

Redeeming the Bunny and the Fox

*A Devotional Adventure through
Courage, Perseverance, and Trust*

Sample
Chapter



Bethel Grove



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Redeeming the Bunny and the Fox: A Devotional Adventure through Courage, Perseverance, and Trust (Sample Chapter)

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To Weston, Russell, Martha, and Titus.

May you grow to have the courage to do what is right, never give up on the things that matter most, and trust in the Lord with all your hearts.

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Introduction



I have to be honest and admit that I do not clearly remember when I saw *Zootopia* for the first time. It came out in March 2016, which means that I had been out of college for less than two years. Don't get me wrong – I love Disney movies, but since I was a bigger princess fan, I was looking forward to *Moana* (which came out later that year) and the live action *Beauty and the Beast* (which came out a year later). So an animated movie about animals was not at the top of my watch list at the time. While I did enjoy it when I finally watched it, it was never one of my all-time favorites. I bought the DVD, which eventually ended up in one of my larger DVD cases, and was mostly forgotten.

However, my whole perspective changed when I finally got to see the long-anticipated sequel, *Zootopia 2*. That movie has become one of my favorite recent Disney animations, sharing both an entertaining and meaningful story that illustrates how far Nick and Judy's characters have come. My

eyes were opened to many biblical and spiritual themes that are present in the story. However, my interest grew while *Zootopia 2* was still in theaters. So I decided to go back and rewatch *Zootopia* and was surprised by what I found.

Just like the sequel, this film also had so many layers of themes that are biblical or spiritual, ones that are illustrated by using sentient animals to show things about our human nature. It reminds us of the importance of standing up for what is right, having courage when the odds are stacked against you, and how the lessons you learn through your greatest struggles can become your greatest tools to love and serve others. All you have to do is watch this film through the lens of the cross.

With this knowledge as the foundation, I invite you to embark with me on an adventure into the biblical and practical truths that are present in the story of *Zootopia*. This adventure will be full of twists and turns, very much like Nick and Judy's personal journeys. Through it all, you will hopefully rediscover an engaging tale of courage, perseverance, and hope pointing us back to the God who is the source of it all.

How to Use This Book



Redeeming the Bunny and the Fox is meant to be a guide through the spiritual themes present in the story of *Zootopia*. Some of the themes we explore will be truths that are biblical in their nature. Others will be illustrations of the consequences of our sins if we choose to reject biblical truth. All of these truths will weave a tale of courage, perseverance, and hope that you won't soon forget.

In each chapter, there will be a description based on one or more scenes of *Zootopia*, reflections, Scriptures (which are italicized for distinction), "Going Deeper" questions, and additional Scripture references related to that chapter's theme. While we will mostly be drawing from the first film, there may also be some information from the *Zootopia Plus* series and *Zootopia 2*.

Due to copyright restrictions, I will be limited in my ability to share story dialogue in this book.

Therefore, direct quotations from *Zootopia* will be limited. Instead, I will give scene descriptions and reference short quotes that should help you know which part of the story I am referencing. If you are unfamiliar with the scene, I encourage you to go look it up on Disney Plus, Blu-ray/DVD, YouTube, or elsewhere on the internet, so you can follow along with the story.

I want to clarify that while I am aware that this film is titled *Zootropolis* in many European markets, I will stick to calling the city in this story Zootopia for clarity. I will also stick to the character names from the American release of this film. I hope this will not prevent any international readers from enjoying this book.



Here are a few recommendations to prepare yourself for these devotionals:

- 1) Familiarize yourself with *Zootopia*, especially if you haven't watched it in a while.

- 2) Have a pen/pencil and paper handy if you want to take notes, especially if you plan to use them for the “Going Deeper” questions.
- 3) Have your Bible or Bible app ready when you read. I recommend using the ESV or NIV since those versions are the ones that will be used most often in this book.

This book can be used in one of two ways. First, you can read five devotions a week for five weeks, which will take 35 days to complete. Second, you can read one devotion every day for 25 days, which will take three and a half weeks. The first option is designed for those who want to use this for a group Bible study. You can find instructions for how to lead a Bible study through *Redeeming the Bunny and the Fox* starting on page 200.

Since this is a book based on what is seen as a children’s film, I also want to explain that there are multiple ways to use this with your family. First, if your child is around junior high age and/or has solid reading skills, then they should read this book themselves to see what they can learn from it on their own. If your children are younger or are not at the right reading level yet, I would encourage you to go through the devotional yourself first. Then, you can use the themes and lessons discussed in these chapters to start discussions with

your kids. I hope this will turn this book into a tool that you can use to have meaningful conversations with your whole family that can shape the way they see the movies they watch.

