

**HEIDI
BOOK GROUP**

HANDBOOK

BY YUKO BRASH

Preface

The novel *Heidi* was published by Johanna Spyri in 1880 under the original – and rather serious sounding – title, *Heidis Lehr – und Wanderjahre* (*Heidi: Her Years of Wandering and Learning*). The book was an instant bestseller, and the following year Spyri published a sequel: *Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat* (*Heidi: How She Used What She Learned*).

The book with which we are familiar today contains both parts, and is known as, simply, *Heidi*. Chapters 1 – 14 are from the 1880 original and chapters 15 – 23 come from the 1881 sequel. This book group handbook covers the first fourteen chapters from the original book, and the material is divided up to be read over nine weeks.

This handbook is based on the Usborne Illustrated Original version of *Heidi* (2013). When page references appear in the notes they refer to this version. However, it is possible to use this handbook with any English version of *Heidi*, as long as it is a complete (rather than abridged) translation. The Usborne version is complete and unabridged, but some parts have been slightly simplified and clarified for modern readers. This makes it ideal for use with group members who are not native speakers of English. It is a beautifully illustrated hardback, and would make a fine souvenir of your book group.

Each week, Bible verses are included in the notes. These are, of course, related to the chapter(s) for discussion that week, and they have also been chosen for being memorable, even for those who are new to the Bible. If you are leading the group, it will be helpful to think in advance about how you can best explain these verses to the other group members, whether or not they are Christians. Intentionally, the Bible passages move closer to the heart of the gospel message as the weeks go on. As the nine weeks come to an end, I hope you'll be able to share the wonderful Good News of Jesus as well as the wonderful story of Heidi! Of course, after the nine studies in this handbook are finished, your group may wish to keep on reading through the rest of *Heidi*. But it is my hope that there may be a natural progression for some groups into a Bible study group.

All quotations from the Bible are from the ESV (Anglicised edition). There is also a Japanese/English bilingual version of this handbook available, which may be downloaded (free of charge) from the *Japan Christian Link* website. If you are reading *Heidi* with native speakers of other languages, you may wish to print out the Bible passages for them in advance each week. You can search for Bible verses in many different languages on the Bible Gateway site (<https://www.biblegateway.com/>).

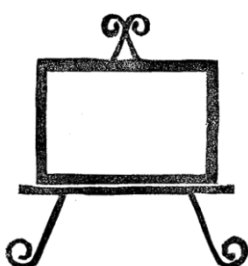
I hope you enjoy your group!

Yuko Brash
Ascension 2019

Key to symbols:



Discussion Question(s).



These Bible verses are given for reference. If you have a Bible you may wish to look these up, but it's not necessary to do so.

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Week 1

1 Up to the Alm Uncle

One morning in June, Dete is bringing her niece Heidi from Maienfeld to the mountain hut belonging to the Alm Uncle. In the little mountain village of Dörfli, Dete's friend Barbel joins them, and they begin to talk about the Alm Uncle's past. On the way, Heidi meets the goatherd, Peter. At the mountain hut, Dete and the Alm Uncle part after a quarrel, and Heidi is left to stay with the Alm Uncle.

Where: The Swiss Alps

Peaceful countryside
Green meadows
Succulent grasses
Fragrant flowers
Rich nature

Deep valleys
Wild land
Narrow and steep paths
Towering mountains
Poor village

Who:

Adelheid		Grandmother	
Alm Uncle		Heidi	
Barbel		Old Ursel	
Brigitte		Peter	
Dete		Tobias	



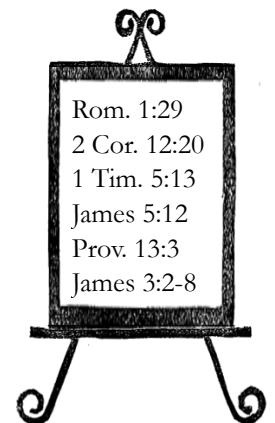
What do people say about the Alm Uncle?

Chatterboxes Dete and Barbel

On the walk up the mountain, Dete and Barbel chat away about everybody and everything in Dörfli (p. 8). They talk especially about the Alm Uncle, just like the villagers always do, but even Barbel admits it is hard to tell whether everything they say is true or not (p. 11). Barbel insists that she can keep a secret and promises not to tell anyone what Dete has told her about the Alm Uncle (p. 12).

