

*Moments of
Faith in the
Gospels*



A COMPANION BIBLE
STUDY

JENNA VAN MOURIK



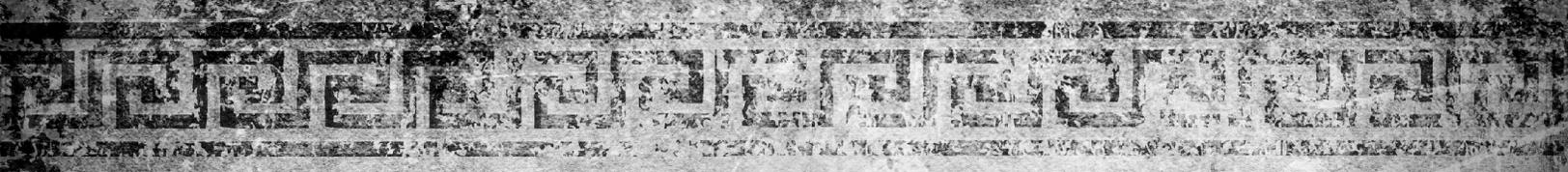
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DAY 1: THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 1:18-25;

Luke 2:1-20; Matthew 2:1-23

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 1-6

Faith in what we can't see...

"A multitude of the heavenly host" (Luke 2:13 CSB). That's about all that the Bible tells us of what the shepherds saw that night, but close your eyes for just a moment and imagine what you might have seen if you'd been there. All would have been calm - you, the sheep, and the stars. Then out of nowhere, a being like you've never seen appears before you. The glory of God surrounding you, terrifying you and astounding you all at the same time. And their message? News that would literally change the world forever. The shepherds, understandably, couldn't contain their excitement. Wouldn't you be just as overjoyed and filled with enthusiasm? They went out and spread the good news among the people. The Bible tells us that "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (Luke 2:18 CSB).

Although the people to whom they proclaimed the good news had not seen the angels or heard their message, or perhaps even seen Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Messiah, they were still amazed. This message of hope gave them faith in the coming fulfillment of God's promises from centuries prior. They might not have seen Jesus, they might not even live to see Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, but they believed in their God and His faithfulness.

Do you think that you would have had such bold faith in those times?



"What do you believe?"

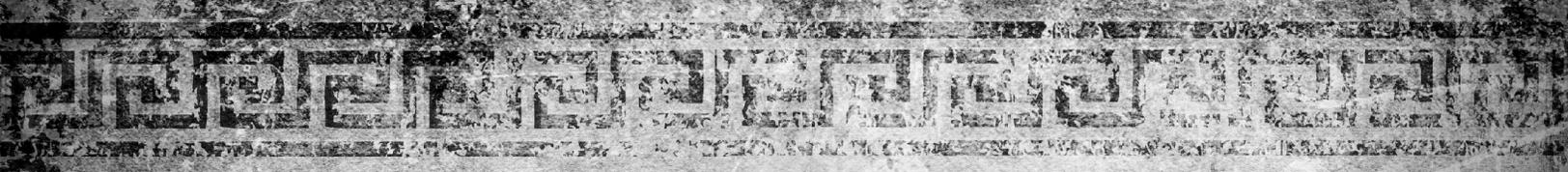
He shrugged in answer to her question, so she pressed on.

"Do you believe what my sabba said? Do you believe that the Messiah is coming? Or maybe that he already has?"

"Do you?" he countered.

Shamira thought for a moment and narrowed her eyes in pensive concentration. It was all she had ever known; all she had ever heard and been taught. When she saw the passion in her grandfather's eyes each time he told the story, the light that seemed to radiate from within him made her wonder how she or the rest of her family could ever believe anything different.

"Yes, I do."



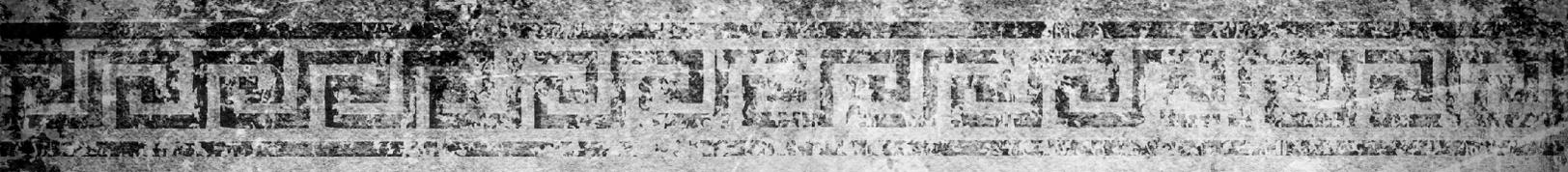
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON SHAMIRA'S STORY AND THE BIBLE

As Christians, we are called to live our lives based on faith and belief in what we cannot see. Later in the Gospels, Jesus himself says to his followers, "Jesus said, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'" (John 20:29 CSB).