If you don't have a family or you just happen to be a big Disney/*Zootopia* fan, then you are in good company, because that is exactly where I am. I believe that this story has something to teach everyone who is willing to view the movies we watch through the lens of the cross. Let's get started.

Chapter 1

Never Gonna Quit



Nine-year-old Judy Hopps, a bunny, and her friends had been hard at work preparing for this year's Carrot Days Talent Show at Woodlands Elementary School, and now it was finally here. As the curtain opened, Judy shared about how predators used to have a "biological urge" to hunt and kill prey. She showed this by using red dancing ribbons and ketchup to show her ancestor being killed by a savage tiger. She shared how the world used to be divided between predator and prey, until animals evolved so they could live together in

peace. This gave every mammal opportunities to pursue their dreams, regardless of their species.

One of her friends, a lamb, shared how she wanted to be an astronaut. Another, who was a cheetah, shared how he wanted to be an actuary. Finally, Judy then revealed that her dream was to be a police officer in the great animal city of Zootopia, a place where “anyone could be anything.” As Judy and her friends took their bows, Judy was so excited about pursuing her dream.

Later that day, as Judy was walking with her parents through the festival, they expressed concern about Judy’s dream, because there had never been a bunny cop, especially in the big city of Zootopia. This did not discourage her, since she was ready to become the first, and change the world for the better. They tried to insist that she could also change the world as a carrot farmer, but as they continued to talk, Judy noticed something was wrong with her friends. As she went to investigate, she saw Gideon Grey, a fox who often picked on her, trying to bully her friends into giving him their carnival tickets.

Judy came forward and insisted that he needed to stop and return their tickets. Gideon made fun of her cop costume. He reminded her that since he

was a fox, his savage instincts were still there. Judy boldly told Gideon that she was not scared and he pushed her to the ground. When he kept making fun of her for being scared and almost crying, she kicked him back, almost hitting him in the mouth. This made him even more mad, asking her why she didn't know when she needed to quit. Gideon then showed his claws and scratched little Judy on the cheek. Then he put her hand on her head and told her that this was the moment that she needed to remember if she ever believed she could become more than a "carrot-farming, dumb bunny." When her friends came to check on her, she gave them back their tickets. They told her that she didn't need to listen to what Gideon said. But she told them there was one thing that he got right: when it came to the things that were important to her, she was never going to quit.



The school play and everything that follows is a fun way to introduce us to Judy's character. And from the beginning, everyone likes Judy. We are on her side and want to see her achieve her dreams. Judy has a beautiful dream of wanting to make the

world a better place. It's interesting to note that she believed that the best way to make this happen was to become a cop. In a world that has seen a lot of hate and animosity towards law enforcement, this view is becoming a rare one. But it's a reminder that making a difference often requires us to do hard things, even if we face resistance. It certainly doesn't take Judy long to face this resistance, even from within her own family, but we will talk about her parents' reaction in upcoming chapters.

What I really want to focus on here is what we can observe about Judy's character from the way that she responded to Gideon. There are three traits that she shows here that are worth mentioning. First, she has a strong sense of justice. She knew that the way that Gideon was treating her friends was wrong and she was willing to stand up against it. That is quite admirable, and a call that Scripture gives us:

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17 NIV).

Throughout the rest of the story, this is a trait that we will continue to see in her. If she knows that something is wrong, she wants to make it right, especially when it's for someone who cannot

defend themselves. I think that it's those that have this strong sense of justice that make some of the best cops, lawyers, or politicians. These people will use all the tools at their disposal to right any injustice that they see. Again, this is quite admirable.

The second trait Judy shows in this scene is courage. Despite being scared, she was willing to stand up to a bully who was bigger than her. Even after he shoved her to the ground, she fought back. Even after she was injured, she still managed to get her friends' tickets. I know that there are a lot of kids in similar situations who end up being paralyzed by their fears. But Judy found courage because she knew that what she was doing was right. Just as Joshua and the people of Israel found courage in this declaration from the Lord as they claimed the land He promised them:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9 NIV).

By not giving into fear, you are putting your trust in the Lord and denying your opponent what they want to see in you. It's interesting to note that we do not hear of Gideon bullying Judy in this way before or after this scene. I think that may have

been because he knew that if he tried again, she would fight back, which made the idea much less appealing. The choice to find courage to do the right thing is compelling, even from a little bunny.

