

Leader's Guide – Used by God

Week 1 - Hannah

I. Introduction

An estimated 10 to 15 percent of couples in the U. S. deal with infertility.

6 million women deal with infertility

2 million couples are infertile

Every year over 600,000 women experience miscarriage

There are a lot of women who deal with miscarriage and infertility. Many women in this room know the pain of suffering with infertility.

When we meet Hannah she is in the midst of her pain.

II. Hannah

Day 1:

I Samuel 1: 1-2

We learn of Hannah's problem immediately.

Elkanah – 2 wives, Hannah may have been the first wife and when she did not have children he took a second wife.

Their culture

Infertility in their culture: a woman was viewed as useless if she did not have any children.

Comparison with Peninnah: 1 had children, Hannah had none

Pain of comparison

How do women compare themselves to others?

Weight; looks; money; marriage

Comparing ourselves to others is never a good thing to do. It either makes us feel better at the expense of someone else or it makes us feel worse about ourselves.

I Samuel 1:3-8

How would you describe Elkanah's relationship with Hannah?

Elkanah – kind to Hannah

I Samuel 1:9-16

Describe Hannah's pain:

Verse 10 – Bitterness of soul; wept much

Verse 11 – misery

Verse 15 – deeply troubled; pouring out my soul to the Lord

Verse 16 – great anguish and grief

You may have never struggled with infertility like Hannah did, but most likely you have experienced some of these emotions at some point in your life.

Whether it is illness, depression, grief, or disappointment, you can relate to Hannah and what she was dealing with.

Through everything Hannah dealt with she allowed her grief and misery to take her to God.

Day 3: Her Vow

I Samuel 1:10-11

What were the 2 parts to Hannah's vow?

1. "I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life"
2. "No razor will ever be used on his race"

Her Vow:

Not said in haste, thought about it a long time

Very serious; not like the promises we see made on TV

Numbers 30:2 says, “When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

Nazirite vow:

Numbers 6:1-8

What were the requirements of this vow?

No razor can touch his head; not go near a dead body; not drink wine

Hannah made this vow that would effect her child for his lifetime. Samuel’s nazirite vow was for his entire life.

Why do you think Hannah made such a radical vow to God?

Was it out of desperation or had her years of suffering changed the way she thought about children?

Did she view children not just to bring her pleasure, but to serve God?

I Samuel 1:17-20

Hannah’s prayer was answered

I Samuel 1:21-24

Does anything strike you as surprising in these verses?

Elkanah did not know about Hannah’s vow.

This vow that would affect all of them, Elkanah did not know about.

Those affected:

Hannah – when she made this vow she did not have any children and she did not know but what if God gave her a son, she would only have one child but she was willing to dedicate him to God.

Elkanah – he loved Hannah and this was his one child with her

Samuel – he would live with the vow his mother made

Hannah made this radical vow and Elkanah did not know about it until it was time to go to the temple.

Elkanah's response:

Verse 23 – “Do what seems best to you.”

Numbers 30:6-8; summarize

He supported Hannah in her decision

Hannah had 3 or 4 years with Samuel.

Can you imagine?

How would you feel if you knew your child would live in your home only 3 or 4 years?

How might you parent differently if you knew you only had 3 or 4 years with your child?

In his book *Futurecast* George Barna says, “Most of a child’s life foundations are firmly in place by the age of thirteen. The data show that the behavioral habits, core values, primary spiritual beliefs, relational strategies, and entertainment preferences that emerge so clearly when we reach adulthood are developed and solidified by the time we reach the age of thirteen as well.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hannah took this seriously.

She taught Samuel, she only had 4 years.

“Nearly three out of every five young Christians (59%) disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time from church life after age 15.”

George Barna

“Families who hold the highest view of Scripture seem to have the best rates of faith transference to their children.”

You Lost Me, by David Kinnaman,

How are we teaching our children about God?

How are you passing your faith onto your children and grandchildren?

Quote on page 12

Are we leaving the job to the church of Christian school?

Very young – read Bible stories

Grow older – you teach them Bible principles and have them read the Bible on their own.

Teenagers – you teach them to apply Biblical principles to their own lives and teach them to make decisions based on those principles.

High school – train them to build a relationship with God through prayer and study of His Word. Have spiritual discussions with them. Making wise decisions.

“If you want society to change, change the people who will determine the nature of the society, today’s children.”

