

# Book Discussion Guide

- What did you think of Livia's goals during the poetry party? Would you have attended? Would you have agreed to plot with Salvia? Why or why not?
- Should Livia have gone with Calida to Gracchus's house? Why or why not? Discuss the pros and cons of her decision.
- Salvia did a lot of things behind her husband's back. Is she justified in these actions? What alternatives might she have had?
- How do you feel about the Roman law that children belonged to the father? Does it seem fair? Does Salvia's decision to use a contraceptive seem justified considering this reality?
- Incorrect assumptions lead to tension between Avitus and Livia (again). Why do relationships so often fall prey to misunderstandings? What can we do to reduce misunderstandings and the resulting hurt feelings in our relationships?
- Avitus has become curious about Livia's faith. What do you think will convince him to become a believer? How might the end of this novel aid him on his journey?
- Discuss Brother Titus's journey to faith in Jesus. What aspects of his story resonated with you? What insights does his story give you regarding the challenges Romans faced when considering Christianity?
- Why do you think Nissa's attitude improved so much when she was given the chance to cook? Might Brisa's attitude improve now that she's no longer forced to cook, (something she has little aptitude for)?
- Brother Titus refers to Livia's ability to investigate mysteries as a gift. This surprises her. We can be blind to our gifts, because they don't seem "spiritual" enough, or because we don't realize that what seems easy to us is difficult for others. Discuss the importance of having your gifts recognized and affirmed.
- Were you disappointed when Livia and Avitus discovered Gracchus might be the victim rather than the killer? Why or why not?
- Like many in our society today, ancient Romans such as Avitus viewed mercy as weakness. Discuss Avitus's struggles between yearning for vengeance and honoring his ideal of justice. In the end, what factors convinced him to extend mercy rather than take vengeance? Would you have done the same, or not?
- After an encounter with Dioges, Roxana ponders if it is humanly possible to love your enemies or extend mercy to those who don't deserve it. Discuss this.