

Chronicle of Narnia Book Club

The Horse and His Boy

THE BOOK

The Horse and His Boy is the fifth book published in The Chronicles of Narnia (1954), although it is the third chronologically in the Narnia storyline. It takes place in Calormen and Archenland, neighboring countries south of Narnia, during the reign of High King Peter, Queen Susan, King Edmund, and Queen Lucy.

THE BIG PICTURE

God in His unconditional love, amazing grace, and immeasurable mercy has prepared a unique plan for each of our lives. Through His sovereign guidance, provision, protection, and presence He leads us to fulfill our destiny while still allowing free will for each of us. God uses trials and difficulties to help shape us and prepare us for His purposes (Ephesians 2:10) and our good, which is ultimately to be conformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

THE STORY IN SUMMARY & SPIRITUAL LESSONS ALONG THE WAY

At the beginning of this book we are introduced to Shasta and to Bree, a talking Narnian horse. It is during this glorious era of Narnia history, that Shasta dreams of traveling to the unknown North. One night he overhears the man he thinks is his father conspiring to sell him as a slave. In this moment, he also meets Bree and they decide together to escape during the night.

In the first days of their escape, the pair encounter two other travelers, Aravis a Tarkheena (daughter of a noble lord) and Hwin, another talking Narnian horse, who are also desperately escaping from their old lives to the freedom of Narnia.

MEET THE MAIN CHARACTERS

DISCUSSION: Of the four main characters in the book, which do you identify with? Why?

- **Shasta:**
- **Bree:**
- **Aravis:**
- **Hwin:**

Even though the two runaway children and their talking Narnian horses did their best to plan an escape from their respective situations, they still are in constant danger of being identified, caught at the risk of harsh punishment and lifelong servitude.

During their escape, they periodically encounter one or more cats and lions who cause them to initially come together, then to change directions several times, to be comforted when alone, and finally to race for their lives when in the greatest danger. The “cats” and “lions” were in fact just one lion, Aslan, who was guiding and protecting them even though they didn't realize it.

- 1. God's presence with us is never ceasing and always protecting, guiding, and providing for us even when we don't recognize it or feel it.**

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

DISCUSSION: What new perspectives did you gain as you think of God sovereignly leading you throughout your life's journey?

The four characters have one particularly dangerous and difficult part of their journey - they must travel through the great city of Tashbaan where they risk being recognized and caught!

Yet, as the story unfolds, we see Aslan's grand plan and design for both the children and their horses. Shasta has an encounter with a group of Narnian leaders from Archenland and is taken in by them, receiving necessary rest and protection before he escapes and continues on. Similarly, Avaris encounters a Calormen Tarkheena that she knows, named Lasaraleen. This is a dangerous encounter, but it ultimately allows Avaris to hear the secret plans of the vile Prince Rabadash. In the end, though content to be a Calormen Tarkheena, Lasaraleen assists with the escape of Avaris and the horses.

Eventually through all of this, it is becoming clear that their destiny is to save Narnia and its neighboring country of Archenland from the conniving and despicable Prince Rabadash, who is driven to conquer and overthrow these two peaceful kingdoms. Shasta specifically will later learn that it was always his destiny to be part of this critically-important moment in Narnia history.

Throughout the story, we see strong parallels in the lives of the children and with well-known biblical characters such as Joseph, Moses, and Esther. As God did in the biblical stories, we see God (Aslan) use the seemingly mundane, meaningless, and terrifying situations in the lives of the children and their horses to guide them to fulfill the plan He has destined for them.

2. God's plan for our life is far better than we could ever imagine and yet at times more difficult than we would want.

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (Genesis 50:20)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

DISCUSSION: We know this is true, but what was the reality of seeing the bigger plan and destiny for our lives - for our main characters? Did they see it, imagine it or even know that God was at work?

DISCUSSION: Looking at this, what should our response to God be?

In contrast with the bravery and courage of these 4 to escape to freedom and beauty Narnia, this story includes many other characters in this story that each reveal different hearts both for and against Narnia.

DISCUSSION: What do you notice about each character's response to Narnia? How might that look in our world today?

3. Our pride can rob us of joy and deny God the glory He deserves

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2)

DISCUSSION: Which characters in this story struggle with pride in some way? What is their pride based in? Have you ever struggled with this sort of pride yourself?

4. There are many things in our old selves that must change or be cast off in order for our faith to flourish.

But this is not the way you came to know Christ. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him—in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus— to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20-24)

DISCUSSION: How do each of the characters of this book reflect a different challenge in embracing personal faith and stepping into the freedom of Narnia and following Aslan?

BRINGING IT HOME

As a Follower of Jesus...

- 1. We can trust Him fully knowing He has a plan and purpose for our life!**
- 2. We can live with confidence knowing He is with us, watching over us, and working for us even if we can't see it or feel it.**
- 3. We must walk in humility knowing we are loved, gifted, called, and empowered by God and being willing to die to our old self in order to take hold of the new life we have in Christ.**

Recommended Additional Resources:

- 1. The Eternal Truths of Narnia - Julie Kloster*
- 2. A Family Guide to Narnia - Christin Ditchfield*