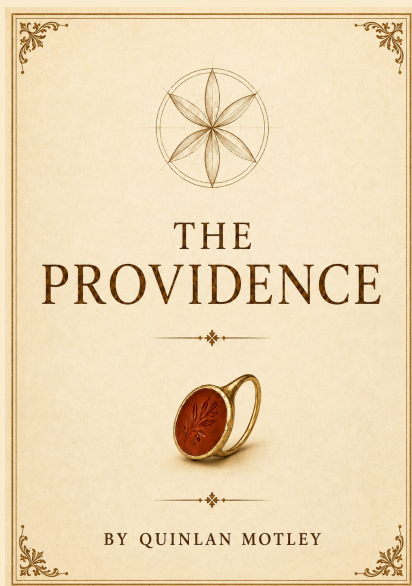


PRE-READING GUIDE

Spoiler-free prompts for a thoughtful first conversation



THE PROVIDENCE

by Quinlan Motley

Book clubs

A book built for the table

THE PROVIDENCE gives a reading group more than one honest position to hold at once.

The ruler's work feeds people. His wealth protects his family. His judgment is often fair. His need to remain responsible for every outcome is also becoming a form of control. The novel does not ask a group to flatten those truths into a slogan.

It asks the better question: what does it mean to surrender when the thing you hold is capable of doing real good?

Choose a copy:

- Kindle / Read Sample — <https://www.amazon.com/dp/BoHH3ZH34W>
 - Paperback — <https://www.amazon.com/dp/BoHH47D2C7>
 - Hardcover — <https://www.amazon.com/dp/BoHH4JZYC6>
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Reading length

This is a compact adult novel. Most groups can assign the complete book between two regular meetings; individual reading pace will vary.

For a slower conversation, divide it by the novel's three Parts:

1. Hunger
2. Multiplication
3. One Thing

Do not publish chapter excerpts in invitations. Direct participants to Amazon's official Read Sample.

Spoiler-free summary

Before he was remembered as the rich ruler who ran to Jesus, he was a hungry boy in Jericho. He becomes a merchant, landholder, and trusted decision-maker by seeing risks other people miss and insisting on fair measures. His wealth creates work, feeds households, and protects the people he loves. It also gives his fear more to manage. When reports of Jesus reach the city, he goes carrying a question no account can settle.

Why it works for discussion

- The protagonist is morally serious and generous before Jesus speaks to him.
 - Work, wealth, and responsibility are shown from several social positions.
 - The novel distinguishes helping people from deciding for them.
 - Scripture fixes the central encounter while leaving the man's biography and aftermath unknown.
 - The story's most important relationships can be read differently without reducing any character to a symbol.
 - The ending preserves uncertainty rather than issuing a salvation verdict.
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Guide A: before reading

Spoiler-free conversation

Use three or four of these prompts before the group begins. There is no need to reach agreement.

1. When you hear the phrase the rich young ruler, what assumptions do you make about the man before rereading the Gospel accounts?
2. What responsibilities in an ordinary life can make uncertainty especially difficult to accept?
3. Where is the line between caring for someone and deciding what safety should look like for them?
4. Can generosity and control exist in the same action? What would distinguish them?
5. What does historical or biblical fiction owe its source text when the source leaves a person's life mostly unknown?
6. How should a novel signal the difference between imaginative possibility and a claim about history?
7. Is wealth morally different when it was built through honest work and is actively used to help other people? Why or why not?
8. What do you expect the detail Jesus looked at him and loved him to change about the encounter?
9. When does careful preparation become an attempt to eliminate the need for trust?
10. What would make a difficult command feel more demanding: contempt from the speaker, or love?

Optional source read

Before opening the novel, read the three short Gospel passages side by side:

- Matthew 19:16-22 — <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/19>
- Mark 10:17-22 — <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/10>

- Luke 18:18-23 — <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/18>

Ask participants to list only what the texts explicitly say. Save interpretations for after the list is complete.

How to host the conversation

1. Put the hardest question in the center rather than beginning with a verdict.
2. Ask participants to name the scene that supports their reading.
3. Let two apparently conflicting truths remain true long enough to examine both.
4. Distinguish what the Gospels say, what the novel invents, and what a reader infers.
5. Do not require anyone to disclose finances, religious history, or private spiritual experience.
6. End by asking what question each reader is still carrying, not what answer the group approved.

Suggested invitation copy:

*Join us to read **THE PROVIDENCE** by Quinlan Motley, a compact work of literary biblical fiction about the rich ruler before he ran to Jesus. We will talk about work, responsibility, generosity, control, and what it means to trust an outcome you cannot secure.*
