

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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: “Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight” (James 1:19-20). Notice the order: First, listen—and be quick about it. Speech is to come slowly, after listening; that is, after getting all the facts. Anger is—or should be—an afterthought. How often do we reverse the order? 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.

PEGGY LYNCH

HADASSAH CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Discuss how Hadassah was perceived by those in the arena prison. How did Atretes see her?
2. Examine Hadassah's role in Atretes' life.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Recount the information and advice Hadassah gave Atretes. How effective or persuasive was she?
2. What do you think made this conversation with Atretes so intense for Hadassah?
3. In what ways have you been persuasive or effective in intense situations?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In your opinion, what stands out the most about Hadassah?
2. Do you think Hadassah's sense of peace was realistic? How does your own sense of peace measure up?
3. “Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight” (James 1:19-20). Describe how Hadassah exemplifies this passage of Scripture.



Searching the Scriptures

As you recall Hadassah's patience and courage, look up the following Bible verses. They may give insight to the source of her effective life and challenge you as well.

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

1 PETER 4:12-13

PSALM 27:14

ATRETES

CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Select a moving or disturbing scene with Atretes and share any memorable insights.
2. Discuss Atretes' relationship with Rizpah. How did it change?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Recount the plans Atretes had for his son. In what ways did God change those plans?
2. In changing Atretes' plans, how did God change Atretes?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In what ways do you identify with Atretes? How are you different?
2. What do you think was Atretes' central conflict?
3. "Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight" (James 1:19-20). What lessons did Atretes learn along these lines?

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you examine Atretes' life, look up the following Bible verses. Consider what insights might have led to the changes in his life and may do the same for you.

We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. It is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city.
Proverbs 16:9, 32

Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds 1 Peter 3:8

When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor. James 4:10



Rizpah

CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Discuss your favorite scene with Rizpah. What draws you into it?
2. Compare Rizpah's faith with Hadassah's.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Describe Rizpah's head versus heart conflict.
2. In what ways did Rizpah's past affect her ability to trust God? How did she change?
3. What interferes with your ability to trust God?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. In what ways are you like Rizpah? How are you different?
2. Do you think Rizpah's relationship with God was realistic? Explain.
3. "Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight" (James 1:19-20). What happened with Rizpah's anger? And your own?

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you think about Rizpah and the choices she made as she struggled with her faith in God, try reading the following Bible verses. They may reveal her challenges and victories and provide insights for you as well.

For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger. Proverbs 15:1

So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Ephesians 5:15

THEOPHILUS

CHARACTER REVIEW

1. Choose a memorable scene with Theophilus and discuss what makes it unforgettable.
2. Compare Theophilus' relationship with Rizpah to his relationship with Atretes. What differences do you find?



Digging Deeper

1. Describe Theophilus' reputation.
2. In what ways did Theophilus share his faith in God? Was he effective? What would you like to learn from his example?
3. How would others describe your reputation?

PERSONAL INSIGHTS/CHALLENGES

1. How are you like Theophilus? In what ways are you different?
2. Consider Theophilus' wisdom and counsel. How does your own wisdom and counsel compare?
3. "Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight" (James 1:19-20). Discuss how Theophilus understood the principles in this verse.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

As you ponder Theophilus' life and reputation, read the following Bible verses. They may reveal his motivations and challenge you as well.

Ephesians 5:19

Colossians 3:16

Philippians 1:12

Galatians 6:4-5



