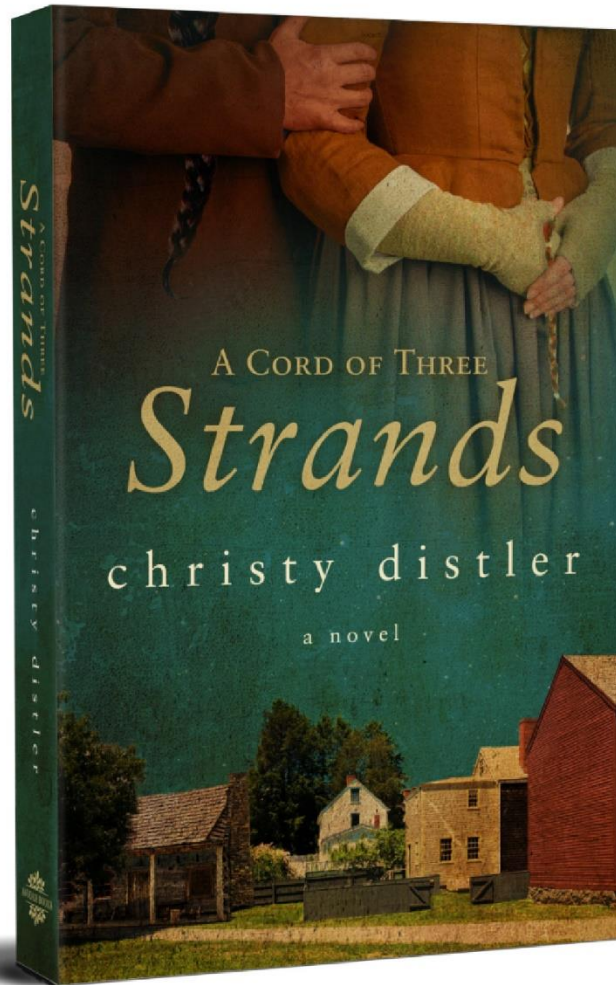
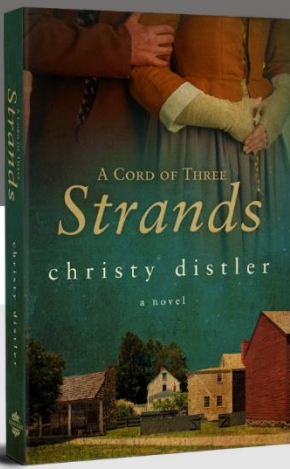


A CORD OF THREE  
*Strands*



BOOK CLUB KIT

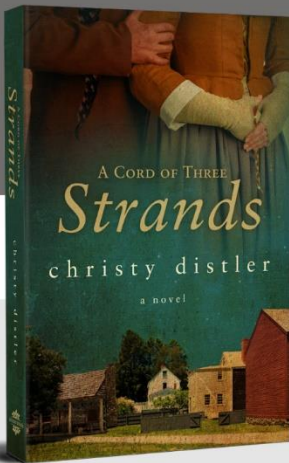


# A Cord of Three Strands

## BOOK CLUB KIT

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 By the end of chapter one, Isaac Lukens has endured much heartache—physically and emotionally. He struggles with regret, particularly about the way he left Horsham, yet when the difficulties of his life overwhelm him, it's his family and close-knit community he longs for. Have you ever been in a situation like this, as either the one giving or receiving love and grace? How has this affected how you interact with others who've hurt you?
- 2 Elisabeth Alden resents her father's insistence that she keep a secret from their community. Speaking the truth is a stalwart tenet of the Society of Friends, and she fears that her keeping silent may put others in danger. Then her family takes in two runaway slaves and hides them from the men who are pursuing them. Elisabeth's father reminds her that there is a season for everything, including a time to speak truth and a time to conceal it. Do you believe this is true? Why? What would you have done in her situation? What would you have done in her father's position?
- 3 Before Jonathan Alden dies, Isaac gives him his word that he will care for Elisabeth and the children. Do you think he does this out of guilt, duty, or love (or perhaps a combination of these)? Did you expect that he would keep his word? Why or why not?
- 4 Elisabeth and Isaac's friendship is strained after Isaac first returns to Horsham. When do you think her resentment of him begins to wane, and what events lead to the strengthening of their relationship?
- 5 After Isaac goes to Lydia Stanton hoping for information on his parents, he asks Elisabeth, "How is it we can miss people so terribly even when we have no memory of them?" She responds, "Our minds may forget but our hearts do not?" Have you ever experienced what Isaac describes here—missing someone you've never met (or you've met but can't remember)? What do you think causes this type of feeling?
- 6 Elisabeth and Hiram Biddle have a complicated relationship. She cares for him and he for her, and it was common for marriages to be built on necessity and friendship during this time period. What do you think you would have done in her situation? Married for the sake of necessity and hoped for the best, or refused a marriage that would be "weakened by disunity"? Why?
- 7 Elisabeth talks about feeling "a stop in her heart." This is a Quaker term that describes felt but not easily understood scruples about an activity or action, although this feeling certainly isn't limited to those of the Quaker faith. Describe a time when you felt a stop in your heart. Did you pay heed to it or ignore it? Looking back, would you do that again?
- 8 Isaac tells Elisabeth that the Lenape who had allied with the French call him Walks In Two Worlds, and that he originally despised the name but now realizes its truth. Have you ever felt like you walked in two different worlds, a part of each but not fully belonging in either? And if so, have you found a place where—or, as in Isaac's case, a person with whom—you belong despite it all?
- 9 At the end of the story, Isaac has found family, but not in the way he'd originally hoped for. In your life, with whom have you found family—either biological or otherwise—in a way you never expected?
- 10 Who is (are) your favorite character(s) in the story? Why? Which character do you relate to the most? Why?
- 11 What was your favorite scene in the book? Which was the least favorite?
- 12 What is your greatest takeaway from reading this story?



