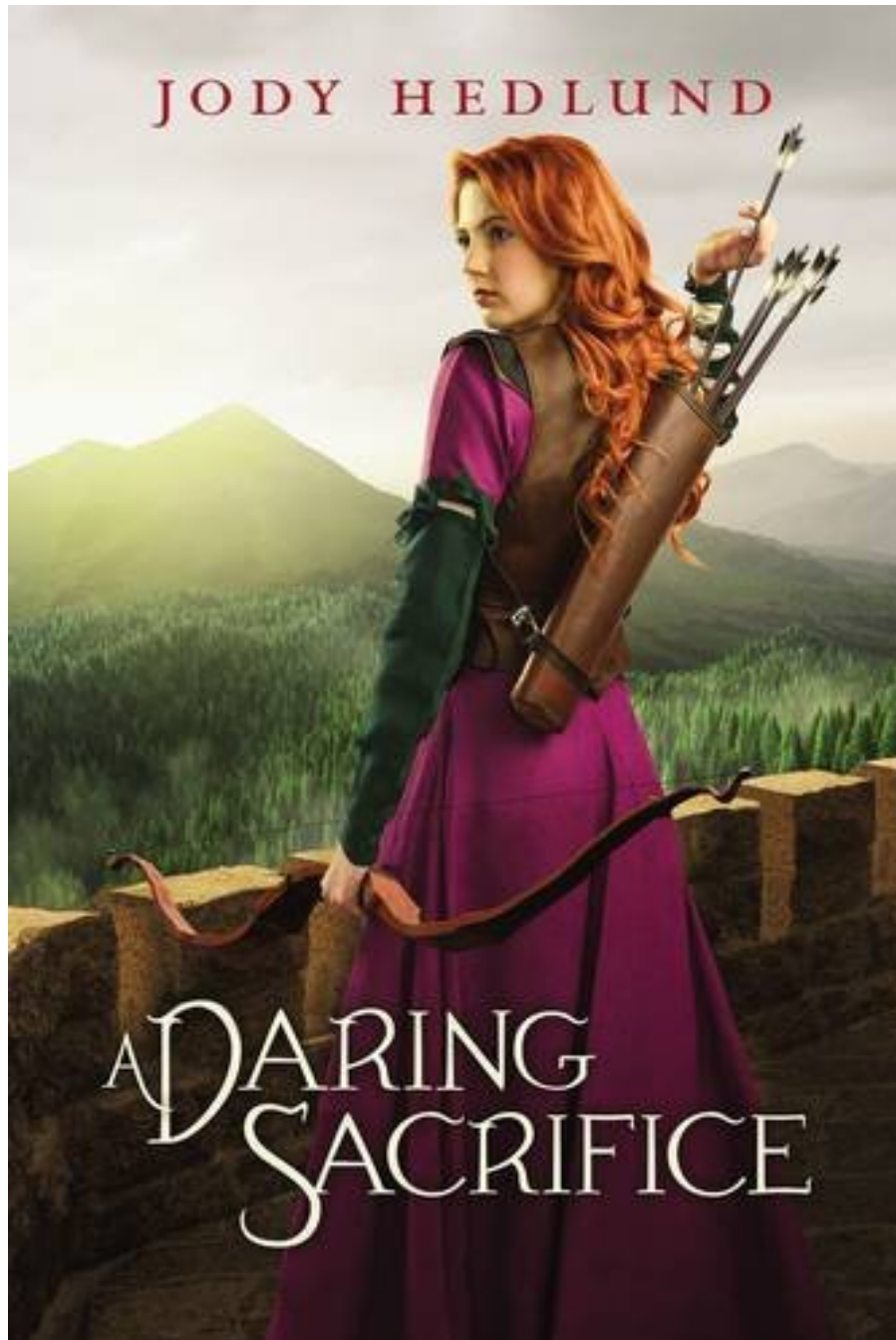


A Daring Sacrifice
Discussion Guide



Discussion Guide for *A Daring Sacrifice*

Instructions: This companion guide can be used for personal reflection or in small group settings. If used for a small group, the book is designed to be completed over the course of seven meetings. Ideally each participant should answer the discussion questions in advance, along with reading the corresponding chapters in *A Daring Sacrifice*. During the meeting, girls are encouraged to share the answers to their questions, and the leader can use the topics to facilitate further discussion within the group.