Futurecast by George Barna, page 51

“Perhaps the most significant and summative finding regarding the influence of parents is this: how you express and live your faith will have, all things being equal, a greater impact on your child’s life than any other factor. What they see and hear and experience growing up with you will communicate more about the essence and veracity of faith than anything they face or anyone they know.”

Sticky Faith, by Dr. Kara Powell and & Dr. Chap Clark

“Invest heavily in shaping the minds and hearts of your children and their friends. Too few parents and families recognize the incredible opportunity they have to change the world by how they raise their children and influence their children’s friends. A society is never without hope of positive change as long as families are intentional and diligent in shaping the moral and spiritual character of their offspring.”

Futurecast by George Barna

Day 5:

I Samuel 1:24-28

Eli – I Samuel 2:12, 17, 22

Did Hannah fear leaving her son with Eli?

Hannah trusted God to raise her son.

What do you think were some of Hannah’s emotions as she left Samuel in Shiloh?

I Samuel 2:1-12

What strikes you about Hannah’s prayer?

She is not leaving Shiloh without Samuel as a grieving mother.

She praised God – verse 1

She acknowledged God as her Rock – verse 2

She acknowledged God’s sovereignty; God is in control – verse 6

Her infertility taught her this

I Samuel 2:19-21

Samuel was a man who changed the course of the Israelite nation. He was a faithful prophet and man of God who helped the Israelites transition to a time of being ruled by a king. He anointed Saul and David and he was God’s spokesman to these men.

Through Hannah, a faithful mother, God gave Israel a faithful man to lead His people.

Closing:

“The greatest legacy you will leave behind is in the lives of your children and the ... variety of children whose lives you are able to significantly influence.”

Futurecast by George Barna

Leader's Guide

Sarah

I. Introduction

Being a follower

“The call of Jesus was, and still is, short on detail but full of promise.”

God made Abraham a great promise and Sarah was a big part of that promise. But it took a very long time for that promise to be fulfilled.

I know we are jumping to the end of the story, but **why do you think God made Sarah and Abraham wait so long to fulfill the promise?**

Abraham and Sarah had to grow into the followers God needed.

God was teaching Sarah to depend on Him and learn to trust Him.

In the events in Sarah's life we see how God was developing the relationship Sarah had with Him.

II. Day 1:

Read Genesis 12:1-9

Map – show Abraham and Sarah's journey

Following

Often followers are called to go where we do not want to go.

How do you think Sarah felt about leaving her family and country?

Sarah was a willing follower.

Followers of Jesus must follow Him.

John 12:26, "Whoever serves me must follow me."

*** Do you find it easy, difficult, or a combination of both when it comes to following Jesus?**

When is it easy to follow Jesus?

When do you find it difficult to follow Jesus?

Sarah willingly followed and submitted to Abraham and to God.

Submission

Read Genesis 12:10-20

Read Genesis 20:1-18

What do you think about these stories?

How do you think Sarah felt about Abraham's plans?

Sarah submitted to Abraham's plan whether she liked it or not.

Read I Peter 3:5-6

Submission: Write this down:

"to choose to yield to another, rather than demanding one's own way."

Sarah chose to submit to Abraham and to God.

"Submission remains the freewill right of the one choosing to yield. It cannot be demanded from another individual or imposed upon one person by another."

10 Lies the Church Tells Women, p. 187

Could we say that as Christians we are called to submit to everyone, because we are called to put the needs of others above ourselves?

Submission is not something that we demand from others.

First, submit to God.

We need to stop thinking about submission as a dirty word or something we don't want to talk about and look at submission as the way that God has called all of His people to treat others. Submission is not just for women.

Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility *consider others better than yourselves.*"

Ephesians 5:21, "Submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ."

Day 3:

Sarah faced many trials:

1. She was barren

Genesis 11:30 – Sarah had no children

Genesis 12:2 – The promise that God made to Abraham that he was to be a great nation

How do you think Sarah felt when she heard about this promise God made to Abraham?

2. Famine

Move to Egypt

Map

Sarah lives a life on the move.

3. Pharaoh's Harem

Her faith is being tested.

God has a plan but, as we see in many followers of God, Abraham and Sarah did not know the plan. They were faithfully following without knowing where they were going.

4. Family dispute

Read Genesis 13:5-18

5. War

Read Genesis 14:13-16

Genesis 15:1-6

They still did not understand because they had no children.

God was building her faith through many trials.

Sometimes, before we can be used by God, we have to go through trials that will build our faith.