Let's think in terms of our main characters. Shamira has been raised all of her life to believe in the message of the coming Messiah. For those of us who were raised in Christian households, can you relate to her faith which comes so naturally to her?

What about those of us who were not raised in Christian households, or did not have the same foundation of faith laid before us, such as Asa? Or Shamira's own father? In the story, both of these characters struggle to take a leap of faith and believe in what they have not seen. In what ways can you relate to their story? What has your faith journey been like?

Put yourself in the characters' shoes. If you had been alive in the first century, do you think you would have put your faith in God, knowing the risks and potential life-threatening consequences such bold faith may have caused? Or might you have struggled?



Recall a time in your life when you had to take a "leap of faith" and act solely on trust in God, not knowing what the outcome might be and not being able to see the future. This could have been a dramatic moment in your life, or a small, everyday decision. How did you find the strength to make that decision? Did prayer play an important role?



DAY 2: THE ANNOINTING OF JESUS AT BETHANY

Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 7-10

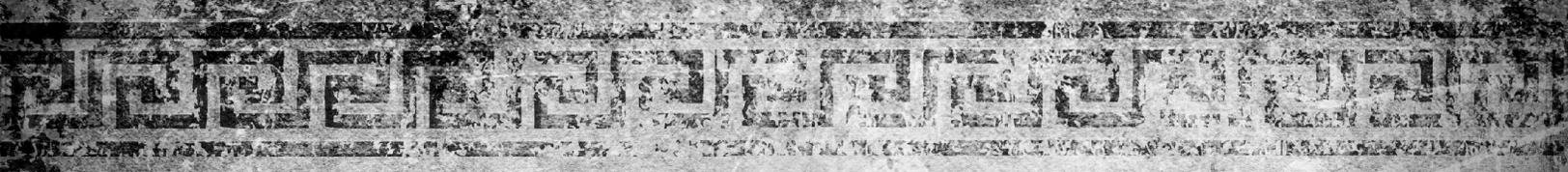
Faith in the face of persecution...

Jesus' anointing is another example of an awe-inspiring scene in the gospels. Here was a woman so firm in her convictions, so firm in her belief in Jesus and her adoration of Him, that she went to anoint Him, and, according to John, wiped His feet with her hair. Some of those who were there criticized her, questioning why the money for the perfume was not given to the poor where it might have been more useful. Jesus responded to this and was recorded in Matthew 26:10-13 as saying, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a noble thing for me. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. By pouring this perfume on my body, she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her" (CSB). Rather than condemning her, He openly commends her for her devotion.

Interestingly enough, John's account of this event highlights Lazarus' presence. Lazarus is another key figure within the gospels; he is noteworthy for being the man who Jesus wept for and later raised from the dead. It was a powerful moment for all who witnessed it, and many were amazed, but John tells us that the excitement and energy surrounding the resurrection of Lazarus upset and



A story could be argued with, proven false or a lie. Evidence could be tainted or destroyed by men who wanted to manipulate facts. Those who dared to disagree with the popular opinion could be killed or silenced by other means. But Asa couldn't argue with what he felt; he was certain now. His mind, heart, body, and soul were held captive by the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the answer to all the questions he had ever asked. He could not ignore that; he would not ignore it. Not even if it cost him his life, as it may have cost Lazarus. He needed to tell this story to Shamira at once.



disturbed the chief priests. They decided to plot to kill Lazarus also, "because he was the reason so many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus" (John 12:11 CSB). In both of these accounts we read about people who were close to Jesus and faithful to Him, but who were later criticized or persecuted in ways both big and small because of that association.

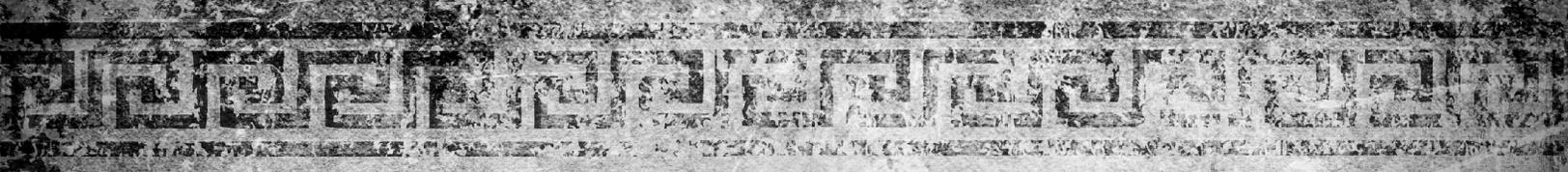
Jesus predicted that His followers would be persecuted, saying in John 15:18-19, "If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you" (CSB). What we can gather from this is that living a Christ-like life will not always be easy; we've chosen to be "in the world and not of it" and because of that we will always be going against the grain. However, we can take comfort in the knowledge that our sufferings are for Him. In the beatitudes, one of Jesus' most quoted speeches, He says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12 CSB). We are not living for an earthly reward, but a heavenly one.