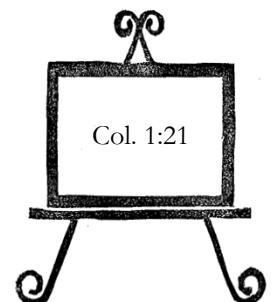


*Do you think Barbel will keep her word? Do you find keeping a secret or promise easy?
Are you sometimes tempted to gossip?*



The Alm Uncle's Backstory, according to Dete

The Alm Uncle is the eldest son of one of the best farming families in the area of Domleschg. He was badly-behaved in his youth, and after spending his family money on gambling and alcohol, he disappeared. There was a rumour that he had become a soldier and gone to Naples (or that he had been dismissed from the army for killing a man after an argument). One day he suddenly reappeared in his hometown with a son called Tobias, but no-one in the village would help him. So he moved to Dörfli, but even there, no one would trust him. That is why he lives in a mountain hut on the Alm, cut off from God and other people (or, "at war with God and man [p. 15]).

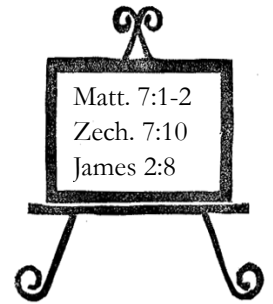




What does Peter the goatherd's house look like (p. 16)? What is a typical summer's day like for Peter (p. 17)?

The Villagers of Dörfli

- ⊗ When the Alm Uncle moved to Dörfli with his son Tobias, nobody would trust him.
- ⊗ Peter's family is extremely poor, with no man in the house to provide for them. However, no-one will help them.
- ⊗ When Dete leaves Heidi with the Alm Uncle, the villagers criticise Dete and say of Heidi, "Poor thing!" But they never offer to help Heidi in any way.



When Tobias and Adelheid died, people said "the fate of these two was the Uncle's punishment for his wicked life," and their pastor urged him to repent (p. 15). Do bad things happen to people because they are wicked?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 1 Peter 3:10

Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:18

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honours him. Proverbs 14:31

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:21

Week 2

2 At Grandfather's

It's Heidi's first day in the mountain hut. At first, there is a striking contrast between the bright and chatty Heidi and the taciturn Alm Uncle, but after a while Heidi's demeanour begins to soften her grandfather's disposition. Already, we see that he has looked after his hut well, working skilfully with his hands and taking tender care of the goats. Contrary to readers' expectations, he looks after Heidi kindly. In *this* old man's "poor" hut Heidi is refreshed in body and spirit, and ends her day peacefully.

The Alm Uncle and Heidi – Contrasting Characters

	The Alm Uncle	Heidi
Movement	Sits down on his bench, motionless	Explores, discovers, runs about the room, searches every corner, works busily away, darts away and rushes back, runs out, leaps, jumps, laughs
Voice	Sits in silence, replies gruffly	Cries out, asks excitedly, pours out her questions
Eyes	Stares at the ground, looks at Heidi sharply	Looks around in delight, peers in, her dark eyes dance with excitement, is entranced (by the bed), is fascinated by everything



Later in the day, the Alm Uncle...

- ⊗ Praises the bed Heidi made up.
- ⊗ Makes her bed double thickness.
- ⊗ Gives her a generous, tasty lunch.
- ⊗ Praises Heidi for taking initiative.
- ⊗ Tidies up the hut and the goats' hut.
- ⊗ Takes care of the goats.
- ⊗ Quickly makes new furniture for Heidi.
- ⊗ Repairs the hut.
- ⊗ Makes dinner, tells Heidi where things are kept, and puts her to bed early.
- ⊗ At night, when a strong wind noisily buffets the hut, is worried whether Heidi might be frightened, and gets up to go and check on her.



Do you think the rumours or remarks about the Alm Uncle we saw in chapter 1 were fair?

How the Alm Uncle Changes

When Heidi first arrives, he stares at the ground and looks at Heidi sharply (pp. 25-6).



In the evening, he stands in the doorway and watches Heidi leaping about (p. 32).



At night, he stands looking at Heidi as long as the moon shines (p. 34).

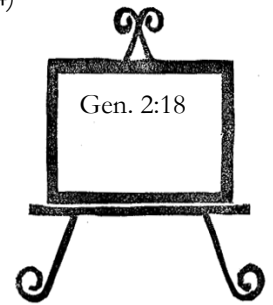


Having read this chapter, what is your impression of the Alm Uncle?