Day 5:

We have to look at the trials that Sarah had been through if we have any hope of understanding the mistake she made.

Read Genesis 16:1-4

Sarah's trials:

Infertility; famine; moving; pharaoh's harem; family dispute; war

10 years since the promise

*** How do you think Sarah felt about still not having a child ten years after receiving the promise of a son?**

Verse 2 – “The Lord has kept me from having children.”

She had given up

“Years of trials, waiting, and finally a feeling of defeat led to this decision.”

*** How do you feel about Sarah’s decision to give Hagar to Abraham to have a son? Do you understand her frustration or do you think she was foolish and hasty in her decision?**

Abraham had not taken another wife even though it was acceptable in their culture.

Do you think maybe some of Sarah’s decision, in her mind, was to honor Abraham?

Could she have been thinking, “You have waited long enough.”

Sarah grew tired of waiting.

Read Genesis 16:4-6

Sarah grew impatient and made a decision that was outside of God’s will.

We have all seen people make decisions because they decided they had waited long enough.

People often make decisions without thinking about the consequences.

The testing of Sarah’s faith included pushing her to the very edge but instead of just giving up, she decided to take over.

Read Genesis 18:1-15

Who wouldn't laugh?

This was a "yeah, whatever" laugh.

***Have you ever laughed at God's timing?**

Verse 15, "Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."

Why do you think Sarah was afraid?

Was it because she realized these were people, or angels, sent from God?

Was it because she realized her impatience?

Was it because she understood for maybe the first time, that nothing is impossible with God?

Did she realize God had a plan and purpose for her?

Had God gotten her attention and Sarah's reaction was like everyone else when they come in to the presence of God, fear?

Was it because she "experienced God" in a new way that was very humbling to her?

Read Genesis 21:1-7

God fulfilled His promise to Sarah.

Even after her huge mistake, God used Sarah.

Sarah would say that even at her age, God used her.

He may use us when we think our usefulness is over, or if we think our mistakes will keep us from being used by God.

Closing

God uses us in His time.

God is using the experiences in our lives to build us into the women He can use for His purpose.

Be patient with God.

Don't give up on yourself.

Used by God
Week 3 – Hagar

I. Introduction

Have you ever thought about or studied Hagar?

I wonder if we have dismissed her just as she was dismissed and overlooked in Abraham's house as well.

How would you describe Hagar?

Broken; lonely; used; abused; invisible (she thought no one saw her)

In Hagar we meet a woman who was rejected and who was broken. I think she was searching for something and did not know what she was looking for.

But then God showed up. God appeared to an Egyptian slave who may have never uttered His name. A woman who was caught in a difficult situation. A woman who had no choice about the situation and when she saw a chance she took it and ran.

“Brokenness forces us to find a source of love outside ourselves. That source is God, whose essential nature is love.”

A Grace Disguised by Jerry Sittser

II. Day 1:

Read Genesis 16:1-3

Hagar became Abraham's second wife.

Culturally acceptable but it was not God's plan –

Proverbs 30:21-23:

**“Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up:
a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of**

**food,
an unloved woman who is married,
and a maidservant who displaces her mistress.”**

Hagar has taken Sarah’s place and it does not work so well.

When Sarah came up with the plan and Abraham agreed to it, they were living outside of God’s will.

Their house must have been a miserable place.

*** What are some things we do that lead us to live outside of God’s will?**

Sin

Taking advice from people who are not living under God’s will

Impatience; control

*** How does it feel to live outside of God’s plan?**

Read Genesis 16:4-6

Hagar “despised” Sarah.

Why do you think Hagar began to despise Sarah?

What might have been going on in that house?

Maybe Hagar felt used

Maybe Hagar thought she should be treated like Sarah

Maybe she despised the way Sarah treated her because Hagar had what Sarah always wanted and couldn’t have, a baby.

16:5

Why do you think Sarah was so upset with Abraham?

Maybe she was angry because he agreed to the plan.

Maybe she hoped to words of assurance from him that she was to be the mother of his child.

16:6

Hagar was mistreated by Sarah so she decides to run away.

How bad must it have been for Hagar to run away?

She was pregnant and alone. She had been a slave most of her life. Egypt was a long way away.

There are times when we need to run.

Running from sinful situations.

Run when you know you being tempted.

Idolatry, sexual immorality, evil desires of youth

Have you ever reached a point where you wanted to run?

Laundry became too much

Fed up with kids or other relationships.

Tired of your responsibilities

Maybe you think if I run from this relationship another relationship will be better.