Introduction

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Read Chapters 7–9 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

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Note from the Author

Sacrifice. Let's be honest. That word isn't particularly popular, especially in today's me-centered culture.

Most of the time, we're conditioned by the world around us through advertisements, commercials, magazines, movies, TV, and even social media to focus on ourselves. We're bombarded with messages that draw our attention to what we should buy next, what we should wear, how we should feel, where we should go, etc.

It's all about making sure *we* get *our* needs met. First. And foremost. The world tells us our personal satisfaction is the most important thing and that we should do whatever it takes to be happy.

Unfortunately, that kind of mindset follows us into our dating relationships. All too often we want to have a boyfriend to make us happy. We want someone to make us feel good, look popular, or keep us company.

Even more unfortunately, when that type of self-centered mindset follows a couple into marriage, wedded bliss soon turns into a wedded battle as each person vies to get his or her needs met through the other person.

A Daring Sacrifice is my attempt to re-introduce this long-forgotten and little-used idea of self-sacrifice back into dating relationships. My twin daughters are entering the world of dating, and as I counsel them about what a healthy relationship looks like, I want to emphasize self-sacrifice—the giving up of our own interests or wishes in order to help others.

I want my daughters to enter into relationships not for what they can get out of them, but because they want to walk alongside a young man and serve God together. I don't want my daughters to be consumed with their own pleasure but rather be seeking to put aside the desires of their flesh. I even want my daughters to be willing to sacrifice a relationship—if need be—so they can remain faithful to bringing God glory.

That's tough! But then again, sacrifice wouldn't be sacrifice without some pain involved—maybe sometimes even lots of pain. Yet, if we can start implementing self-sacrifice in our dating relationships, then we'll be off to a good start in preparing for marriage and hopefully avoid the heartache that so many married couples today face.

As you read through *A Daring Sacrifice*, be sure to look for the many ways that Lady Juliana and Lord Collin make sacrifices for one another and the other people that they care about. It's my prayer that this companion guide will help facilitate introspection and discussion that will lead to a greater awareness and ability to add sacrifice back into relationships.

Whether you're currently in a dating relationship or still waiting for your prince charming to come along, take the time now to evaluate God's design and to build your castle with a solid foundation based on His Word and His principles.

Blessings,

Jody Hedlund

Section 1

Read Chapters 1–3 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Feeling alone

There are times when all of us feel lonely. We might feel different from the friends and family members around us, like we don't fit in. Or perhaps we're missing important people who used to be in our lives. Juliana often felt alone—she'd lost her father, and even though she'd made a new family with the peasants from her lands, she still didn't have a true home. She lived in exile and in fear, trying to be the leader her people needed but never sure she was succeeding.

When you feel alone or set apart, remember that God is always there for you. He has a shoulder for you to lean on, a hand to help you up, and a deep desire to listen to you, even if no one else will. It's normal to have feelings of loneliness, even though they can be hard to bear, but you don't have to bear them alone.

Read Deuteronomy 31:6

Question: Do you turn to God when you feel alone? If you do, what do you say to him? How does he help you feel better?

2. Wanting a connection

It's clear from the moment that we meet Lord Collin that he's missing his friends. He's returned home after years of being away, and now he has to find his place in the world all over again. He's desperately seeking a connection with someone who understands him and cares for him on a deeper level. Over the course of the story, he finds this connection in Juliana. She is the one person who doesn't make him feel alone any more.

This is a journey we all take as we look for the person we want to spend our lives with. But along the way, don't forget there is already someone made just for you in your life—God. He knows you better than anyone ever will, and he wants to be connected to you. Your relationship with God is the most important one you'll ever have, so take time to talk to him, to get to know him, and to let him into your life.

Read 1 John 3:1

Question: Are there people in your life that make you feel complete? People who you feel most comfortable with? What are some of the attributes of those people that you connect with the most? Why are these so important to you?

Section 2

Read Chapters 4–6 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Becoming aware of someone you didn't expect

Some relationships begin as friendships—years go by before any romantic feelings are introduced into the mix. Some people even fall for people that at one point they didn't like, much like Juliana and Collin. Juliana is surprised to learn that Collin wasn't one of the wealthy, entitled nobles she hated so much, and Collin has to reconcile the different sides of Juliana he knows: the young girl who kicked him, the Cloaked Bandit, and the courageous woman he loved.