The Switzerland of the nineteenth century in which Spyri lived, and which she described in the novel, was very poor. In particular, the Swiss Alps were thought of as an extremely dangerous and barbarous region. In chapter 13, it says “Sebastian was sure that the countryside was wild and savage” (pp. 173-4). In this context, Heidi finds herself in a little mountain hut with only two goats! But there, she drinks fresh goat’s milk that was “the best she’d ever had,” enjoys lunch that “tasted delicious,” feels “perfectly content” (p. 31), and sleeps soundly in “the finest bed in the world.” (p. 34)



What do you think true riches are? What would you describe as a truly fulfilled life?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man. Ecclesiastes 3:13

Sweet is the sleep of a labourer, whether he eats little or much. Ecclesiastes 5:12

The work of a man’s hand comes back to him. Proverbs 12:14

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 Timothy 6:17

Week 3

3 In the Pasture

For the first time Heidi spends a full day in the pasture. She cannot hide her surprise and delight at all she sees, from the mountain flowers, to the goats, and the sunset. With the somewhat inarticulate Goat-Peter, Heidi passes a most happy day! We enjoy the interaction between the characters: Heidi, who wants to know everything; Peter, who desires to know no more than is absolutely necessary; and the Alm Uncle, who seems to know all things. In summary, this chapter gives us an immersive experience of a wonderful summer on the Alm.

The Sun Watches

In the morning, the Alm Uncle (Grandfather) tells Heidi to wash her face. He says, “You must wash and make yourself clean, or the sun will laugh at you, if he sees you all dirty and black” (p. 36). For the Alm Uncle, who at this point does not have faith in God, the sun is the highest power that oversees life on earth.



Do you think of the sun as something like a “god,” that rules the heavens and the earth and sees everything?

The Flowers of the Alps

Heidi is mesmerised by the beautiful flowers on the Alm. She picks them and brings them home in her apron. But when Heidi opens her apron, all the flowers are completely faded. When Heidi was looked after by Old Ursel just before she moved to live with the Alm Uncle, she had to stay indoors all the time. Perhaps the flowers stuffed in her apron symbolise Heidi *then*, and the wild flowers blooming happily in the sun symbolise Heidi *now*.



The Eagle

Heidi sees an eagle flying high above the mountain. Its screams are sharp, loud, and piercing. Later, Heidi asks Grandfather why the bird screams so. His reply reflects what he thinks in his own heart; mocking the people who live down below in the villages, all crammed together making each other cross (p. 49).

Calling by Name

Peter the goatherd knows all the goats’ names. As he teaches Heidi these names, Heidi pays attention, studies them carefully, noticing their differences, and soon she learns them all too (p. 43). Calling something by its name shows your interest and affection towards it. In chapter 1, we saw how the villagers of Dörfli only called Peter’s mother, “Goat Peter’s mother,” even though her real name was Brigitte, and his grandmother simply “Grandmother” (p. 17). Everyone also calls the Alm Uncle “the Alm Uncle,” and we, as readers, never discover these old folks’ real names. The interest, concern and affection that Heidi has towards the goats are greater than those of the villagers of Dörfli towards Peter’s family and the Alm Uncle.

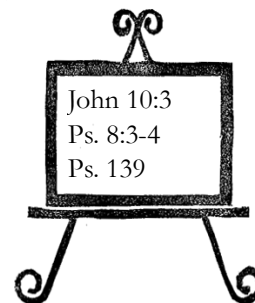


*Do you think the sun knows you by your name? What about God, if he exists?
Does God know you by your name?*

Heidi loves and comforts Snowflake, who was recently orphaned. Heidi can show great compassion, perhaps because she herself is an orphan.



Do you think suffering might make you a more compassionate person?



The Sun Speaks

Heidi is deeply moved by the beautiful sunset glow on the mountain. Her grandfather explains that it is the sun's way of saying good night to the mountains, casting his most beautiful beams across them (p. 50). It is true that, according to the Bible, the sun (as the heavenly body that "rules" the day) speaks. Have a look at the psalm on the right, from the Bible. According to the Bible, what does the sun (as part of "the heavens") speak about / reveal to us?

