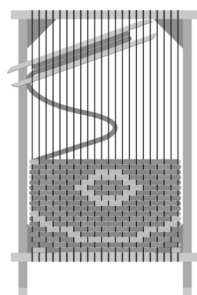


*Moments
of Hope in
the Bible*



A COMPANION BIBLE STUDY

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DAY 1: CHAPTERS 1-4

Suggested scripture readings: Philippians 1, Psalm 22, Psalm 27, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Hope that Comforts

Rut, a supporting character in *Jerusalem's Daughter*, becomes the main character in *Daughter of the Most High*. However, the years that have passed between stories have changed Rut. When readers meet Rut again, she is in the midst of deep grief, not only for the loss of her loved ones, but the loss of the life she imagined she would lead.

Readers can remember that in the depths of our own grief—for job losses, lost friends or family members, lost homes, lost dreams—we have a hope that comforts us. We never have to feel truly alone or abandoned, because God is with us always.

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Philippi, he wrote to encourage the believers there as well as to thank them for their support of his ministry. Paul also wrote this letter while he was imprisoned; yes, *imprisoned*. He writes in Philippians 1:12-13, “Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ” (CSB). He could have felt hopeless in this situation, but he kept his mind fixed on Jesus. It was that hope that encouraged Paul, and that likely comforted the believers in Philippi.

Paul later wrote in Philippians 1:20, “My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (CSB). When we are facing trials, we too should hope *eagerly* for the glory of God to be revealed. Each struggle we endure in this life is an opportunity for God’s character to further be revealed to us and to others. Lean into that hope when you face sorrows or losses, turn your eyes and your mind upon God, and let His promises be your comfort.

Life doesn’t always go the way we planned. We might not get the job promotion we applied for. We might not meet our spouse, get married, and have children on the timetable that we would deem best. The acceptance letter to your dream college or program may never arrive. Many things can happen that are not “according to our plan.” But remember, God’s plan is so much better than our own.

If you are in a season of struggling, make Psalm 27:4-6 your prayer: “I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the Lord and seeking him in his temple. For he will conceal me in his shelter in the day of adversity; he will hide me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock. Then my head will be high above my enemies around me; I will offer sacrifices in his tent with shouts of joy. I will sing and make music to the Lord” (CSB).

Seek God first always, and He will be your comfort. He hears you, He listens, and He responds.




Shem drew near to her once more, as though he could hear her melancholy thoughts. Tenderly, he whispered,
“Everything in God’s timing, my beloved.”

“That is what you always say,” she sighed. She’d heard the phrase so many times that it had lost its meaning for her. The proverbs Shem prayed over her each morning, though they warmed her heart, did little to encourage Rut.

“I always say it because it is always true. God is faithful yesterday, tomorrow, and today. We can trust His plan. After all, He brought us together, didn’t He?”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON RUT’S STORY AND THE BIBLE

Has there ever been something in your life beyond your control that you wanted to change? How did you deal with that circumstance? Where did you turn for hope?



Read Psalm 27. Notice the words that David uses to describe God (words like “stronghold” or “light”). What words would you use to describe God’s presence in your life?

It is important that we as Christians maintain a close relationship with God, especially during hard times, because He is our strength. Use this space to write a prayer and talk to God. Take the time to have an intentional moment with your Creator.

DAY 2: CHAPTERS 5-8

Suggested scripture readings: Philippians 2, Psalm 56, Psalm 65, Romans 12:9-21

Hope that Strengthens

In Chapters 5-8, both Hektor and Rut face some difficult situations, from saying hard goodbyes to surviving storm-tossed nights at sea. Hektor finds strength from the Psalms, and tries to help Rut by encouraging her to do the same.

When we are facing tasks or events that seem impossible or insurmountable, we can have renewed strength through God. Psalm 56:5-7 reads, “You answer us in righteousness, with awe-inspiring works, God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the distant seas. You establish the mountains by your power; you are robed with strength. You silence the roar of the seas, the roar of their waves, and the tumult of the nations.” Remember: God is the Creator of all the earth, all-powerful and all-knowing. Nothing is impossible for Him, and He calls us His **children**. No matter what kinds of seas we need to cross, we can rely on God for the strength to do so.

Though Hektor does not yet know the Good News of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, he models to Rut the humble behavior Paul describes in Philippians 2. Paul writes, “If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love,

united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:1-4 CSB). Hektor does this by rescuing Rut at sea and later helping her adapt to life in Phoenicia by giving her the gift of the loom.

We can also model that hope to others through our behavior, including how we act, how we talk, and how we approach problems. In doing so, we can adopt the same attitudes of Jesus and be a light to others in dark times, reminding them where they can draw strength from too.



“Lord,” Hektor prayed silently as he adjusted his position after another sharp movement of the ship, “I’m afraid I won’t be getting any sleep tonight, so you might be hearing a lot from me. I hope you don’t mind.”


He stopped briefly to laugh at his own quip, then settled back into his prayers. *“Lord, I thank You for another day to live on this earth and see the beauty of Your creation. From the sandy shores of Tyre, to the cedar trees cloaking the land beyond Sidon with their shade, to the vast expanse of clear blue water covering the rest of the earth... Even the thunder tells of Your power. I thank You also for this life You’ve given me, and that Lydia gave me a chance when she had no good reason to do so, other than that she saw how badly I needed help.”*



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON RUT'S STORY AND THE BIBLE

Think of a time when you had to do something very hard. How did you approach it? Was prayer or scripture an important part of that process? If not, how might focusing on God have impacted that experience?

