

THE  
HEART  
CHANGER  
Teacher's Guide

# The Heart Changer

## Teacher's Guide

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## GETTING TO KNOW JARM (PRONOUNCED ‘YARM’) DEL BOCCIO:

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE INSPIRATIONAL STORY?

I must say “Jane Eyre.” Not only do I love novels set in the 1800’s, but Jane’s determination to be chaste, honorable and forgiving in the face of hardship. She inspires me! As far as children’s books? Hmmm. There are so many good ones. “The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe,” L.M. Montgomery’s works, the Betsy-Tacy Series, Little House on the Prairie Series, and “Charlotte’s Web” come to mind. And believe it or not, I learned to read very early in life, and one of my favorite authors was Dr. Seuss!



### IF YOU COULD LIVE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, WHERE WOULD IT BE?

That’s a tough question for a world traveler! Either the Cotswolds in England, the French Countryside, or Joppa in Israel — that’s right— the town where Jonah boarded the ship for his fateful journey. It’s so quaint.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE?

Psalm 27:4 ESV

*One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to inquire in his temple.*

It’s all about simplicity — focusing on the most important One in my life.

If you want to know more about me, visit my website at: <https://www.jarmdelboccio.com/> Sign up for my newsletter and follow my journey. I’d love to keep in touch with my readers!

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WHAT BIBLE CHARACTER DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH, AND WHY?

Hmmmm. Probably Hannah in the Old Testament — I prayed for a child for many years, but God chose to close my womb and open my heart for adoption. My husband and I adopted a son and daughter from Russia years ago, and they have enriched our lives greatly. In fact, *The Heart Changer* is dedicated to our daughter, Olivia!

WHERE IS YOUR MOST FAVORITE PLACE TO WRITE?

In my second floor Victorian sitting room, with a lighted crystal candle and a cup of White Peony tea resting on an antique table by my side.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCENE IN THE NOVEL?

Where Adara is comparing life to a tapestry: we see the underside, full of tangles, but God sees the beautiful pattern on top. He makes all things work together for good!

## GETTING TO KNOW MIRIAM:

WHAT WOULD YOUR MAIN CHARACTER, MIRIAM, CHOOSE FOR HER FAVORITE FOOD?

If she's anything like me, it would be a pomegranate or a dessert similar to baklava: puff pastry, walnuts and honey!

AND HER FAVORITE COLOR?

Oooh. I never thought of that. Hmmmm. Maybe blue . . . like the sky. Or deep red, the inside color of pomegranates.

WOULD SHE HAVE HAD A FAVORITE SONG?

Well, there were no radio stations or Pandora back then, so probably a Psalm set to music? Psalm 139 comes to mind, where David talks about how fearfully and wonderfully made we are!

QUESTIONS ABOUT MIRIAM'S STORY TO PONDER:

- Who do you think the “Heart Changer” is? Why do our hearts need changing?
- Our friends and family can see our actions and hear our words. But many times we are able to hide our true feelings. Can anyone see deep down in your heart? If so, what would He find there?
- Why did Miriam have a hard heart?
- If you were taken from your home, what would you miss the most?
- Is it okay to question God?
- When could you see Miriam's heart beginning to change?
- Why was Rana's heart jealous of Miriam? Have you ever felt jealous? Of whom?
- Have you ever felt like turning your back from God because of difficult circumstances?
- Do you think it was wrong of Miriam to light the candles to Adara's god?
- What circumstance in your life seems like a tangled tapestry? How can God make it beautiful? Can you see it happening right now?
- Which character did you relate to the most? Why?
- What is another way Miriam's story could have ended?
- Would Miriam have influenced Naaman for good if she would have shown hate instead of forgiveness?

## RESEARCHING THE SETTING:

If you are brave, look online at images of leprosy. Research the symptoms, and the fate of those centuries ago, before modern medicine had a cure. In the Bible, what is leprosy a picture of? What can wash our hearts clean of sin?

In Bible times, people with leprosy were isolated and sent to the wilderness to live. No one from their family would visit, since they'd be afraid they would catch the disease themselves if they touched a leper. So these men, women and children lived the rest of their lives without the communication or touch from their loved ones. What would you find the most difficult about living far away from your family and friends if you had leprosy?

2 Kings 17: 7-23 tells us why Israel was taken into captivity. What were some of those reasons?

Why did they make God angry? Did they ever repent? Judah was also taken into captivity, but by Babylon. Did they ever repent? What happened as a result?

Syria is north of Israel. Can you find it on a map? How far is Damascus from Samaria? That is how far Miriam walked as a captive. What is the farthest distance you have walked? What part of that walk would be the most difficult for you? Heat? Tiredness? Lack of food?

The Golan Heights is land between Israel and Syria, and a battleground between the two countries (and at times, Egypt) for years. Research the wars through the years over this land — and the Druze who live there. Here is an article to help you understand: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/21/world/middleeast/golan-heights-israel.html>

You might be interested to connect with Charlie Dyer and The Land and the Book Podcasts: <https://www.moodyradio.org/programs/the-land-and-the-book/> He talks about all things pertaining to Israel each Saturday morning.

What are the major rivers in Syria? Find the Jordan River near Samaria where Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy. What is the flora and fauna like around these rivers? Are they clean or muddy today?

We have heard much about Syria and it's refugees. Look up the Syrian refugee crisis online. What is life like for a refugee child?

Write a short report about the country of Syria and anything that interests you— it's food, culture, flora or fauna.