Psalm 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Isaiah 40:8

[The] God of all comfort... comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

What can be known about God is plain to [all people], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

Romans 1:19-20

Week 4

4 At Grandmother's

After the summer days of going out to pasture comes autumn, and then the indoor season of winter. But even in the deep snow of the Alm, Heidi is not bored. She has already become an invaluable friend to Peter and the goats, and in this chapter she becomes friends with Peter's Grandmother. Grandmother, who is blind, longs each day for Heidi's visits. Heidi's friendship, for Grandmother too, is irreplaceable.

“Heidi Magic”

Heidi loves to stay close and watch her grandfather work. During the winter months, she especially enjoys his cheese-making. Now the mountain hut has seats for two everywhere!



Peter misses Heidi during the winter and pays visits to her house. The Alm Uncle listens (often with a smile!) to the children's conversations and offers Peter a generous dinner whenever he comes. In chapter 1, the Alm Uncle only watched Heidi standing in the doorway, whereas now he goes round with her to look at the beautiful pine trees, just to please her. Changes are beginning to occur: not just in the hut's interior, but in the Alm Uncle himself!

Heidi Visits Grandmother

All summer long, Peter tells his mother and grandmother about the Alm Uncle. No doubt he relates how he is generous with their lunches and how well he looks after Heidi. But Peter's family think he must be mistaken. When Heidi arrives and tells them that she has just come down the mountain with her grandfather on a toboggan, they think she is confused.



Do you think that sometimes our preconceived ideas or prejudices mean that even when someone tells us the truth, we just cannot (or will not) accept it as really true?

Problems with Peter's House

- ⊗ Very dark, with only a dim light.
- ⊗ A very old dwelling.
- ⊗ The wind blasts through the walls, swinging the shutters, making the house creak and groan.
- ⊗ Many things need mending, but Peter cannot yet fix things. (There are no grown-up men.)
- ⊗ No one can read - Grandmother is blind, and Brigitte and Peter are illiterate.



When Heidi visits Grandmother, she notices that the house has lots of problems. Which of them are fixable, and which are not? In the novel, many of these “problems” will be solved. How do you think that might happen?

How to Bring Light Back to Grandmother

Heidi's Suggestions*

- By making the inside of the house really bright.
- By going outside where everything is white.
- Wait until summer when the sun is stronger.
- When the sunset glows, the mountains turn red like fire, giving shining lights.
- Her grandfather can make Grandmother see.

Grandma's Suggestions

- By having something to look forward to, especially hearing a friendly voice.
- If Heidi visits her and talks with her.
- If she could hear someone read the beautiful hymns in her old prayer book.

In time Heidi learns that none of her ideas would make Grandmother see again, and that knowledge fills her with sorrow. But each time Grandmother comforts Heidi, telling her that she feels the darkness much less now that Heidi visits her. Trusted by Heidi to make a real difference, the Alm Uncle repairs the whole house, without being asked again (p. 66). On a bitterly cold mountain of the Alm, there is now a little circle of love, in which people's hearts are warm and happy.



When you have something to look forward to, it lifts your spirits up and brings joy to life. If you have hope, you can live positively. Do you have something to look forward to? What kind of things give you hope?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

Proverbs 12:25

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 121:1-2

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

* In the Usborne book, this part is not translated in detail. The conversations between Heidi and Grandmother go like this:

H: "One of your shutters is hanging loose, Grandmother. Look how it bangs to and fro."

G: "I can't see it, my dear, but I can hear it very well."

H: "Why can't you see the shutter?"

G: "I can't see at all, child, it's not only the shutter."

H: "If I go out and pull the shutter right back so that it's really light in here, you'll be able to see, won't you?"

G: "No, not even then, light or dark makes no difference to me."

H: "But if you come out in the shining white snow, I'm sure you'll see them."

G: "Let me be, child. I can't see any better in the light of the snow. I'm always in the dark."

H: "Even in summer? Surely you can see the sunshine and watch it say good-night to the mountains and make them all red like fire, can't you?"

G: "No, child, nor that either. I shall never see them again."

Heidi bursts into tears.

G: "Come here, my dear, and listen to me. I can't see, but I can hear, and when one is blind, it is so good to hear a friendly voice, and yours I love already. Come and sit beside me and tell me what you and grandfather do up on the mountain."

H: "Just wait till I tell Grandfather about you. He'll be able to make you see, and he'll mend the hut too. He can do anything."

(From Puffin Classics *Heidi*, 2009 edition, pp. 48-50, translated by Eileen Hall.)

