



Barefoot

STUDY GUIDE

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Reading for Week One: Chapter One

Week One: Day One



CHAPTER ONE: MEG (PP. 11-16)

Scripture: Psalm 62:1-8

1. What words or images come to mind when you hear the word *resilient*? What does it mean to be resilient in hope?

2. Meg tells Hannah she often has “imaginary conversations with people who aren’t here” (p. 13). What kinds of conversations or voices typically play in your head? Spend time offering these voices to Jesus and hearing his words of truth.

3. Both Meg and Hannah struggle to be on the receiving end of care. Why? How practiced are you at receiving love and care from others? If it is hard for you to receive, why might this be?

4. “Even with everything [Meg] had seen about God’s faithfulness, even with everything she’d experienced the past few months about God’s

presence and love, she still found it hard to trust. So that's what she was learning to offer—the truth. To God. To others. To herself. No denying her fears. No stuffing her sorrow. All the anxiety and the heartache, the regret and the guilt, the longings and the desires, the wrestling and the sin, the past and present and future—all of it belonged at the feet of Jesus. All of it” (p. 15). What are you learning to offer to Jesus? What do you need courage to see?

5. The Spirit's echoing word for Meg is *hope*. Is there any particular word or theme echoing for you? If nothing immediately comes to mind, spend some time listening for one.

6. “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him” (Psalm 62:5 NRSV). Read this verse slowly several times. Does it describe your practice or your longing? What would it mean to wait in silence and with hope for God? Offer your response to God in prayer. Then spend time sitting in silence.

Week One: Day Two



CHAPTER ONE: MARA (PP. 17-22)

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

1. What family memories, traditions, or heirlooms are important to you? Why? Offer these to God with gratitude. If there are any that have been lost over the years, speak to God about the emotions that rise within you as you remember them.
2. What “gotcha games” are Mara and Tom playing? When are you tempted to retaliate or get even? Offer these impulses to God in prayer.
3. Bring to mind an occasion when you felt too angry to speak or too disappointed to cry. Is there anything unresolved to offer God in prayer?
4. Read Matthew 5:43-48 aloud several times. Bring to mind people who make life difficult for you. What is God’s specific invitation to you? Journal your response.

Week One: Day Three



CHAPTER ONE: HANNAH (PP. 23-30)

Scripture: Psalm 127:1-2

1. When are you tempted or most likely to lose patience? Do you see any patterns? Which spiritual practice(s) could help counteract the gravitational pull toward impatience?

2. What kinds of stories are most likely to evoke your compassion? Why? How readily do you practice intercessory prayer, generosity, mercy, or serving others in need? Who is God calling you to serve in these ways?

3. “The slowing down, the paying attention, the deliberate rest and unplugging, the transition from the driven life to the received life—all of this was a paradigm shift [Hannah] still needed time to process and integrate” (p. 26). What about you? What’s the pace of your life? In what ways can you practice the discipline of slowing down and paying attention today? Or, if you’ve been practicing like Hannah, what fruit do you see?

4. “By the faithful and stealthy work of the Spirit, Hannah had begun to perceive . . . all the ways her personal identity had been swallowed up and enmeshed with her professional one, all the ways she had defined herself by what she did for God rather than who she was to him—the beloved” (p. 27). Do you share anything in common with where Hannah has been or what she is perceiving? Offer what you notice to God in prayer.

5. How are you integrating play and rest into your rhythm of life?

6. Read Psalm 127:1-2 again several times. What is stirred in you as you read? Offer your response in prayer.

Week One: Day Four



CHAPTER ONE: *CHARISSA* (PP. 31-40)

Scripture: Galatians 5:1

1. What does Charissa see at Crossroads? How does this affect her? Stir her to action?

2. Miss Jada tells the volunteers, “Everybody you meet is made in Abba’s image. If you can’t see it, look harder. Ask for new eyes” (p. 32). Is there anyone you have trouble seeing in this way? Why? Ask God for new eyes.

3. “By grace [Charissa] had begun to see . . . her socially acceptable forms of idolatry: her thirst for honor and recognition, her pursuit of excellence for her own sake, her deriving her sense of self not from her identity as the beloved in Christ but from her own achievements and reputation” (p. 36). What are your “socially acceptable forms of idolatry”? Spend some time confessing these to God in prayer and meditating on the identity Christ has given you.

4. How do you respond when others try to control or manipulate you through their expectations or even their gifts? Bring to mind an example of such a conflict and offer what you notice to God in prayer.

5. Why does Charissa think she needs a “less self-centered image of God”? What images of God are shaping your life with him right now?

6. Read Galatians 5:1 again. Where do you sense a gravitational pull toward slavery rather than freedom in Christ? Which practice(s) can help you resist that pull? What kind of freedom can you celebrate today?

Week One: Days Five and Six



REVIEW

These are days to revisit any reflection questions you weren't able to complete earlier in the week. Return to the Scripture passage that either most stirred you or least stirred you, and spend time meditating on it.

Spiritual disciplines to note from the characters' journeys in chapter one: waiting, generosity (both practicing and receiving), Scripture meditation, serving, rest, play, community, attentiveness

Week One Group Discussion

1. Discuss any points of resonance with the characters' journeys thus far. Who are you sympathetic or frustrated with? Why? In what ways are the characters providing windows to glimpse God and others more clearly, or mirrors to see yourself?
2. Choose one of the Scripture texts for the week for group lectio divina. (This spiritual discipline is described in chapter four of *Sensible Shoes*.) What's stirring for you as you prayerfully listen to the Word?
3. Which spiritual disciplines can you practice in community? Perhaps there's a mission agency that easily slips off the public radar during the year. Discuss creative ways to serve together.
4. How can the group pray for you as you move forward with hope?

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