Hektor encourages Rut through words of affirmation, as well as meaningful gifts. How can you be a light to others in everyday situations?



Reflect on Romans 12:12. How does this verse give us a model for the Christian life? How can we apply it during difficult times in our own lives? How can we model this behavior to others?

David writes in Psalm 65:5, “You answer us in righteousness, with awe-inspiring works, God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the distant seas” (CSB). A great way to find hope for the future is by looking into the past. Use this space to write down a list of “awe-inspiring works” or ways that God has answered your prayers. Return to it whenever you need your hope to be strengthened.

DAY 3: CHAPTERS 9-14

Suggested scripture readings: Acts 16:1-15, Philippians 3

Hope that Heals

When we are sick, we take medicine that helps alleviate our symptoms. It may have a bitter taste or negative side effects, and it does not always provide immediate relief. On the contrary, when we choose to open our hearts to God and give our lives up to Him, inner healing begins instantaneously. That is what happens when we choose to cling to the hope we find in salvation.

We don't know very much about Lydia from the Bible, other than that she did business in Philippi, was originally from Thyatira, and that her occupation was a seller or dealer of purple cloth. The account of her conversion in Acts 16:14 reads, "A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying" (CSB). After her heart was opened, she and her household were baptized and she became an integral part in supporting Paul's ministry in Philippi by hosting Paul and his companions in her home. That is the transformative power of relationship with Jesus Christ.

For the fictional character of Rut, who has struggled throughout the story with grief and regret, she too finds healing when she finally stops running from her past and chooses to face it instead. When she is able to shift her perspective from herself to God, she

sees God's plan and purpose in every detail of her life. Her experience is reminiscent of what Paul writes in Philippians 3:7-10, which reads, "But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith" (CSB). When we view our earthly gains and losses in the light of Jesus, we have no reason to mourn; only to worship and have joy. Open your heart to Him, and let His unfailing love wash over you.



Rut closed her eyes, and when she did, she saw a glimpse at the glorious tapestry God had been weaving all along. He had been there in Tyre, leading her path to cross with Lydia's and Hektor's. He had been there on the road with Benayahu, when her brother encouraged her to take Lydia's offer. He had been there when Rut decided to go to Philippi. He had been with Paul and his company, guiding them also to Macedonia and even to the riverside. Even in that darkest moment as she wailed for her husband, God had been there. All along, in every good day and every difficult one, His hand had been guiding her to this very moment. How could she not see that then as she so clearly saw it now?



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON RUT'S STORY AND THE BIBLE

How has pursuing a relationship with God helped you to find healing from things in your past? In what areas do you still need healing? Is there anything keeping you from giving God the space to work in your life and in your heart?

Hektor and Rut look at their lives like a tapestry: a collection of threads that may seem messy or disconnected up close, but come together to reveal a beautiful pattern or design. What “threads” in your life once seemed disconnected, but later were revealed to be an important part of God’s plan for your life?

Read Philippians 3:12-21. What is the goal or prize that Paul describes, and how does that align with your own goals? What does it mean to “eagerly wait” for our Savior, Jesus Christ, as it says in Philippians 3:20 (CSB)?

DAY 4: CHAPTERS 15–EPILOGUE

Suggested scripture readings: Acts 16:16-40, Philippians 4, Romans 15

Hope that Never Ends

What is the secret to having a never-ending hope? It may seem impossible that even on our darkest days we can remain hopeful, but there is a way: *Jesus Christ*.

When Paul and Silas were arrested in Philippi, the Bible tells us in Acts 16:25, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (CSB). In that difficult circumstance, those two men could have given up to despair and grief, but they chose to raise their voices in prayer and song. How many of us can say that our immediate reaction would be the same in such a dire situation? They were able to do so because they clung to hope in God. Through prayer and song, they kept their eyes on Him.

This concept is beautifully explained in Philippians 4:12-13, which reads, “I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me” (CSB). When we place our hope in God and not in the things of this world, we will find that the source of our hope is a well that never runs dry. It is Him who gives us strength, and carries us through each day. Look back carefully on the tapestry that your lived experiences create—like Rut and Hektor in the story—and you will start to see God’s hand in every thread.

When trouble comes near, search for Him in your past, and look toward Him for your future. Return to Him again and again, and His hope will return to you.

As it says in Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (CSB).



Like these people, her citizenship, her true identity and the one she and so many others spent so long searching for, came only from Jesus. She was a daughter of the Most High God. These people were brought together by their Heavenly Father, the One who saw both sides, and wove all of their stories into one. Tears filled her eyes, because as she beheld them all, some whose names and stories she knew very well and others she did not know as well as she would have liked, she saw pure beauty.

Like those who had come before her, the seeds of faith planted in this room would only continue to grow from generation to generation. To say that Rut felt blessed to be a part of it was an understatement, for it was still only just the beginning.

This was God's tapestry.

These people and their lives were His masterpiece, and it was still unfolding.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON RUT'S STORY AND THE BIBLE

Can you list any examples of times in your life where God was evident, whether you realized it then or not? How does looking back at that situation or circumstance enable you to have hope when facing struggles in the future?

Reflecting on the events with Paul and Silas in prison as recorded in Acts 16, what could be considered “prisons” in your life? Struggles or situations that you would rather not be in, current or past? How have you or how could you adopt the attitude of Paul and Silas and worship through it?

In the story as Rut and the other believers listen to Paul's letter for the first time, certain themes touch her heart. Having now read all of Philippians yourself (If you've been following along with the Bible reading plan), what themes or verses stood out to you? What were your major takeaways from this reading experience? How do you want to apply what you read to your life right now?



NOTES





