Week 5

5 Unexpected Visitors

Heidi is now old enough to go to school, but where should she live? The pastor thinks she should be in Dörfli, Dete wants to send her to Frankfurt, but the Alm Uncle would prefer her to be on the Alm. In the end, Dete's forceful approach (her rhetoric) wins the day, and it's suddenly decided that Heidi will move to Frankfurt. For those left behind on the Alm, the days seem darker, and there are big changes in Heidi's own life too.

The Best Environment for Heidi According to her Needs

<u>Pastor: Dörfli</u>	<u>Dete: Frankfurt</u>	<u>The Alm Uncle: The Alm</u>
Community	Civilisation	Nature
Schooling	Money	Animals
Church	Tutoring	Learning life skills

In chapter 1, we saw how Johanna Spyri does not describe the Alm as some kind of paradise. Neither does she portray Frankfurt as a particularly "bad" place. For many people, Frankfurt would seem a more cultured and "liveable" place for people than the Swiss mountain regions. Indeed, for Dete, Frankfurt is obviously the place where her niece will be happiest.



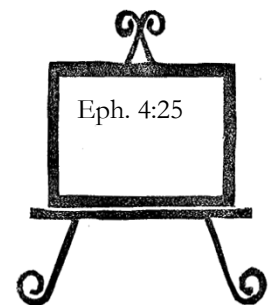
Would you prefer to live in the city or the country? Would your choice change if you had school-age children?

Overbearing Dete

Dete tries to overpower people with the strength of her words, but she is not honest. Might she not have been able to persuade Heidi by telling her the truth?



What does Dete say to cajole Heidi into going to Frankfurt? If you had been Heidi's aunt and truly desiring the best for her, how might you have persuaded her to move to Frankfurt?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

It is not good that the man should be alone.

Genesis 2:18

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.

Romans 12:10

[Speak] the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:15

6 All Kinds of New Things

Heidi has been brought against her will to live in the Sesemann mansion in Frankfurt. There's a storm brewing between Heidi the mountain girl and Miss Rottenmeyer, who is a stickler for formality. But there are three generations of characterful folks in the Sesemann house: Clara, her father Mr Sesemann, and her Grandmamma. For Heidi, her new life in Frankfurt is not all bad, but bittersweet.

Outside *or* Inside? Formality *or* Character?

From the very beginning Miss Rottenmeyer is not pleased with Heidi, as it is plain to see that Heidi is poor and uncivilised. She is horrified to hear Heidi's age and educational background, and even her name! However, even as Miss Rottenmeyer rejects each aspect of Heidi, Clara approaches Heidi affirmingly. She asks, "Do you prefer Heidi or Adelheid?" (p. 84), which shows the respect she has for Heidi as a human being. Miss Rottenmeyer had requested "a child who was different from all other children" (p. 84), "a perfectly unspoiled little girl, quite out of the ordinary" (chapter 5, p. 72). But as it turns out, she can't accept anyone who does not fit her criteria of a "good" person.



Do you think that we also say that we like children (or other people) who are "out of the ordinary," but we actually try to make them fit a certain mould?

Both Dete and Miss Rottenmeyer say that Heidi knows no manners. However, if the basis of good manners is respect for other people, Miss Rottenmeyer, who is very rude to Heidi, is the one who has no manners!



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement.

John 7:24

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Week 6

7 Miss Rottenmeyer Has a Busy Day



Thanks to Heidi, the Sesemann household is caught up in one unforeseen (and quite unintended) incident after another. We can only laugh at the pompous Miss Rottenmeyer, such a stickler for formalities, as she is wound up by Heidi, jumping up and shouting at her until she is white with rage!

Heidi's Case-File, no. 1

- ⊗ Heidi fails to turn up at breakfast
- ⊗ Heidi scatters books and everything on the floor
- ⊗ Heidi goes out without getting permission
- ⊗ Heidi brings kittens into the house

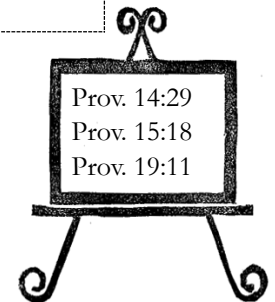


The Short-Tempered Miss Rottenmeyer

Chapter 6	Cries, shrieks in horror Looks rather annoyed Vents her anger at Sebastian Calls for Tinette with an unpleasant tone	Bottles up her anger Groans to herself Exclaims in annoyance
Chapter 7	Bursts through the door and exclaims Scolds Heidi Looks like a loaded cannon Speaks in the gravest tone	Her fury mounts and she raises her voice Tries to shout, her voice hoarse with fury All the feelings of irritation and fury
Chapter 8	Is watchful, constantly glances at Heidi Intends to punish the responsible White with rage	Does not calm down Claps her hands together in outrage