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

Suffering for Christ can mean many things. The woman who anointed Jesus was ridiculed by those around her and judged for her devotion to God, while many others were and have been martyred for their faith. Have you ever experienced persecution or condemnation of some kind as a Christian?



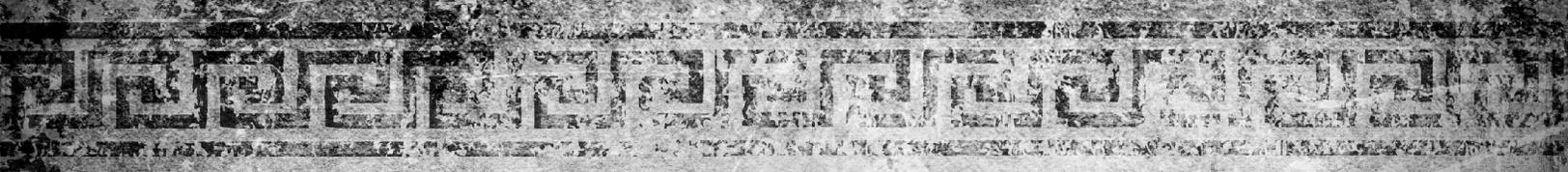
Were you able to take comfort in Jesus' words about suffering for Him?



When Asa returns from Bethany and overhears his father plotting against Lazarus, Asa is heartbroken. He has now seen the truth of the rumors himself and has met many of Jesus' disciples face-to-face. This scene marks a turning point for Asa, where he begins to truly think and believe for himself that Jesus is the Messiah and that his father may be in the wrong. The narrative tells us, "His mind, heart, body, and soul were held captive by the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the answer to all the questions he had ever asked. He could not ignore that; he would not ignore it. Not even if it cost him his life, as it may have cost Lazarus." In doing this, he is going directly against what his father wishes for his life. Have you ever been in a position where someone close to you has disapproved of your Christian lifestyle? How did you handle that situation?

When Asa tells Shamira everything he has witnessed, she is filled with excitement. Asa however is not as quick to rejoice; out of love, he warns Shamira about what it could cost her to believe in Jesus. Shamira understands his concern, but she tells him that her convictions are firm. Her journey is similar to that of her Sabba Eliyahu, who is also sometimes criticized for his unwavering beliefs in the coming Messiah. Has there ever been a time in your life where you have had to stand firm in your convictions? Do you think you would have struggled to remain firm during this time?





DAY 3: THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

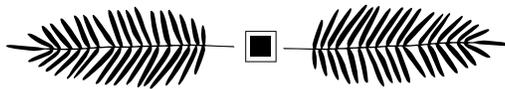
Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11;
Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 11-12

Faith when God calls us to wait...

After thousands of years of praying and hoping for a Savior and hundreds of years of silence, God finally sent Jesus to earth. Although many didn't know it at the time, the Messiah was living and walking in their midst waiting to fulfill the events that we now celebrate as a part of Easter. The week before Jesus' resurrection, He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. It was a humble manner for the Prince of Peace and Lord of Lords to enter the Holy City for Passover, but the jubilation from the crowds was fit for a king as they paved the streets with their clothes and hailed Him with palm branches. Together they shouted, "Hosanna," which can be interpreted today as a cry for a savior. "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" they shouted. "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

But that was still just a piece of God's plan. The Messiah had arrived, but the work was not done.



"Shamira!" Asa swooped down, helping them both up. "You both could have been crushed!"

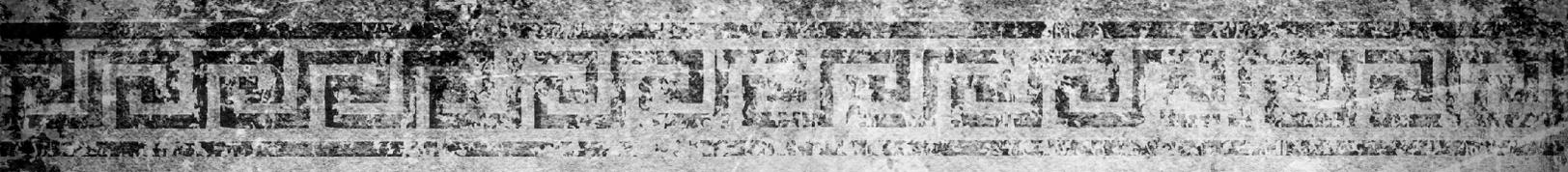
Regaining her balance, Shamira looked first to Libi to make sure she was all right, and then to Rut, whose face was full of trepidation.

