

Seeker of Stars – Bible Study Question Outline

The following studies are set up to deal with themes rather than specific chapters, and can be used by a small group Bible study, an adult Sunday School class, a personal quiet time or even a discussion group among people of various beliefs. The one requirement is that participants have read the entire novella before the study series begins.

The series could be studied in the weeks leading up to Christmas, and would make the Advent season meaningful in fresh ways. I would take on no more than one session a week.

Please don't feel that you have to address all the questions listed. Pick the ones that appeal to you.

You will notice there are no answers offered. The questions are designed to make people think and engage with God, rather than to get the right answer.

Let me know how the material works. If you develop other questions, send them along – this material can be adapted and made far better with your input.

Susan Fish

Session 1- Dreams

Session 2 – Relationships

Session 3 – Providence

Session 4 – Vocation

Session 5 – Healing

Session 6 – The Christmas Story

Session 1 – Dreams

“For as long as I can remember, I have had a recurring dream of reaching for the unmoving star and grasping it. My body moves around the star in the glorious dance of the stars, while my hand receives tingles of light that run through my entire body. It is always my right hand and when I awake from such dreams, so real are they that I can still feel the tingle and I search that hand with my eyes for the imprint of the star or traces of starlight.” Seeker of Stars, pp.5-6

Bible: Genesis 28:10-22 (Jacob); Genesis 37:1-11; Genesis 40:1-41:40 (Joseph); Matthew 1:19-21 (Joseph); Matthew 2:12-15 (magi); Matthew 27: 19 (Pilate’s wife)

Dreams in Seeker of Stars: Recurring dreams – Melchior’s dream of grasping star
Warning dreams – Melchior’s dream of Herod
Dreams of call – Balzar’s dream of journey

Discussion Questions

- How do we interpret dreams today? Who can interpret them best? What dream interpretation and interpreters do you consider valid and wholesome?
- Have we ever had dreams of warning or call?
- What are our recurring dreams?
- What is the relationship between the dreams we call our wishes and the dreams we experience when we sleep? Do we understand God speaking to us through either means?
- Ebenezer Scrooge doubted the visions that came to him, saying, “There’s more of gravy than the grave about you,” suggesting dreams can be caused by indigestion. How do we know which dreams to take seriously? What if you are a person who never remembers dreams?
- How, if at all, does God speak to us today? How do we prepare to hear God’s voice? Can God speak to us if we aren’t listening?
- Read through the above Bible passages. How would you categorize the different types of dreams in the passages? How did the dreams in the passages affect the destiny of the dreamers and others? How did the dreams change the direction or actions of the dreamers? How did dreams have these effects on the dreamers in Seeker of Stars?

Group Activity: You might find movies with dream sequences in them – such as *Field of Dreams* – and show clips to the group. Have group members evaluate what sorts of dreams these might be, or how people follow their dreams.

Session 2 – Relationships

“Just as the smell of a meal cooking over a fire would suddenly awaken a hunger I had not been aware of, so watching this father and son filled me with an ache for what I had never known. I longed for such a father and thought back to what my own father had been...My hungry heart printed Balzar and his son upon my memory.” Seeker of Stars, pp.61-62

Bible: Proverbs 31:11, 28-31; I Cor. 13; Col. 3:21; I Samuel 20; Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-33

Relationships in Seeker of Stars:

- parent and child – Melchior/father, Balzar/Hasin
- brothers – forgiveness – Melchior/Salvi
- marriage – pomegranate, letters
- friendship – Omar, Balzar

Discussion Questions

- As Melchior “printed” Balzar as a role model, who do you print as models for relationships? How do media portrayals of relationships affect our imprinting?
- What opens our eyes to the value of the people we take for granted?
- Look at Proverbs 31: 11, 28-31. Discuss the role of praising and appreciating the people around us, as well as our natural tendency to complain.
- How can we start fresh in our relationships, rather than repeating old, broken patterns?
- How do the various characters in Seeker of Stars live out the description of love found in I Corinthians 13? In what ways are the characteristics of love missing from the relationships between the characters?
- How are our human relationships affected by our relationship (or lack of relationship) with God? In what ways is this also true for Melchior?
- Look at Colossians 3:21 and consider Melchior’s relationship with his father.
- Friendship plays an important role in Melchior’s life. Who are Melchior’s friends and what are the effects of his various friendships? Are there parallels between Melchior’s friendships and that of Jonathan and David (I Samuel 20)?
- Melchior’s marriage is likely atypical for his time and perhaps our time. Consider both the marriage advice from Melchior and Reta’s example as well as from Ephesians 5. What old-fashioned advice or example should be adopted today?
- Examine your own relationships: where do you have cause to celebrate? What needs prayer? What needs a change of heart or action?

Group Activity: Melchior found reconciliation through communication. Provide paper, pens and a quiet place. Ask them: If you were to write a letter to “allow all to be revealed and received”, who would you write to and what would you say? Challenge them to write and consider sending their letters. Even if they are not ready to send the letter, they may learn from the writing exercise.