Have a look at the Bible passages below. Are you an irritable or easily-angered person? Is it easy to calm down when we feel we have the right to be angry? When human beings make mistakes or do evil things, does God get angry like Miss Rottenmeyer?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Ephesians 4:31

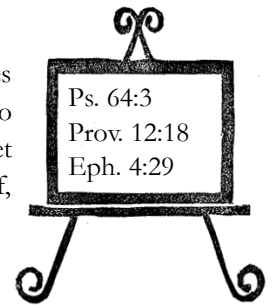
[Be] quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. James 1:19-20

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. Ephesians 4:26

8

A Commotion at Mr. Sesemann's

The former tranquility of the Sesemann household is long forgotten! There is Sebastian, who takes Heidi's part while he enjoys watching the irritable Miss Rottenmeyer; there is the unkind Tinette, who is always looking down on Heidi; there is the tutor who teaches Heidi carefully, fairly, and patiently, yet is bamboozled by her apparent inability to learn any of her letters; and of course there is Heidi herself, who begins – little by little, by trial and error as she is scolded – to learn the “Rottemeyer rules.”



Heidi's Case-File, no. 2

- ⊗ A street boy and his turtle visit
- ⊗ A basketful of kittens is delivered
- ⊗ Heidi makes a runaway attempt
- ⊗ A pile of bread rolls is found in Heidi's wardrobe



Heidi's Stress

However much she is blessed in Frankfurt with all her needs for food, clothing, and shelter met; however much Clara and Sebastian are kind to her, Heidi still wants to go home. But when she is scolded for being ungrateful after her “runaway attempt,” Heidi has no-one left to tell her true feelings to. Her great stress builds up until she develops mental illness – something with which we are familiar today, and which Johanna Spyri, writing in the 19th century, also seems to have known well.



The first set of Bible passages below comes to mind as we read about Sebastian and Tinette. The second set links back to chapter 7, and teaches us about what God is like. How does God compare with Miss Rottenmeyer?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 1 Peter 2:18

[Do] not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor. Zechariah 7:10

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. Proverbs 16:24

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Psalm 103:8

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. Psalm 130:3-4

By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil. Proverbs 16:6



9 Mr. Sesemann Hears All Sorts of News

The kind and fatherly Mr Sesemann returns home. Miss Rottenmeyer tries to report to her master how unsuitable Heidi is as a playmate for Clara, but Clara herself tells her father how much she loves Heidi and prefers her company to anyone else's. Clara's appeal wins out and it is decided that Heidi will stay on in Frankfurt. Two weeks later, Mr Sesemann returns to Paris on business.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

In the next chapter, Grandmamma shows Heidi a beautiful picture book. Heidi's favourite story from the book is based on a famous Bible story called "the Parable of the Prodigal Son." You can find a summary of the story at the end of the next chapter (pp. 144-145).



Can you find any differences between the summary in Heidi and the Bible passage below? Why do you think Spyrri made such changes to the story?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...



There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:11-24

10 Grandmamma

Grandmamma comes to take her son's place in the Sesemann mansion. Compared to Miss Rottenmeyer, who watches Heidi like a hawk and yet seems to notice nothing of true importance, Grandmamma is immediately sensitive when Heidi is out of sorts or has been crying. Thanks to Grandmamma, Heidi learns her letters, the wonder of reading books, and how to pray to God.



Grandmamma

One of the elements of *Heidi* that makes it such an appealing novel is the shrewd but kind character of Grandmamma. She has great wealth and wisdom, but she knows that there are some problems in life that cannot be solved by money or learning. She is a woman of prayer and faith, who always asks God for help in any and every situation.