The last and most important trait that is shown here is perseverance. I find the comment from Gideon about not knowing when to quit to be compelling, as well as Judy admitting that it was true. In this situation, Judy knew that she was doing the right thing by defending her friends and taking back what was stolen from them. It didn't matter how much Gideon mocked her stage play or her dream of being a cop – what mattered was doing what was right. She was willing to do the right thing, no matter the cost.

It makes me think of a character from the Old Testament who also knew that things were not right in his world. Then, he was asked by God to do something that seemed insane to the people around him. They mocked and teased him for years as he worked hard to do what God asked him to do. This project took a very long time, but he did not give up, even when things were difficult. He believed that God would do what He said He would do, until that courage and perseverance was finally rewarded.

If you know your Bible stories, you probably know that I am talking about Noah. God asked him to build an oversized houseboat on dry land for a flood that would not come for about a hundred years. A lot of people miss this detail, but Noah was about 500 when his sons were born (Genesis 5:32), but he was 600 years old when he entered the Ark (Genesis 7:6). Some scholars believe that it could have taken Noah up to a hundred years to complete the construction of the Ark.

While we don't know the exact timeframe, what we can conclude is that it took a very long time to finish and his neighbors were less than supportive of what he was doing. While not recorded in Scripture, it is believed that Noah tried to warn his neighbors about the coming flood, trying to convince them to repent from their wicked ways. This obviously did not go over well. But through it all, Noah did not give up. Even when he was heckled for years on end. Even when he had no proof other than God's word to him that a flood was coming. He never faltered and did everything that God commanded him to do (Genesis 6:22; 7:5). That's an incredible amount of courage and faithfulness on his part. It captures the heart of

what was written thousands of years later in the book of Hebrews:

“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (Hebrews 10:36 NIV).

As we continue on this journey with Judy, I think it’s important to follow how these traits will shape her story. She will need her sense of justice, courage, and perseverance to become the cop she was meant to be. She will just have to overcome all the odds that are currently stacked against her.



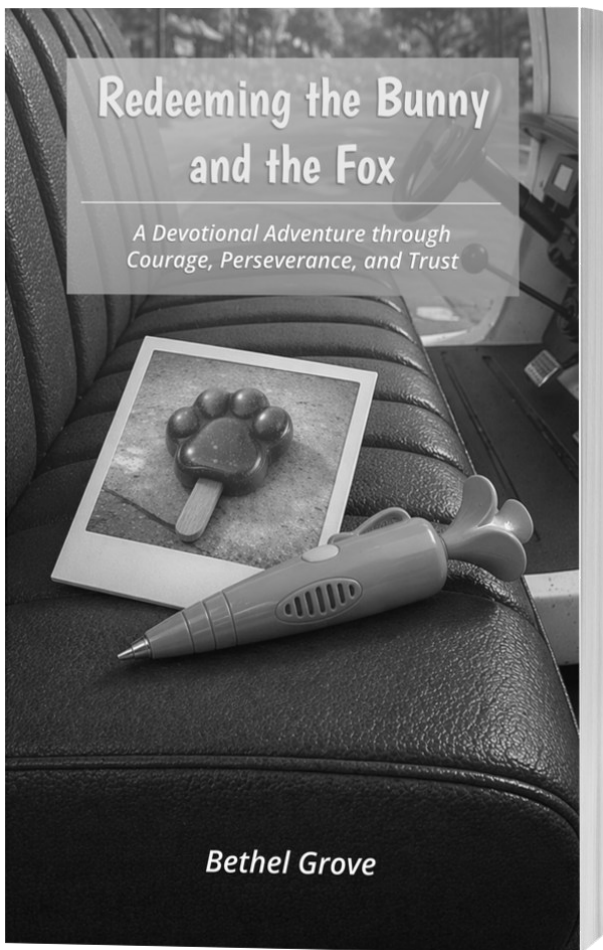
Going Deeper

1. Do you think a world of sentient animals has lessons to teach us about our own world? Why or why not?
2. In what ways can we seek justice for those that cannot defend themselves?
3. What choices can we make in our mindset that will make us more likely to choose courage over fear?
4. What can we learn from the story of Noah about persevering when things get tough?
5. What decisions can we make to choose justice, courage, and perseverance today?

Other Verses on Courage, Justice, and Perseverance

Proverbs 31:8-9, Psalm 82:3, Galatians 6:9, James 1:3-4, Genesis 6-7, Hebrews 11:7

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