Session 3 – Providence

“My heart swelled with joy at this unexpected blessing in the desert. Such a strange and full night it had been. After days of emptiness in the desert, to be reconciled with a brother and a wife, and to lose my best friend was much to take in.” Seeker of Stars, p.79

Bible: Psalm 37; Genesis 45:5-8; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 10:29, 30

Providence in Seeker of Stars:

- Melchior’s accident
- The letters between Melchior and Reta

Discussion Questions

- What is providence and how do we see it at work in our lives?
- In the book, how does providence override “fate”?
- How do you understand the relationship between free will and providence?
- Does our culture encourage or discourage faith in God’s providence? If we don’t believe in providence, what is the alternative?
- What evidence do you hold onto for God’s sovereignty?
- The passage from Daniel quotes Nebuchadnezzar who came to his senses after a bout of insanity caused by extreme pride. What does he come to acknowledge about God?
- Is the sovereignty of God a source of comfort or fear? Why? How does Matthew 10:29,30 affect your feeling about God’s control?
- Genesis 45:5-8 shows how God’s providence is seen most clearly in hindsight. Like the famous “Footprints in the Sand” poem, it is often only after a difficult period is over that we are able to see God’s presence and providence. Having finished Seeker of Stars, trace God’s hand of providence throughout the book.

Group Activity: Divide into two groups and consider Psalm 37, with one group arguing from the psalm (or other biblical references) for providence and the other group arguing for free will and/or fate.

Session 4 – Vocation

“Melchi’s work suited him too, but I must find him another trade so he can support himself. There are fools who will pay to have their fortunes read in the stars, and fools who will read them. I still consider his hobby a waste of time, but others do not. It is the one profession Melchi would gladly do, and it is the one he is best prepared for.” Seeker of Stars, pp.23-24

Bible: Exodus 3:1-4:17; Esther 4:12-16; Luke 1:29-55

Vocation in Seeker of Stars: Melchior, Salvi.

Discussion Questions

- In what ways is vocation determined for us? In what ways can we choose? Look at Luke 1:29-55. What were Mary’s choices within her call?
- Vocation has been defined as the place where our passion meets the world’s great need. Look at Exodus 3:1-4:17 and discuss this quotation in reference to Moses, to Melchior in Seeker of Stars and also to you.
- How do we respond to a sense of call? What makes us reluctant? How is this true for Moses or for Melchior?
- Esther is a fine example of a person who needs to be persuaded to accept her vocation, by another person. Read Esther 4:12-16. Have you ever been persuaded, or like Melchior, did you need to believe in your own purpose against odds?
- Is our vocation synonymous with our work? Should it be? Examine whether your work engages your passion, the great needs of the world or both? If not, ask yourself how you understand the purpose of your work. Imagine what you would do if you did work out of passion, purpose and calling. You might even ask God to show you if He has a different purpose for you. Melchior pursues his love of the stars initially as a hobby; some people work to afford the chance to pursue a vocation in their leisure time.
- How does vocation relate to abilities and to spiritual gifts?

Group Activity: Once participants are clear on a definition of vocation (as different from occupation), have each person write down on a slip of paper what they understand their vocation to be. Collect the slips and draw them, asking participants to guess who said what. An unguessed vocation may lead to discussion about how we are prevented or enabled to live the vocation we have been given. Talk about ways we can help each other live out the vocations we have been given.

Session 5 – Healing

“[The healer] arrived as we were finishing breakfast, unwound my bandages and had me stretch and flex my fingers. I had secretly been doing so for more than a week. Though the skin was pale and wrinkled and the scar still fresh and red, I knew my hand was healed. The healer smiled as I demonstrated my muscles. Then she asked me to pick up a cup from the table. I was a scorpion with a broken claw – my fingers could not close to grasp or pinch.” Seeker of Stars, page 21

Bible: Luke 17:11-19; Luke 18:35-43; John 9; Mark 5:25-34, Mark 8:22-25

Healing in Seeker of Stars:

- Melchior’s hand
- relationship between Melchior and Salvi
- relationship between Melchior and Reta

Discussion Questions

- What is healing? Is healing merely physical? Look at John 9. At what point is the man truly healed?
- What causes healing?
- What is the relationship between desire/request and healing? What role does our willingness play?
- Melchior does not ask to be healed and yet his hand is restored. Is there biblical precedence for this?
- What role may faith play in healing? Is the object of our faith the issue, or simply the substance of faith? Look at Mark 5:25-34 and the example of the woman who was healed by touching Jesus. Does the power of healing belong to Jesus, her faith or the interaction of the two?
- When John the Baptist wonders if Jesus is the Christ, Jesus tells his disciples to report on the miraculous healings He has performed. Read Luke 17:11-19 and Luke 18:35-43 to examine Jesus’ teaching on healing.
- Melchior’s healing is gradual and yet he attributes it directly to the infant Christ. Do we take God’s role in gradual healing seriously? Look at Mark 8:22-25 to see an instance of gradual healing.

Group Activity: Bring a variety of old magazines, and have participants pull out articles and/or ads which promise healing. Discuss whether the claims are reasonable, and the role God and faith play in such claims.

Session 6 – The Christmas Story

“An incredible story poured forth, which made ours sound commonplace. Angel visitations, virgin fullness, joy and sorrow, dreams and resolutions, promise, panic and pain – a child – squalor and shepherds, glory and – God.” Seeker of Stars, page 90

Bible: Matthew 2; Genesis 28:10-22; Genesis 32:22-32, Exodus 3:1-6

Discussion Questions

- Read the biblical account of the magi and compare with Seeker of Stars:
- Are there discrepancies?
- How did the book enhance your view of the magi and the original Christmas story?
- In what ways did you imagine the magi differently?
- What do you imagine might happen next for Melchior? What are the effects of an unexpected, life-changing encounter with God? Look at Jacob’s encounters with God in Genesis 28:10-22 and 32:22-32, as well as Moses’ first encounter with God in Exodus 3:1-6. What role does fear play?

Group Activity: Ask participants: If, like Melchior, you were to tell your story – what would you say has been the “deepest desire of your heart”? What have been the painful places? How have you encountered God in your desires and pain? Have participants partner up to share their “stories.” Invite them to share their stories with God and thank God for His presence in their lives.