# A Cord of Three Strands

## BOOK CLUB KIT

### AUTHOR Q&A

**Q** What was your inspiration for writing *A Cord of Three Strands*?

**A** My inspiration actually came from a dream. I know, cliché, right? But it's true. Years ago I was working on the genealogy of my maternal grandmother's family and came across a name—Seneca Lukens—that made me question the family's connection to the Seneca tribe. That night Isaac Lukens—a man born to a French trader (some of my ancestors were French traders) and a Lenape woman—showed up in a dream. From there I started writing his story, and it ended up intertwining with historical happenings and people.

**Q** What sort of research did you do for *A Cord of Three Strands*?

**A** *A Cord of Three Strands* required so much research. I had some general knowledge already since I love historical fiction and I attended Horsham Friends Meeting (the Quaker meeting in the book) for a couple of years when I was a young adult. That said, a lot of research was still necessary, especially since all the places in the story, as well as several people and the Friendly Association (the group of Philadelphia Quakers who attempted to act as a liaison between Pennsylvania and its Indian tribes) aren't fictional. So I read mounds of books and visited a plethora of websites. I also scoured the 1756 editions of the Pennsylvania Gazette and the recorded minutes of local Friends Meetings during the time period, which provided great insight into life in the 1750s. Some of the subjects I deep-dived into were eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, the Lenape people, the Pennsylvania government's relationship and treatment of its Indian tribes, everyday life in colonial times, and Quaker life during the time period. Fortunately, I love the research aspect of writing.

**Q** Did you unearth anything that was totally unexpected that you knew you had to include?

**A** As far as unearthing something unexpected, yes—two things, actually. The first was the Friendly Association. I didn't know about that until I started researching, and when I learned the group formed at exactly the time the book was set, I knew I had to include it. The other thing I learned didn't end up in the book, but it gave me some real insight into what life was like in the eighteenth century. About a year after *A Cord of Three Strands*'s prologue takes place, Gwynedd Friends Meeting (the nearest meeting to Horsham) was hit by an epidemic, probably diphtheria, that took the lives of about sixty of the children—almost that entire generation—in two months' time. That to me is just inconceivable. Several of the children who died were cousins to my ancestors, and I'd love to find a way to somehow write a tribute to those children and their families. But goodness, what an emotionally intense undertaking that would be.

**Q** What do you hope readers will discover by reading *A Cord of Three Strands*?

**A** I think several things can be gained by reading this story. Being that it's fiction based on fact, there are the historical aspects, such as the effects of the French and Indian War in Pennsylvania, including the plight of the Lenape people, the difficulties of living on the frontier, and the Society of Friends' attempts to forge peace between Pennsylvania and its Indian tribes. The story also provides insight into the beginnings of organized abolition and what would become the Underground Railroad after the turn of the nineteenth century. And of course there are the concepts of faith and grace. Isaac and Elisabeth are flawed humans like all of us. They've made decisions they regret and endured great difficulties, and yet their faith has allowed them to see that God truly does bring good from our most painful circumstances if we trust him. I've seen this promise fulfilled over and over in my life, and I can't help but share it.