Hagar is fed up with the situation so she decides to leave.

She soon learns that she can run from Sarah and Abraham but she can't run from God.

III. Day 3

Genesis 16:7-8

Desert

“The Bible is constantly sending people into the desert for redemption, because it’s there, away from the ease of settled life, far removed from ready water, that they turn to God for sustenance.”

Abraham by Bruce Feiler

God may take us to the desert to get our attention or maybe to get us away from distractions.

Hagar runs to the desert and for the first time she learns that God cares for her.

Would she have believed the message of God, could she hear God, if she had stayed in Sarah and Abraham’s household?

Could it be that God takes us to the desert so that we can hear Him or see Him, or focus on Him?

Have you ever been in a situation that you would describe as a desert experience?

God cared for this pregnant, Egyptian slave girl by appearing to her in the desert.

What does it tell you about God that He chose to send an angel to Hagar?

His love for all of mankind

2 questions that the angel asked Hagar:

1. Where have you come from?

2. Where are you going?

Hagar’s answer:

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai.”

Answer:

She knows where she is coming from but not so sure about where she is going.

Where are you coming from?

Bad marriage

Unloving family

Church that did not care for me like they should have

Hagar: “Let me tell you about the stinking place that I have come from.

Do you know what she did to me? I was not going to stay there one minute more.”

Where are you going?

Are you walking on God’s path?

Have you decided to make your own way and your walking on a path of your own making?

God cares more about where we are going than where we came from.

God wants us on His path.

Isaiah 42:16:

“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before
them and make the rough places smooth.

These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”

Are you living your life under God’s will?

Genesis 16:9-12

“Go back...and submit.”

Submission: **“to choose to yield to another, rather than demanding one’s own way.”**

God told Hagar to return to her miserable situation, yield to Sarah and stop demanding her own way.

Why do you think God told Hagar to go back and submit to Sarah?

Maybe it was the best place for her to be – people who would care for her and her son.

Maybe Hagar needed to learn how to submit – give up her own way.

Genesis 16:13-16

The God who Sees – El Roi

Discuss how amazing it is that we have a God who sees us.

Hagar was in awe of the fact that God saw her.

How do you think Hagar felt when God told her to return?

She had talked to an angel of the Lord

She had received a promise

Her perspective was different after she encountered God

It is easier to “go back and submit” when we submit to God first.

IV. Day 5

Genesis 21:8-10

Conflict in the house:

Ishmael is mistreating Isaac

“that slave woman”

*** What do you think Sarah and Hagar’s relationship was like after Hagar went back to their home?**

If you thought maybe things were peaceful when Hagar returned, I think the way Sarah referred to Hagar lets us know that there was still a lot of conflict in the house.

Genesis 21:11-14

Abraham was “greatly distressed” about sending Ishmael and Hagar away. He could not provide for them if they were not living in his household.

As the firstborn

“The birthright of a firstborn included a double portion of the estate and leadership of the family. As head of the house after his father's death, the eldest son customarily cared for his mother until her death, and he also provided for his sisters until their marriage.”

Genesis 17:20

*** How do you think Hagar felt about being sent away from Abraham’s home?**

Scared; she knew what it was like to be in the desert by herself;

Genesis 21:15-16

She had given up.

Genesis 21:17-18

Hagar experienced the God who sees in her prior experience in the desert, this time she learned that the God who sees is also the God who hears cries for help.

Once again Hagar is in the desert where she can clearly hear God.

Genesis 21:19-21

Closing: Read Romans 8:38

“For I am convinced that neither...illness, divorce, disappointment, abuse, cancer...

Used by God
Chapter 4 – Rahab

I. Introduction

Talk about an active faith. Tell a story about someone who demonstrated an active faith.

II. Day 1

History of Israelites

Rescued from Egypt

Moses

40 years of wondering due to disobedience

Joshua and Caleb

Joshua is leader

Joshua 1:9

Entering Jericho – map

Importance of capturing Jericho

Walls – Outer wall was 6 ft thick and inner was 12 ft thick.

Rahab's house

Read Joshua 2:1

Prostitute:

***How do you think others treated Rahab?**

Spies go to her house.

Popular place; place that was visited by visitors to the city

God's plan was to rescue Rahab from Jericho.

Joshua 2:2-7

***Why do you think Rahab became a traitor to her own people?**

She knew there was no hope with her own people and gods.

She believed the stories she heard about the God of the Israelites

“Rahab did not allow her past or her present to determine her future.”

