



GRANGER SMITH  
**MOONRISE**  
DISCUSSION GUIDE



# MOONRISE

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## OVERVIEW

Country singer Will Brown (Granger Smith) pushed away his family, fame and faith after his wife's death. It's his daughter and a talented horse trainer who show him the strength, forgiveness and grace to live life again.

**SPOILER ALERT:** Intended for use after viewing ***MOONRISE***, this study guide provides resources for biblically-based discussion. This guide is an excellent tool for group or personal study.

# THEME ONE: GRIEF

Will has lost the desire to sing—ever since his wife died, grief has sidelined his career and his role as a father. At night, he rides into the darkness with the ghost of his wife, anguished and grieving. His daughter Eloise is desperate to ride her mother’s horse Belle, but all Will can see is his grief: and his fear that his daughter will suffer the same fate as her mother.

## SCRIPTURES REFERENCED:

**Psalm 34:18 (NIV):** “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

**Psalm 31:9-10 (NIV):** “Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.”

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV):** “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

**Matthew 5:4 (NIV):** “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

## SCENES TO REVIEW

“Night Ride”: 01:06 — 02:26

“The Last Gift”: 1:31 — 1:34

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Reflect on the opening scene to *MOONRISE*, “Night Ride.” What does this say about how Will is handling the death of his wife? Do you think these night rides are healthy? Why or why not?
- Despite the fact that his wife died after being thrown from Belle, Will is unable to part with the horse or let anyone ride her. Why do you think that is? What makes Eloise so attached to the horse, even knowing what happened to her mother?
- 2 Corinthians calls God the “Father of compassion.” What does this name mean to you? How have you experienced the God who “comforts us in all our troubles” in your own life?
- For years, Will has been carrying around a Christmas present he found under the tree on the night his wife died. He hasn’t had the heart to open it. When Eloise opens it with him, she finds a nautilus fossil and a letter explaining its discovery. What is the significance of this fossil in the story? What do you think that Claire’s note, “Always growing, forever forward,” means to both Will and Eloise?
- ***MOONRISE*** explores how freeing it can be to let go of the past and move forward. Which character in the story did you resonate with the most and why? Will and his grief? Eloise and her determination? Sam and her hope?

# THEME TWO: JOY

Joy feels too painful in the midst of grief. Even celebrating Christmas seems unthinkable to Will, leaving his children to set up a Christmas tree in secret in the barn. But something shifts when someone—Sam—begins to capture Will’s attention and heart. Suddenly, there is music again. But there isn’t just a new song or the willingness to return to the public stage: there is joy. And there is hope for a future out of the darkness of his loss.

## SCRIPTURES REFERENCED:

**Psalms 30:5 (NIV):** “Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

**Romans 12:12 (NIV):** “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

**James 1:2-3 (NIV):** “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

## SCENES TO REVIEW

**“Dinner Under the Stars”: 56:04 — 57:43**

**“My Story’s Not Finished”: 1:34 — 1:39**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Sam’s presence on the ranch affects the entire family—even if the boys are skeptical because she’s not their mother. At what point did you see Will start to soften toward both Sam and his daughter?
- In “Dinner Under the Stars,” Sam tells Will, “My dad always said there are some things in this world that words can’t get to.” What is one of those things in your life?
- The characters in **MOONRISE** grapple with hope and joy in different ways. Eloise hopes to ride her mother’s horse by Christmas; Sam is hopeful for clarity in her personal life; the boys just want to play music like their father. But change is slow, and hope fills the gaps softly. Reflect on Romans 12:12. What do you think it means to be joyful in hope? What does it imply about our current circumstances?
- Re-watch the scene “My Story’s Not Finished” with Will’s sold-out concert. Listen to the lyrics of the song carefully. What does it say about grief and joy? At the end of the film, Will tells Sam that she gave him inspiration for the song. Reflect on how they both change each other for the good.