"I knew this was a dangerous idea!" cried Rut, clutching onto Asa's sleeve as the crowd became more ravenous, pushing and shoving in the direction of Jesus.

"No! We're so close!" said Shamira, lunging forward into the mass of people, keeping both of her arms wrapped around Libi.

"Oh no, you don't," commanded Asa, pulling her back. "I will not return to the house of Eliyahu to tell Aharon I allowed one of his daughters to be trampled. I am taking you back to your family, Shamira."

"But what about Libi? I know that if I could just see him, if I could only speak with him, he could help her!" She was almost screaming with emotion, her eyes just barely overflowing with tears. The crowds kept moving, and with every step, she knew Jesus was getting farther and farther away. Had she thrown away Libi's chance, as she'd thrown away that palm branch?



Although humanity had been waiting for generation upon generation, they would have to wait just a little bit longer before salvation through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection would be made possible.

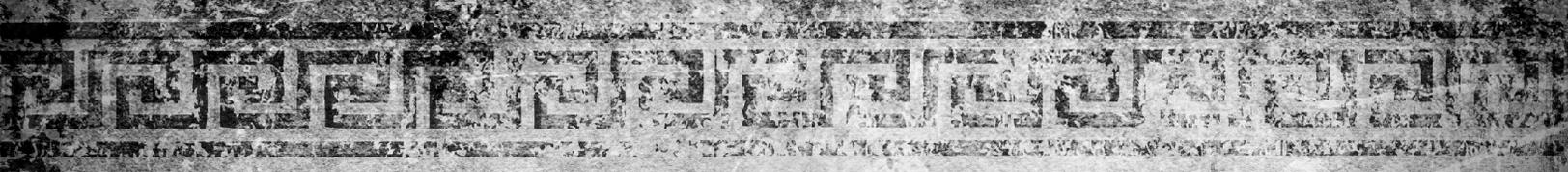
Similarly, in Shamira's story, she is thrilled to see that Jesus has arrived. Shamira is willing to do whatever it takes to get Libi to Jesus, confident that He will be able to help them and restore their family. However, as the crowds grow larger and as Jesus keeps moving farther, she is cautioned to wait for the sake of her safety and the safety of her cousins. She begins to wonder if her actions and efforts were in vain, since God seemingly did not answer her prayers in the way she thought that He would.

Today, we are blessed with the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, and the knowledge that through Him we too can experience Salvation. However, for those who lived in Jesus' time, they were following along with His ministry day-by-day, step-by-step. Jesus' hours on the cross were fast approaching, and his death would challenge many who did not have faith in the resurrection or did not understand why God had called Jesus to suffer. Like Shamira, they may have questioned God's timing or plans, and they may have even struggled with doubt. These struggles may still plague us today in different areas of our lives as we wonder what God's plans are now. Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us, "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end" (CSB). God's ways are often beyond our own understanding, but we can take comfort in the knowledge that He is always in control and it is up to us to put our faith in Him, whether He is telling us yes, no, or calling us to wait.

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

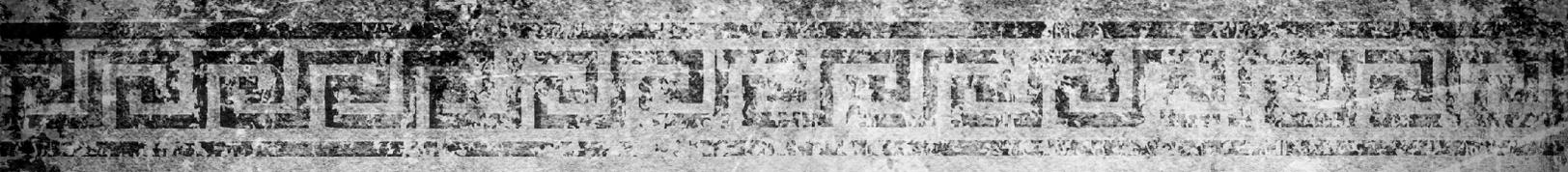
Read Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28. The characters in the story and the real people we read about in scripture did not know the plans God had for them, or how His plans would come to fruition through Jesus' life and ministry on earth, but they were called to have faith in difficult times. Have you ever been put through a trial, or experienced something difficult, and struggled to keep your faith, not knowing what God had planned? How did you work through those feelings?





Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15. People often say that "hindsight is 20/20," in reference to the fact that when we look back on our lives we often see how events are connected in ways that we didn't understand at the time. Have you ever endured a difficult experience or had to walk through a trial that you didn't understand, only to look back later and realize how God was at work during that time to accomplish something else?

1 John 5:14-15 speaks about effective prayer and petitioning to God. John writes, "This is the confidence we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of Him" (CSB). Think about a time in your life when you sincerely prayed to God over something. Did He answer as you expected that He would, or did He provide a different answer instead?



DAY 4: THE SECOND

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

*Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 21:12-17;
Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48*

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 13-16

Faith in the face of a miracle...

Throughout His ministry, Jesus performed many miracles. One instance that stands out to many is the healing of the paralytic. This event is recorded in Luke 5. Jesus told him in Luke 5:20 that his sins were forgiven, but some of those who were listening scoffed at this. How could a mere mortal man forgive sins? It is written in Luke 5:22-23, "But perceiving their thoughts, Jesus replied to them, "Why are you thinking this in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" (CSB). Then, to affirm His identity and His authority, Jesus healed the man. The Bible tells us that the witnesses were awe-struck and many began to glorify God that day.

Another instance of Jesus performing miracles that is particularly relevant in the context of Shamira's story is the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem and the healing of the blind and the lame who were there.

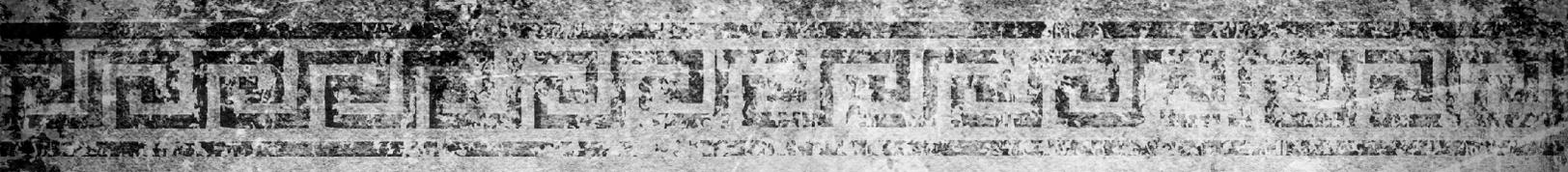


"Truly I say unto you," Jesus began, "this was done so that God's works might be displayed. We must do the works of him who sent me while it is still day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light."

His words were soft spoken, and his cadence was slow, but the meaning behind what he said resonated with all of those who heard it. They were powerful words.

"Now, we must be going," said Jesus, turning to leave.

Shamira jumped forward, ready to protest. "You cannot leave now! You must wait until my abba and uncles return so they can see you too!"



We see these miraculous events play out through the eyes of the fictional character, Shamira. While Shamira, Asa, Libi, and the rest of their family are all fictional and specific events that they experience are the product of the author's imagination, they are interpretations of what the people who witnessed Jesus' ministry may have been like. Through the narrative of the story, we are able to experience just how life-changing Jesus' actions were for the everyday people who lived back then, and how powerful they still are when studied today. Those miraculous actions, coupled with Jesus' teaching, strengthened their faith and made the early believers bold.

John writes near the end of his gospel in John 20:30-31, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (CSB). We are continuously living in the aftermath of a miracle, that is, the miracle of Jesus' resurrection. Just as those early believers were emboldened by what they saw, we can also read the gospels and deepen our faith in Him, being witnesses to His grace.

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

Consider John's words in John 20:29-31 and Jesus's message when He says, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (CSB). How do these passages apply to us as believers in modern times?

Read and think on Psalm 119:11 and Ephesians 6:10-18. How can reading and studying the Bible strengthen our faith? Why should we not only be reading the Bible, but committing it to our hearts and minds, practicing it, living it out, and sharing it with others? In what ways can you become more intentional about this?

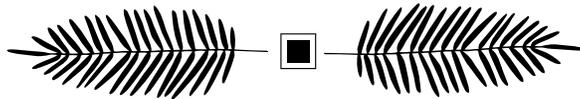
DAY 5: JESUS CONDEMNED AND CRUCIFIED

Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15,
Luke 22-23; John 13-19

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 17-20

Faith in times of fear and darkness...

Sometimes, we are called to walk through times of darkness. In these times, we may experience feelings of pain, sadness, fear, and even anger. Jesus was condemned and crucified on Good Friday, taking the sins of the whole world upon Himself so that we might experience eternal life and salvation by grace through faith. Until the morning of the resurrection however, He spent three days in the tomb, and His followers spent three days waiting, wondering, and weeping for their Savior.