The person you end up caring for might not be “obvious.” He might not be the cutest boy in class or the star of the sports team—he might be an old friend or someone you didn't always agree with. It can be strange when you start to see someone in a brand-new light, so ask God for guidance as you explore new feelings and learn more about someone you thought you knew.

Read Acts 9:1–19

Question: Have you ever changed the way you looked at someone? Why do you think it's important to look for different sides of people as you get to know them?

2. The power of attraction

We can immediately sense the attraction growing between Collin and Juliana as they begin spending time together. Sometimes those feelings of attraction can be so strong, even distracting.

There's nothing wrong with being attracted to someone, but it is important how you act on those feelings. Self-control is one of the virtues that God loves the most. Exercising that self-control in situations of attraction will allow you to develop a relationship with that person that extends beyond surface-level attributes like beauty or charm. Like Collin and Juliana, take the time to get to know the person you find attractive to see if what's on the inside is as nice as what is on the outside.

Read Galatians 5:22–23

Question: What kinds of things do you want to have in common with a significant other? Make a list, and the next time you feel drawn toward someone based on physical attraction, see if they meet your other qualifications.

3. The right kind of compliments

It can be very satisfying to get a compliment, to be told you look nice, especially by someone you like. However, we might not always get the *right* kind of compliment. Compliments on your appearance, while nice to hear, only go skin deep. At first, Collin sees Juliana as a pretty girl, and he often tells her how beautiful she is. But as he gets to know her better, he realizes her true beauty lies within her courage, her self-sacrificing nature, and the love she has for her people. When he praises *those* attributes, he is paying Juliana a true compliment.

Our society places a great deal of importance on what's on the outside: our clothes, our hair, our makeup, our jewelry. But God cares most about what's inside of us, and those are the things he wants us to praise in others. Think of ways you can give the right kinds of compliments to your friends and family, and help spread a culture of inner beauty among the people in your life.

Read 1 Peter 3:3–4

Question: What types of compliments do you give and get? Are they superficial, or do they go deeper? What do you think is the right balance between the two?

Section 3

Read Chapters 7—9 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Getting to know the person you care for

Collin and Juliana spend a short amount of time together—only one week—but they both work hard to get to know one another on a deeper level. Juliana soon discovers Collin’s kindness and sweetness, something she’s surprised to find since she had him pegged as just another heartless noble. Collin, on the other hand, is shocked to learn about all that Juliana has suffered through in the past, and is impressed by how she’s grown stronger because of it.

Getting to know the person you care for is important to building a healthy relationship. As we discussed earlier in this section, physical attraction is only a small part of the puzzle. Movies and books can sometimes dramatize “love at first sight” and make it seem like no work is needed to fall in love. But in fact, the opposite is true. Love is not based on outward appearances but on a connection fueled by understanding, trust, and common ground.

Read Proverbs 2:2–5

Question: What do you think is the best way to get to know someone?

2. Helping someone become a better version of themselves

We can’t force people to change. It isn’t our job, and it doesn’t usually work. But like Juliana, we can sometimes see a spark inside someone that we can help draw out. Juliana knows Collin has a good heart and wants to do what is right. However, he doesn’t understand the suffering of the poor the way she does. Because Juliana sees that spark of good in Collin, she is able to guide him into helping the peasants on his land. She doesn’t change Collin—she simply helps him become a better version of himself.

When you are in a friendship or a romantic relationship, you may find opportunities to help build up the people you care about. God wants us to bring out the best in others, and he wants us to do it with thoughtfulness, love, and grace. So the next time you see a place where a friend could improve, pray for guidance on how to help them. Don’t barge in and try to change everything at once, but instead be patient and help to draw out the purest and noblest parts that already exist inside them.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Question: What can you do to bring out the best in others? What can you do to bring out the best in *yourself*?

3. What makes for healthy competition?

When Juliana and Collin have an archery contest, they both want to win. Competition can be a good thing for friends or significant others...but it can also be a bad thing if it goes too far. So what makes for healthy competition?

