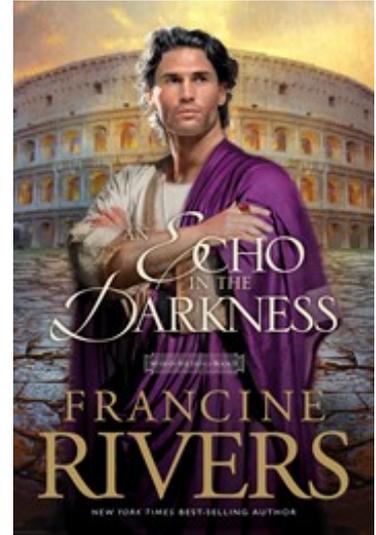


Dear reader,

We hope you enjoyed this story and its many characters by Francine Rivers. It is the author's desire to whet your appetite for God's Word and His ways—to apply His principles to your life. The following character study is designed for just that! There are four sections of discussion questions for each of the four main characters:

Character Review—gets the discussion going
Digging Deeper—gets into the character
Personal Insights/Challenges—gets you thinking
Searching the Scriptures—gets you into God's Word

When writing this story, Francine had a key Bible verse in mind: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). We can choose to be self-sufficient or to rely on God. We can act on our own understanding regarding life's circumstances, or we can seek God's will in every situation. But only one choice assures us that God will direct our paths. Making wise choices is an ongoing process. With this in mind, let me encourage you to get together with some friends and discuss your favorite scenes, characters, and personal insights from this novel. May your insights never end, and may your discussion "runneth over"!



PEGGY LYNCH

HADASSAH

CHARACTER REVIEW

1. What is your favorite encounter with Hadassah and why?
2. What changes are evident in Hadassah since the arena (other than physical)?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Discuss how Hadassah perceived herself.
2. Describe how Hadassah moved from fear and timidity to power and love.
3. What fears keep you from experiencing God's love and power?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In what ways do you identify with Hadassah? How are you different?
2. What do you think motivated Hadassah? What motivates you?
3. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). How did Hadassah demonstrate her trust in God?



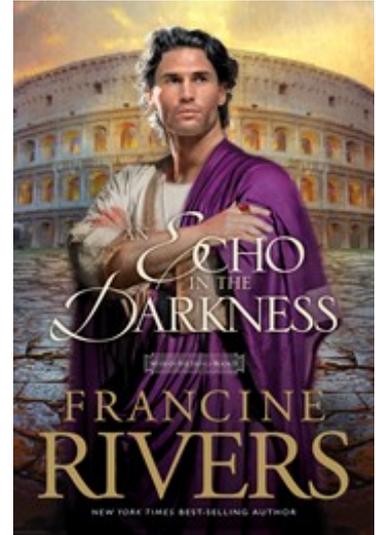
Searching the Scriptures

As you discuss Hadassah and how she grew in her faith, read the following Bible verses. They may shed light on her journey and yours as well.

O Lord my God, I cried out to you for help, and you restored my health. You brought me up from the grave, O Lord. You kept me from falling into the pit of death. Psalm 30:2-3

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. 1 Peter 3:3-4

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7



MARCUS CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Discuss Marcus' journey. What do you think he was looking for?
2. Did Marcus understand the real meaning of truth? Describe his attitude toward truth and how it affected his actions and decisions.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Describe some of the changes you have observed in Marcus.
2. Contrast Marcus' understanding and response to "truth" with Julia's.
3. Recount Marcus' conversion to Christianity. What were the steps that led him to this point?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In what ways do you identify with Marcus? How are you different?
2. Why do you think Marcus began his journey for truth? In what ways do you seek truth?
3. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). In what ways did Marcus experience God's direction in his life?

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you think about Marcus' journey in faith, look up the following Bible verses. They may reveal his motives and expose your own as well.



A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash. Sensible children bring joy to their father; foolish children despise their mother. Proverbs 15:14, 20

We can gather our thoughts, but the Lord gives the right answer. Proverbs 16:1

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

PHOEBE CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Describe your favorite scene with Phoebe and what stands out about her.
2. Elaborate on Phoebe's relationship with her children.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Discuss Phoebe's lifestyle and priorities. How did her lifestyle and/or priorities change in the course of the book?
2. In what ways did Phoebe demonstrate her faith in God?
3. What would your own list of priorities look like?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In what ways are you like Phoebe? How are you different?
2. Do you think Phoebe's prayer life was realistic? How does your prayer life compare?
3. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). In what ways did Phoebe learn to trust God?

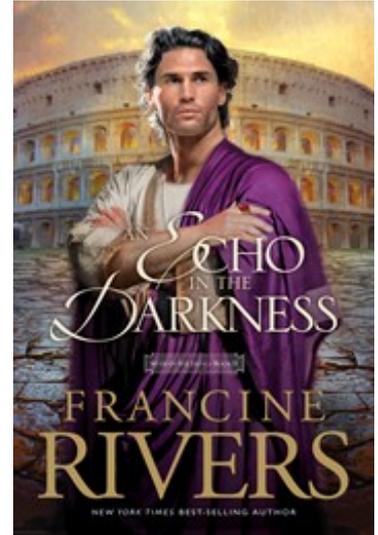
SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you think about Phoebe's journey in faith, read the following Bible verses and see if they provide the reasons and hope that motivated her and hopefully you too.

Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us. James 1:27

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. Romans 8:26

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. James 5:16



Julia

CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Choose a memorable or moving scene with Julia and discuss what caught your attention.
2. Describe Julia's lifestyle.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Elaborate on some of Julia's choices and the consequences of those choices.
2. In what ways did Julia attempt to justify her choices?
3. In what ways do you justify your own attitudes or actions?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. How do you identify with Julia? In what ways are you different?
2. When do you think Julia began to soften toward God and why?
3. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). In what ways did Julia struggle with her "own understanding"? In what ways do you?

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you ponder Julia's journey to find the Savior, look up the following Bible verses. They may shed light on her struggles and your own as well.

Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies. She will not hinder him but help him all her life. Proverbs 31:10,12

Another reason for right living is that you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. Romans 13:11

For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. Romans 10:9-10