Libi's lips quivered. "Where did Sabba go? What happened to him?"

Shamira took a deep breath. She wasn't even sure she understood the answers to those questions, let alone how she could relay them to children in a way they would be able to understand.

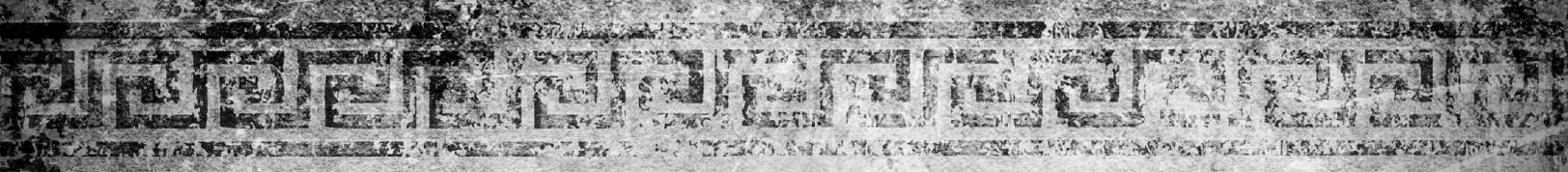
"He was a very old man, Libi. And in a great deal of pain," she began.

"Sick like me?" she said, pointing to her ears. "Sick" wasn't the word Shamira would have used to describe Libi's affliction, but she nodded a reply to Libi anyway.

"His body was very weak. He wasn't strong anymore, and we all need to be strong in order to live. God saw his pain and weakness, and so He took it away. Now he is at rest forever," Rut said.

"You see, God is a God of love; when you are with Him, you cannot feel any pain. Sabba ran out of strength in this life, but God has given him strength tenfold in the next," Shamira echoed some of the last words her sabba had spoken to her. He had believed them, and Shamira needed to believe them as well.

"Now he is with God feeling no more pain, only joy," finished Rut. "You know what joy is don't you?"



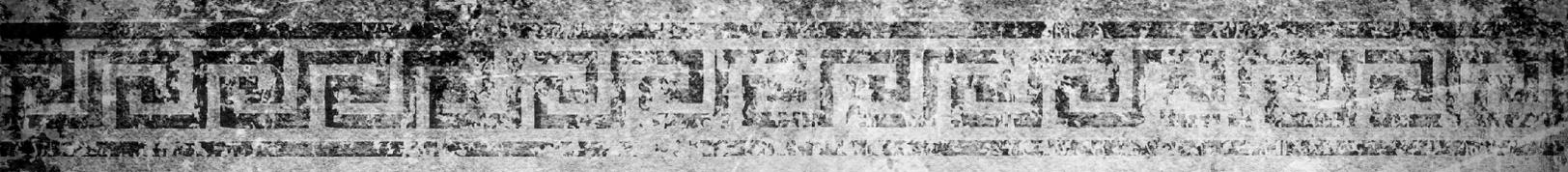
Within *Jerusalem's Daughter*, the characters endure multiple devastating losses in tandem. First, Asa realizes that his relationship with his father is truly severed as he makes the decision to follow Jesus and try to warn the disciples before it's too late. Then he, along with Shamira, witnesses the horrific persecution and crucifixion of Jesus. After Jesus finally draws his last ragged breath, Shamira returns home only to discover that her Sabba Eliyahu, the man she has always loved, admired, and looked up to, has also passed away. These losses result in an all-consuming kind of grief for the characters.

When we experience similar trying situations or painful experiences, we can often be tempted to give up all hope. We can succumb to that temptation, or we can instead turn to God and cry out to Him for help. The Bible is full of examples of God being a comforter. While we may experience trials and tribulations, we can take heart in His faithfulness, for He is the God who was and is and is to come. He will never leave us or forsake us. During these times it is so important that we cling steadfast to Him, immersing ourselves in His word, and praying to Him and asking for a peace that surpasses all understanding. As Psalm 121:1-2 says, "I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." He will carry us through even when we are not strong enough to carry ourselves, so long as we have faith.

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

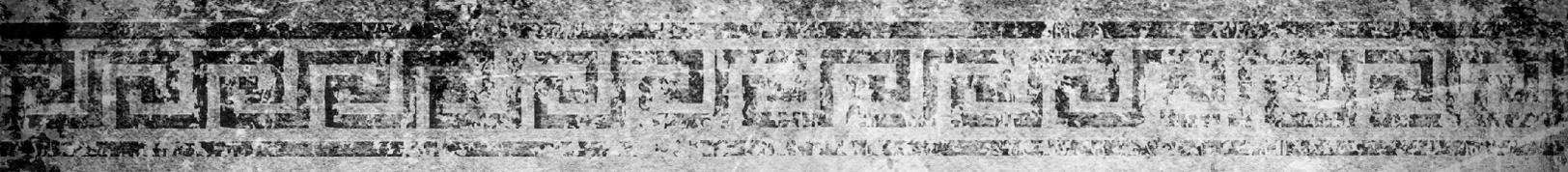
Have you ever experienced grief such as the loss of a loved one, like Shamira and her family experience upon the death of Eliyahu? In what ways did you cope with that? Where did you take comfort? Can you think of any scripture verses that were or would be particularly helpful to someone struggling with those same feelings?





