread closed over me like a cloud. And I feared we'd never go back to the way we were." What do you think caused these feelings? How did Julia overcome them?

12. Describe the encounter Franky and his father had at the schoolhouse. How did this change their relationship? How did their relationship continue to change throughout the rest of the story? Was there a turning point in their relationship? If so, when?

13. In the middle of the story, Sarah and Franky become closer. What brings them together? When did they realize it and how did they react to the change?

14. When things started to get tough, George Hammond started to talk about leaving. What do you think he meant? Did he ever act on his sayings? Have you ever felt like giving up? How did you overcome?

15. "Everythin" that happens shows us something else about the love and good of God, if we know how to see it? (page 223). Do you think the Worthams and Hammonds could see God's love and good even as the bleak reports and news of injuries started to come in? How so?

16. The prayer that Rachel offered for Robert became a prayer that bound the entire family. How did sharing this prayer help the families stay united throughout the hardships of the war?

17. The Worthams and Hammonds have overcome many trials in the past, but are faced with more in **Rachel's Prayer**. How did they come through these new hardships? What did you learn about facing challenges and hardships in your own life?

18. Do you think God uses bad times to make us think more about him? Can you share a personal experience when this

might have been true?

19. The book is written in three perspectives: Julia's, Sarah's, and Franky's. Why do you think the author chose to write the story from three different points of view? Which character do you relate to most, and why? Do you think these multiple perspectives interrupt or add to the story?

20. Among other key themes, the novel says a lot about living faith, appreciating community, enduring change, and finding peace. How are these elements portrayed throughout the book? How do these themes play together? What other themes did you find in the book and how did they affect your reading experience?

## **Author Bio**

Leisha Kelly was the author of several bestselling historical fiction books, including EMMA'S GIFT, JULIA'S HOPE and KATIE'S DREAM. She served many years on her local library board, bringing good reads and educational opportunities to her community. Once a waitress, cafe manager, tutor and EMT, Leisha became a novelist and speaker who remained active in the ministries of her church.

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