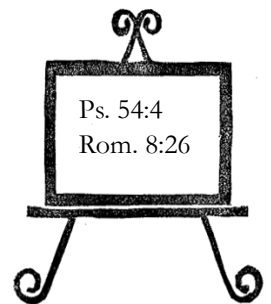
*What do Clara and Heidi like about Grandmamma? What, on the other hand, does Miss Rottenmeyer not like about her? What do **you** think about Grandmamma?*

The Wonder of Reading Books

Once she has learned her letters, Heidi receives a book from Grandmamma as a present. From that day on, she loves nothing more than sitting down with her book and reading the stories that go with the beautiful pictures (p. 144). Despite her "seclusion" in the Sesemann house, through reading books Heidi's heart is able to roam freely through the world of her stories.



Do you like reading? What kind of books do you like?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

Psalm 33:13-15

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you.

Psalm 55:22

Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation.

Psalm 68:19

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Week 8

11 Heidi Gains and Loses



The kind Grandmamma has taught Heidi reading and needlework, and shown her tender care, but now she too must leave for home. Left behind in the Sesemann house, Heidi becomes ever more lonely and homesick.

Unanswered Prayers

Since Heidi has learned to pray to God, she now pours out her heart to him, asking to be allowed to go home to her Grandfather (p. 142). But when it seems to Heidi as though nothing is going to change, she stops praying.



What does Heidi think is the reason for her prayers being unanswered? How does Grandmamma respond, and what is her explanation of the various reasons why prayers might not be answered immediately?

Grandmamma then gives Heidi instructions on how to live the life of faith: (1) She must not turn her back on the God who helps her; (2) Even if she does something stupid, if she says sorry to God he will forgive her; (3) She must keep on trusting God, because he will surely cause things to turn out for her good in the end. In response, Heidi asks God for forgiveness and she resolves never to forget him again.

Even Crying is Forbidden

A “grandmother” character in one of Heidi’s books dies, and Heidi develops a new worry – that “Grandmother” and her own Grandfather back on the Alm might die before she can return home. But when Miss Rottenmeyer threatens to confiscate her books if she hears Heidi cry again, Heidi can no longer cry in the Sesemann house.



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. Psalm 145:18-19

[Jesus said,] “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand.” John 13:7

What is impossible with men is possible with God. Luke 18:27

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

12 The Sesemann House is Haunted

In the end, Heidi becomes ill and starts to sleepwalk. On the advice of Mr Sesemann's friend the Doctor – who stays up all night with him to “drive out the ghost” – it is decided that Heidi must return home immediately.



Heidi's Lonely Struggle

Since the last chapter, Heidi's battle with homesickness has gone from bad to worse. Let's think about what that was like.

- Chokes back her sobs
- Makes a lot of effort not to cry
- Has lost her appetite, scarcely eating anything
- Grows pale and thin
- Buries her face in her pillow and cries every night
- Longs more and more for the beautiful nature of the Alm
- Even reading about something that hints of her home brings tears to her eyes
- Tries to block out the sunshine
- Sits in a lonely corner of her bedroom and fights the homesickness in her heart

Under all this extreme stress, Heidi tries to conceal her feelings, and she ends up sick and sleepwalking.



Does Heidi ask God why he doesn't listen to her prayers? Do you every pray? Have a look at the Bible passages below. Do you ever pour out the questions in your heart such as “why?” or “how long?” to God?

Haunted Mansion

Things are very strange! All the doors at the Sesemann mansion are securely locked each night, yet each morning the front door is open. Nothing has been stolen. Johann sees a figure clothed in white in the middle of the night. With all the fuss about a ghost, Mr Sesemann comes home, and it is only when he and the doctor stay up at night that they discover Heidi's sleepwalking.



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 10:1

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me?

Psalm 13:1

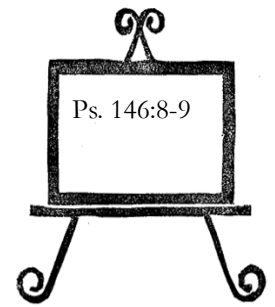
[God says,] “I have surely seen the affliction of my people ... and have heard their cry. I know their sufferings.”

Exodus 3:7

Week 9

13 A Summer Evening on the Mountain

Heidi is home at last! On the mountain path up the Alm, the scenery is so breathtakingly beautiful – even more than in her dreams – that Heidi is filled with thanks to God. Having checked that Grandmother is safe, Heidi finally returns to her grandfather’s house. For the first time in a year she sleeps soundly on her bed of straw.



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you for ever!