Most of the time when we are enduring a trial, we do not understand why it is happening to us. In the case of the Bible and the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can see the whole picture of those events and how they were carefully orchestrated by God to bring about the fulfillment of His promises. However, those who lived through it may have been scared, upset, or afraid. When Jesus was taken, the Bible tells us that the disciples fled. We are also told of how Peter denied Jesus three times, as Jesus predicted he would. Had you been there in first-century Jerusalem, how do you think you would have reacted to those events as they unfolded? Where might you have gone?

Think about Philippians 4:6-8, which are some of the most oft-quoted verses for those struggling with fear and anxiety. How can we apply these verses today? In what practical ways can we live them out?



DAY 6: JESUS IS RISEN

Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 28:1-15,
Mark 16:1-14, Luke 24:1-43, John 20

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 21-22

Faith in the impossible...

The Bible tells us that “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26 CSB). When we read the account of the resurrection, we are reading the account of the ultimate miracle. The impossible made possible. That doesn’t just mean the impossibility of defying death; the impossible made possible also refers to the divide between humanity and God finally being bridged. Through His sacrifice, Jesus made a way where there was no way before for us to have salvation.

Because of The Fall as it is recorded in Genesis, humans have a sin nature that is completely incompatible with the righteousness of God. After Adam and Eve sinned they were cast out of the garden, and such unity with God as it had been at the time of Creation was no longer possible. Jesus however took all of the sins of the world upon Himself and paid the sacrifice for us. He was the ultimate Passover lamb. When He defeated death, He defeated death for us too, that we might have eternal life. It is written in John 3:16, "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (CSB). That eternal life, that Salvation, that impossibility is possible for us, so long as we believe and have faith in Jesus as our risen king.



“They’ve taken the Lord! The tomb is empty!”
said Mary to Peter, grabbing his arms. Her
eyes were wide, and she looked petrified.

“The tomb... The tomb...” Peter repeated the
words in a state of shock. The very next
moment he took off running out the door,
nearly knocking over the other women behind
Mary. John followed Peter, and Asa jumped
up to follow John.

The tomb is empty! thought Asa. Empty!
“Could it really be?” said Asa, panting for air
and trying desperately to catch up to the other
disciples. “Could he have risen from the
dead?”

There was only one way to find out.

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

It is written in Ephesians, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient" (Ephesians 2:1-2 CSB). Before Christ, we were dead, but now we live in the New Covenant. Ephesians 2:8 tells us "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift" (CSB). Have you accepted God's gift of Salvation for yourself? Do you recall that moment of faith? If so, what was it like for you? Did you have any mentors or guides as you began your walk with Christ?

Around Easter, we often hear the account of Resurrection morning when the women went out to the tomb and Mary first saw the risen Jesus. We also hear of Thomas, who doubted whether or not it was actually possible until Jesus revealed himself and his wounds to Thomas. Consider John 20:24-29.

Do you think you might have doubted the truth had you been there at the time, or would your faith have remained steadfast? What can this encounter tell us about believers today? How can we respond to the doubts of others when sharing the gospel message?



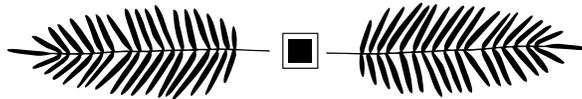
DAY 7: JESUS CALLS HIS FOLLOWERS, THE ASCENSION

Suggested scripture readings: Matthew 28:16-20;
Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-53; John 21; Acts 1-2

Follow along with Shamira's story in Jerusalem's Daughter: Chapters 23-24

Faith that takes action...

The most beautiful part of the story of Jesus, His life, and His ministry here on earth is that the story never really ends. The story goes on, even today, as the Great Commission still applies to believers. When Jesus ascends, He says to His disciples, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on



Slowly, the shadowy figure stepped toward her, one step at a time.

Closer...

And closer...

