

May 12, 2013

In The Beginning: Eve
Genesis 3:20

1. Mothers nurture our sense of _____.

2. Mothers nurture _____.

3. Mothers nurture _____.

Community Group Study Guide

For the week of May 12, 2013

QUICK REVIEW

Review your notes from Larry's sermon. What struck you as interesting? Did it apply to any stories or circumstances from your own life?

MY STORY

1. People have lots of superstitions about things that will make a wish come true. What are some that you have heard of? What's a good story you remember from when you or someone you know made one of these "lucky wishes?"

2. Some people get their hopes up if there's even a hint of a possibility that something will happen. Others remain pessimistic until whatever desired outcome they're looking for is virtually assured. Where would you place yourself on a continuum between these two extremes, and why? Can you think of an example that illustrates why you put yourself at the spot you chose?

DIGGING DEEPER

On Sunday Larry talked about Eve from Genesis. In this week's study we'll examine two more Old Testament mothers. Throughout the Bible we see countless stories of hope, stories of people clinging onto something despite their circumstances, despite their pain and grief, and despite their desires.

Read Ruth 1:1-22.

1. We see Naomi experiencing tremendous loss in this chapter. While far from home, she loses her husband and two sons. She hears the news that the famine in Israel is over, and prepares to head home. It's then that she has a conversation with her daughters-in-law. She tries to give them hope that God will provide husbands for them. Here is a woman in absolute grief, offering hope to those around her. When have you seen someone in a difficult situation take me to offer hope to others?

2. When Naomi returned from Moab she decided she didn't want to be known as Naomi, but rather to be called Mara because God had made her life bitter (Mara means "bitter"). Naomi, despite having just encouraged Ruth and Orpah in verses 8-13, is still feeling hopeless. When you find yourself feeling hopeless, how do you normally react?

In chapter 2 of Ruth we see Ruth harvesting grain in the field of a man named Boaz. Boaz takes notice of Ruth, and provides plenty of grain for both her and Naomi.

Read Ruth 3:1-18

3. In chapter three the focus of the book shifts to Ruth. Ruth lost her husband, and left her family and homeland out of loyalty to Naomi and God. Naomi begins to play matchmaker and in this chapter we see one of the courtship rituals for the Israelite culture at that time. Chapter three begins to show that God is at work in the lives of these two women. Ruth, who has operated on hope for most of the book so far, begins to see God providing. Naomi, who has been a consistent source of hope despite her own frustration, begins to see God's continuing faithfulness. When have you experienced that joy of seeing God provide during dire circumstances?

4. God provides for Ruth and Naomi through the actions of Boaz. Often God wants to use us in the same way. He wants to use us to prove His faithfulness to someone, or to provide for someone, or to help someone who is experiencing difficulty. When have you been used to show God's provision or loyalty to someone? When has God used someone else to show you his faithfulness?

Read Ruth 4:13-17.

5. Can you imagine the joy that Ruth and Naomi felt when Obed was born? This child was evidence that God had never given up on them. Obed was the living proof that their hope had not been misplaced or silly. It's often difficult to place our hope in God, but it's from examples like these that we are reminded of God's faithfulness. Who in your life has been an example of hope and/or of God's faithfulness? How so?

TAKING IT HOME

Hope is a difficult concept. Some people think hope is just some kind of wishful thinking, yet the book of Hebrews talks over and over again about looking forward towards the future day when God will make all things right. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Hope means having faith that even when we don’t see Him moving, God is still at work in our lives. Often it’s hard to remember this during those difficult times in our lives, yet we must continue to trust that He will do what He has promised.

But along with maintaining our own hope, we have a responsibility to the countless others out there in need of a reminder that God is working in their lives. Through our words and actions we can remind them that God has not forgotten them, that there is still hope for them. They can still look forward to a positive future.

Over and over in Scripture God restores hope. We see it in the lives of Naomi and Ruth, as well as many Biblical figures. God is passionate about restoring hope in us, and through us. Perhaps this week you can be the instrument He uses to restore hope in the life of someone. Write a note, mow a yard, have a conversation with someone who needs that reminder.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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