First—having fun. Whether you are playing a game of one-on-one basketball, challenging someone to a Scrabble match, or even studying flashcards for a test, you should be having fun. When the fun stops and rivalry begins, the competition has gone too far. Second—the purpose of any competition should be to improve, not to prove who is better. We are all equal in the eyes of God, and it does us no good to think one person is more important than another. Healthy competition encourages us to enjoy a challenge, not to cheer for someone to win or lose.

Read Philippians 2:3–4

Question: Do you get too competitive sometimes? What happens when you do? How can you make sure you keep games or contests fun and fruitful?

Section 4

Read Chapters 10–12 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Fighting for those you love

When Juliana leaves, Collin doesn't think twice about going after her. He's found someone he truly cares about, and he doesn't want to let her go. He is willing to do whatever it takes to keep her safe and give her the life and the love she deserves.

Fighting for a relationship is about overcoming hardships and not letting disagreements or misunderstandings get in the way. This goes for friendships and romantic relationships, and it all stems from the way God loves *us*. No matter what we do, no matter how many times we mess up, God is always there to love us and forgive us. The way he cares for us is patient and everlasting, and he wants us to show that same love to the important people in our lives.

That isn't to say that we need to keep friends or significant others in our lives if they hurt us or are a bad influence. We must always be smart and protect ourselves, allowing the right kinds of people into our lives. But for those we do let in, we must accept their imperfections and allow them to stumble now and then. Most importantly, we need to let them know we will be there through it all.

Read John 13:34–35

Question: How can you show your friends and family that you are willing to go the distance for them?

2. Opinions that matter—what your friends and family have to say

Collin's first meeting with Bulldog doesn't go very well. In fact, it goes terribly! Like Juliana, Bulldog doesn't trust the nobility, and he doesn't believe Collin has Juliana's best interests at heart. But as he gets to know Collin, he realizes how much Collin cares for Juliana and that he's a good man.

It is important to listen to our friends and family when we bring someone new into our lives, whether that is a friend or a significant other. Those closest to us want what's best for us, and they can sometimes see things that we can't when we are wearing rose-colored glasses. It can be frustrating when your parents don't like a new friend, but listen to their thoughts and give them time to get to know each other. In the end, consider the opinions of your friends and family, whether or not they agree with you.

Read Proverbs 27:6

Question: If you were Bulldog, what would you think about Collin? Would you make an effort to get to know him better for Juliana's sake? If those closest to you were still throwing out red flags about someone in your life, even after getting to know them, what do you think you should do next?

Section 5

Read Chapters 13–15 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Why we sometimes resist our feelings

You see it in books and movies all the time—the hero or heroine tells their partner they don't love them, when really they do. Sometimes this is an act of sacrifice, or a way to save a life, or simply self-preservation. In *A Daring Sacrifice*, Juliana turns down Collin's proposal because she won't give up on her people. She puts others before herself, giving up a life of luxury and love with Collin to protect the people she's sworn to keep safe.

We all want to be happy, but Juliana knew her happiness would come at the expense of others. If she wasn't there to be the leader of the peasants, they would be in even greater danger from her uncle. Saying no to Collin was probably the last thing she wanted to do, but she believed that she had a bigger cause that she needed to put first.

There may come a time when you need to resist your feelings toward someone. It might be a hard choice, so ask for guidance when you find yourself in this situation. God will help show you the right path and the right choice.

Read John 3:16

Question: Do you think Juliana made the right choice? What would you have done if you were in her place? What might be some circumstances where you would be called to give up a relationship either temporarily or permanently?

2. How to deal with heartbreak

We all experience heartbreak at one time or another during our lives. It may be because we had a break up, had a friend move away, didn't get in to our top college, or a million other things. Unfortunately, heartbreak is a part of life, and it's important to know how to manage those feelings when they come.

Collin goes through a range of emotions after Juliana turns down his proposal. First, he is angry, then he is hurt, and finally he is just sad. Progressing through these emotions is normal, even though none of them feel good.

If you find yourself with a broken heart, turn to God in prayer. He's mended blind eyes, broken legs, and even raised people from the dead. He can un-break your heart. It might not be right away, but God will help heal what hurts if you put your trust in him.

Read Psalm 34:18

Question: Have you had your heart broken before? What happened? What did you do about it?