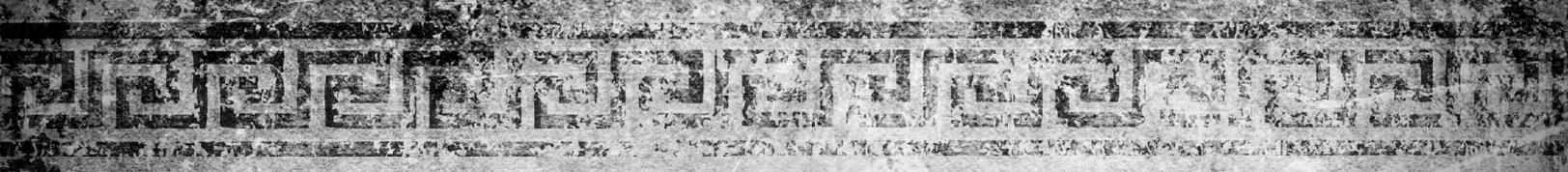
And closer... Until he was right in front of her. Her pulse raced in excitement as she waited. Time seemed to stand still.

Finally, Asa reached out and took her veil in his hands, and she moved with the weight of it. In one swift motion, he lifted it over her head, revealing her face to him. She lost herself in his deep brown eyes and all the emotions behind them. He was good, he was loyal, he was honorable—he was a man who chased after God with all of his heart. The only man she could ever see herself with. For a moment, the rest of the room faded away and it was just the two of them standing there, with his hand reaching out for hers.

His chest swelled as he breathed in and said to her, "My beloved, my Mira... Are you ready?"

She looked down at the open hand before her and back up into Asa's loving eyes. Then, taking his hand, she whispered, "Yes," as she'd promised to do every day when she'd first accepted his proposal.

"Yes," she said again, only a little more loudly for all to hear. He accepted her hand and placed on top of her veil a headband of coins and flowers. Then, when he was finished, she let him lead her out to the wedding feast, and from there to the rest of their lives.



Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20 CSB). The resurrection of Jesus and the gift of salvation is too important to be silent about. It must be shared with the world, for Jesus didn't just come for the Jews, but for all people.

Even at the end of *Jerusalem's Daughter*, there is a sense that this is not the end for these characters. Their journey to find the Messiah may be ending, but their journey to spread the good news about Jesus and the gifts of grace and salvation is only beginning. Similarly, our journey as Christians doesn't end when we believe in Jesus and accept God's grace; that is just the beginning of our walk with God. Through the Holy Spirit we can be continuously transformed and changed as we are drawn nearer to Him.

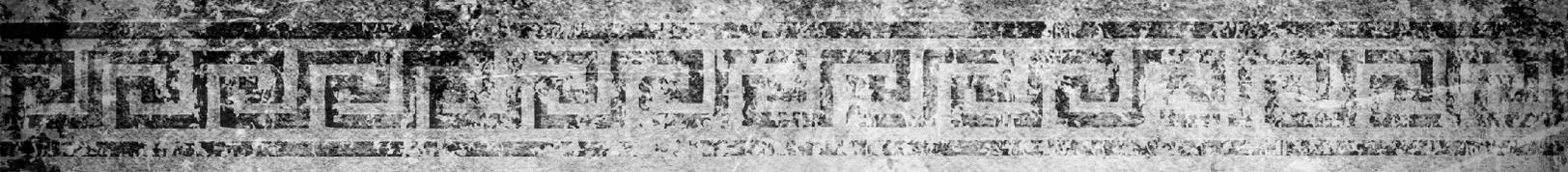
Faith in God and Jesus is a faith that moves, a faith that speaks, and a faith that takes action.

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

What does it look like to live out the Great Commission today? What are some ways, both big and small, that we as believers can answer that calling?

Consider the idea of the body of Christ and 1 Corinthians 12. According to this passage, believers are all given spiritual gifts upon receiving the Holy Spirit. Ministry looks different for every person; how can you serve God and minister to others in your own way?





Throughout the story, Shamira learns about the power of our words. She is told by her Sabba, "Your words have power, Shamira. God can use them in magnificent ways. Keep telling your story, keep speaking the words only you can speak." Sometimes a story just needs to be told, a testimony just needs to be shared, a word just needs to be spoken. Have you ever had an opportunity to share your testimony? What was that experience like for you?



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is an author of Biblical fiction whose debut novel, *Jerusalem's Daughter*, will be published in 2021. She graduated magna cum laude from California Baptist University with a B.A. in English.

Jenna is passionate about books, storytelling, and using the art of fiction to portray the truth of God's love. She enjoys sharing Christian fiction recommendations on her YouTube channel, and sharing all about her writing and personal life on Instagram and on her blog. She currently lives in Northern California with her husband, Brandon, and her toy Australian shepherd, Piper. She tries to live every day according to God's purpose, with what she calls a "Now Go!" mindset, in reference to her favorite passage of scripture, Exodus 4:11-12.

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