## ACTIVITIES RELATING TO *THE HEART CHANGER:*

What's in a name? Look up the meaning of the names in *The Heart Changer*, such as Miriam, Naaman, Jonas, etc. What kind of character do they reflect? What about your name? Does it fit your character? Can our character or heart change for the good?

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List some names of God. Which ones speak to your heart? Check these links for a list if you need suggestions: <https://www.navigators.org/resource/praying-names-attributes-god/> <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/10-names-of-god-and-what-they-mean.html>

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Look up the word 'heart' in Scripture. Make a list of the kinds of hearts we can have. Describe the heart in these verses: Psalm 51:17, 2 Chronicles 34:31, Psalm 16:9, Deuteronomy 5:29.

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## HELP FOR THE HEART:

Here is a insightful study: [https://www.hendricksonrose.com/Christian/Books/easy\\_find?Ntk=keywords&Ntt=Transformed%20heart](https://www.hendricksonrose.com/Christian/Books/easy_find?Ntk=keywords&Ntt=Transformed%20heart)

Looking for a devotional to help shape your heart? Check this one out. <https://www.amazon.com/Girls-Like-You-Devotional-Tweens/dp/0736961755>

What lies can our hearts believe? Find the answers here: <http://www.liesyoungwomen-believe.com/>

“Lord now indeed I find Thy power and Thine alone can change the leper’s spots and melt the heart of stone.” - from the hymn, *Jesus Paid it All*



## SYRIAN RECIPES:

Looking for Syrian recipes to try? Here is a great website: <http://www.syriancooking.com/>

<http://www.syriancooking.com/other-desserts/baklawa-baklava>

<http://www.syriancooking.com/other-desserts/roz-bhaleeb-rice-pudding>

<https://youtu.be/BjgR1WUu8no> Syrian Sesame/pistachio cookies on YouTube

### STUFFED ZUCCHINI (KOUSA MAHSHI)

*compliments of my friend, Theresa — taken from her Middle Eastern recipe box*

#### INGREDIENTS:

- about 10 small zucchinis
- 2-3 tbsp of tomato paste
- 1 cup of basmati rice
- 1 package or 1 pound of minced beef or lamb
- 1 tomato diced
- 1/2 onion diced
- 1/3 cup of parsley, mint, and coriander
- 1/4 tsp chili powder
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp allspice
- 1/2 tsp salt and pepper

#### DIRECTIONS:

Thoroughly combine all of the ingredients except the zucchinis. This will be your stuffing.

Cut off the zucchini stalks, then slice off the dried tips at the opposite ends without removing too much flesh. Carefully hollow out the zucchini from the stalk end by pushing and turning a manakra: (<https://irregularjourneys.wordpress.com/2016/03/28/kousa-mahshi/>) into the flesh. The tool will remove thin fingers of flesh at a time; keep hollowing until you have a generous cavity. (Reserve the zucchini flesh for another purpose, such as an omelette.) Fill a bowl with water and add 1 tsp salt. Wash the zucchini in the salted water (this helps to keep them firm when cooking), then drain.

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Fill each zucchini with the stuffing, leaving 1 cm free at the top to allow the filling to expand. It's easiest to fill the zucchini by hand, tapping them on the bench every now and then to settle the stuffing down. If you have any leftover stuffing, shape it into meatballs.

Fill a large saucepan with water and add 2 tbsp salt and the tomato paste. Add the stuffed zucchini and any meatballs and bring to the boil. Simmer over low heat for about 1 hour, allowing the sauce to reduce. Serve the stuffed zucchini with a little of the sauce

### RUZ MA BEZELLA (RICE WITH PEAS)

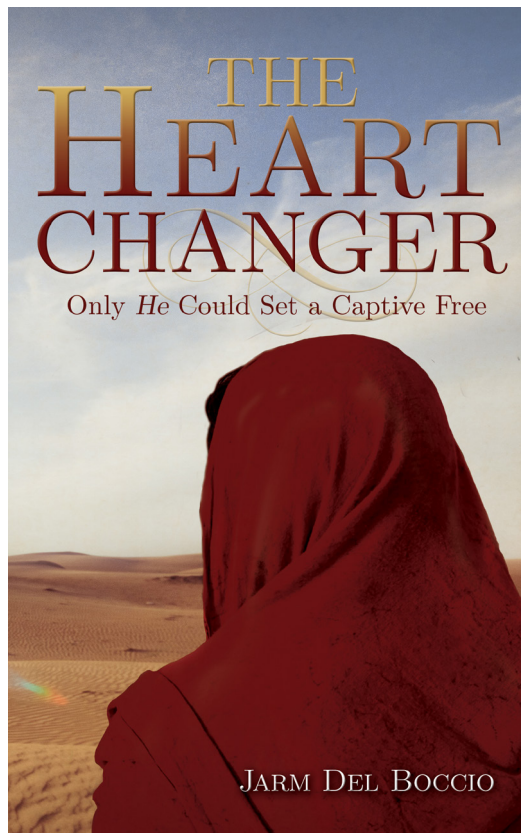
*Served for Mother's Day, March 21st, in Syria*

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 3/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 kg ground beef
- 1/2 kg peas
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 cubes beef stock
- 3 cups rice
- 7.5 cups water

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

Pour oil in a big pot on high heat. Add ground beef, peas, spices (everything except the beef stock cubes). Stir until browned. Add rice, stock and 1.5 cups water for every cup of rice (7.5 cups in total). Cover and allow to simmer until rice is cooked. Serve with sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, red pepper on top of platter, and with a side of salad.



For more information about  
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&  
***The Heart Changer***  
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