Psalm 30:12

Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Psalm 28:6-7

14 When the Church Bells Ring

It is the day after Heidi’s return home – a Saturday – and she spends it with Grandmother. Grandmother’s face shines as Heidi reads out the hymns from her hymn book. The conversation on the way home gives Heidi the opportunity to share the story of the shepherd with the Alm Uncle. That night, the Alm Uncle prays to God for the first time in decades. On the Sunday, he and Heidi go to church. The Alm Uncle’s face also shines, as his relationships with the pastor, the people of Dörfli, and Peter’s family are restored.

Grandmother’s Joy

From the old hymn book, Heidi reads Grandmother a song called “The Golden Morning.” The words of this hymn were written by German pastor Paul Gerhardt in 1666. There are twelve verses in total, but in the novel Spyri quotes verses 1, 2, 8 and 12. Grandmother even asks for an *encore* of the last section!

The Golden Morning

(The Free Lutheran Chorale-Book <https://www.lutheranchoralebook.com/texts/the-golden-morning/>)

1. The golden morning, / Joy her adorning,
On us is gleaming, / Rays brightly beaming,
With her beloved heart-quickening light.
My head and members / Lay deep in their slumbers,
But now awaking, / All sleep from me shaking,
Gazing on heav’n, / I rejoice at the sight.
2. Mine eye’s beholding / God’s work unfolding,
Made for His glory, / Telling the story
Of all His power so mighty and great
And where the Father / His faithful shall gather
In peace, whenever / Earth’s ties they shall sever,
Leaving this mortal and perishing state.
8. Though all decayeth, / God ever stayeth,
Nor doth He waver, / He changeth never,
His Word and will have immutable ground.
His grace and favor / Are steadfast forever,
In our hearts healing / Death’s pangs that we’re feeling,
Keeping us now and eternally sound.
12. Grievs, though heart-rending, / All have their ending;
Though seas be roaring / And winds outpouring,
Thereafter shines the dear sun’s blessed face.
Fullness of pleasure / And glorious leisure
Then will be given / To me there in heaven,
Where all my thoughts are directing their gaze.



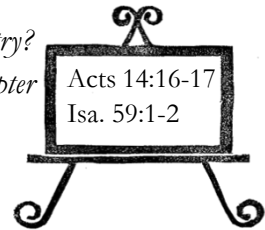
What is the meaning of verse 12 of “The Golden Morning”? Why was Grandmother so overjoyed to hear this?

The Prodigal Son

Heidi is thankful to God for arranging that she come back at just the right time, so that she might buy bread for Grandmother and read books to her. Heidi realises that it really was better for her return to have been delayed for a year. Talking to her grandfather about this also gives her the opportunity to share her beloved story about the shepherd with him.



Do you think that the father of the shepherd forgot about his son while he was off in the far country? There's a hint in the character of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, which we saw in chapter 9. On this basis, where might we need to adapt the "theology" that Grandmamma taught Heidi?



The Change in the Alm Uncle

The Alm Uncle had decided that he was unacceptable to either God or others, and had lived a life separate from God and men. But the night after Heidi speaks to him, he prays. After that, he (1) goes to church; (2) apologises to the pastor; (3) is reconciled to the villagers; and (4) comes into Peter's house and is able to get on with everyone – a remarkable transformation! (What other changes can we see in the Alm Uncle's appearance and his feelings?)

The villagers' attitudes also change in response to the Alm Uncle's transformation. However, in our case, God shows his great love to us and accepts us, *before* we ever change.



In the original German (not in some English translations) the pastor says to the Alm Uncle, "Nachbar, Ihr seid in der rechten Kirche gewesen, noch eh Ihr in die meinige herunterkamt." ("Neighbour, you were in the right church before you came down to mine." What do you think this means?

At last, true peace has come to the beautiful village of Dörfli, and the villagers have learned to accept one another. The Alm Uncle says, "I am happier today than I had thought possible. It's good to be at peace with God and man." (p. 196) Don't you think this is the main message that Johanna Spyri wanted to share with her readers through the novel *Heidi*?



THE BIBLE SAYS ...

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. Isaiah 35:5-6

[The] precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. Psalm 19:8

Those who look to him are radiant. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Psalm 34:5, 8

It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35

[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Ecclesiastes 3:11

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

We love because [God] first loved us. 1 John 4:19

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

[Bear] with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, [forgive] each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:13

Acknowledgements

Spyri, Johanna. *Heidi*. Translated by Eileen Hall. London: Puffin Books, 2009.

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