Section 6

Read Chapters 16–18 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. A cause bigger than yourself

Juliana knew there was something bigger and more important than her own pride and safety, and that was why she confessed to her crimes to save her people. In Bible times, Jesus's disciples understood this too. They were living for the kingdom of God, taking great risks to share the gospel with people who didn't believe in things like freedom of speech or freedom of religion. They knew they could be killed just for praising Jesus' name. But they did it anyway.

There are many things bigger than us out there in the world. In fact, we are teeny tiny! Always thinking about *me, myself, and I* closes you off to opportunities to participate in something big and important. That might be spreading the Good News, raising awareness about an issue in your community, or doing something selfless to help your friends or family. Find the causes that matter most to you, and allow yourself to think big.

Read Matthew 5:1–12

Question: Have you ever gotten involved in a movement or a cause? What did you do? What was it like?

2. What does self-sacrifice mean today?

Thankfully, you aren't likely to find yourself in a situation like Juliana and Collin did. They both offered to give up their lives to save each other and those they cared about. In modern times, our opportunities for self-sacrifice are not usually so extreme, but there are still ways we can give of ourselves to help others.

Start by following Jesus' lead. Jesus is the ultimate example of self-sacrifice, but not only because he died on the cross for our sins. He showed that same generosity and humbleness of spirit everywhere he went. He healed people, he blessed them, he got down on his knees and washed their feet...he even prayed for his enemies. He always thought of what he could do for his fellow man.

Your version of self-sacrifice can have different actions but the same motive. Find ways you can volunteer or lend a hand on a project. Limit your time on your phone or computer because you know it means a lot to your parents when you unplug and spend time with them. Help a friend study for a test or tutor a classmate in a subject you know well. Organize an event with your church or school that benefits those in need. These are little steps, but they can make a big difference.

Read Hebrews 13:16

Question: What can you sacrifice for the good of other people in your life?

Section 7

Read Chapters 19–21 in *A Daring Sacrifice*

1. Relying on the strength of others

Near the end of the story, Juliana has to rely on Collin to do something brave and terrible—he has to go on fighting without her. With her life in danger, Juliana must trust that Collin will keep the battle against her uncle going, that he will win the day to save her people and make sure Juliana’s death is not in vain. Having that kind of trust in someone is hard to come by, but it is a hallmark of a strong friendship or romantic relationship. It isn’t easy for us to give up control and put our fate in someone else’s hands, but that’s exactly what Juliana does with Collin. She knows him and she loves him, and she is certain he will do the right thing.

We know that our first step to trusting is to put our full faith in the Lord. He will never let us down. He will always do what is right. But he wants us to believe in the good of others too. Being able to trust another person with your thoughts, your secrets, and your insecurities means you’ve achieved a rare and important bond.

Relying on others isn’t a bad thing. It doesn’t mean you are weak. Quite the opposite, actually. It means you are strong enough to trust and blessed enough to have people in your life worthy of that trust. God calls us to seek help outside ourselves, both in him and in those around us. Read the verses below and reflect on God’s desire for us to work together.

Read Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 15:22, and Romans 12:4–5

Question: Besides the Lord, who do you rely on? A best friend, a parent, a teacher? How do they support you in difficult times? How can you do the same for them?

2. Love is sacrifice

If there is anything we can learn from Juliana and Collin, it is that love doesn’t come easy! Sacrifices big and small are necessary to make their relationship work—to make any relationship work. They teach us that compromises need to be made, that giving up one thing may mean gaining something better, and that being together is most important of all.

Love as sacrifice is a message we see appear over and over in Scripture, whether it is Jesus on the cross, Ruth leaving her home with Naomi, or Esther pleading with the king to save her people. We have to be willing to give of ourselves and to give of our love to make relationships prosper. Neither inflexibility nor keeping score have any place in love. In fact, the Bible tells us exactly what true love is like:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails ...” —1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)

Read 1 Corinthians 13:13

Question: How can you show that kind of love to the people in your life?



About Jody

Jody Hedlund is a best-selling and award-winning author who loves fairy-tales and happily-ever-afters. She makes her home in Midland, MI with her husband and five children. When she's not writing another of her page-turning stories, you can usually find her sipping coffee, eating chocolate, and reading.

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