III. Day 3

Courage

Joshua 2:9-13

What did Rahab tell the spies that she knew? Joshua 2:9

Joshua 1:9 – Don't be terrified

Joshua 2:9 – “a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.”

God instructs His people to be courageous and to not fear and the Canaanites, people without God are living in fear.

***Why do you think Rahab rejected the gods of her people and chose to believe in the God of the Israelites?**

Maybe she had doubts about her gods

She believed the stories she heard about the God of the Israelites

Do you think belief is easier for some than for others?

Exodus 15:13-16 – “melting away..”

God said it would happen and it did.

Fear

Rahab said that “a great fear of you has fallen on us.”

What had the fear of the Canaanites done to them?

Paralyzed

Watch everyone who came into their cities

Maybe they had beefed up security

What had Rahab’s fear led her to?

Belief

Faith

Action

What do you do with your fear?

Are you paralyzed by fear

Does it lead you to action

Story of the talents

Matthew 25

“I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground.”

Does your fear keep you from God or lead you to God?

Fear vs. reverent fear

Joshua 24:14, “Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness.”

Joshua 4:24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always **fear** the LORD your God.”

Our fear of God should lead us to follow, obey, and serve Him.

Joshua 2:14-16

Rahab risked her life to help the spies.

She was the only one in her city who was willing to do that. She knew there would be consequences to her belief.

What courage!

Have you ever done something that requires courage?

***What is God calling you to do that requires courage?**

Are you being called to talk to that neighbor about Jesus or invite her to church?

Do you feel that God is calling you to work in a ministry at church but you have fears about getting out of your comfort zone?

Are the “what ifs” in life keeping you from doing something?

Do you want to go on that mission trip but there is a fear that is keeping you from stepping out and going?

Do you fear what others will think if you get the counseling help you need?

Do you fear how your life might change if you follow the direction you believe God is leading you?

Maybe there is a ministry that you want to start but you are afraid of being told no.

Do you fear success? What if you do something and God blesses it in a way that is beyond what you ever dreamed?

Taking a risk for God

I believe that God blesses those who are willing to take risks for Him.
It takes courage and it takes overcoming fears.
And you have to stand up to Satan and say to him, “I am not going to let you stand in the way of what I am called to do.”

IV. Day 5

Faith

Read Joshua 2:17-21

A sign of the promise

Read Joshua 2:22-24 – Joshua must have been anxious because of what had happened years earlier.

The spies report verses the spies report in Numbers 13.

Numbers 14:9

What a difference 40 years makes!

God can do amazing things when His people live in faith and not fear!

***Why were Rahab and her family saved?**

Because she hid the spies

Joshua 6:15-17; 22-25

How do you think Rahab felt when she came out of her house and saw all of the destruction?

Sad; alone;

It confirmed what she believed about God

Relieved that she and her family were saved

Rahab’s faith in God and the risk she took saved her family.

Active Faith

James 2:25-26

We show our faith by what we do.

How do we show our faith?

What are some things we do to show our faith?

Compassion; forgiveness; listening; serving; working; praying

Are you prepared for God to answer your prayers?

Transforming Faith

Rahab's life was completely changed because of her faith.

She had a new place to live.

She lived in a new culture, among different people.

She no longer lived as a prostitute

Rahab's comfort and security were gone but she got to live a whole new life.

Outside the Camp

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

When you go to war against your enemies and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives, **11** if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. **12** Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails **13** and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. **14** If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

***How do you think Rahab felt about having to do these things?**

Grateful; willing to do whatever was required

An active faith will lead us to change things in our lives as well.

Closing

God rescued Rahab because she chose to believe. And then she acted on her faith and she and her family were saved.

Rahab is listed in the genealogy of Christ

When we are willing to take risks and step out in faith, God will use us in powerful ways.

Leader's Guide

Ruth

I. Introduction

Give an example, or story, of love and sacrifice

II. Day 1 – Love and Sacrifice

Read Ruth 1:1-5

Moabites:

Genesis 19:30-38 – Moabites descendants of Lot and his daughter

Numbers 25:1-5 – Sexual immorality with the women of Moab

Deuteronomy 23:3-6 – Moabites mistreated Israelites

Judges 3:12-14 – Moabites ruled Israelites for 18 years

Moab was an idolatrous, pagan nation and God wanted His people to keep their distance.

Elimelech takes his family to Moab because of a famine.

He and his 2 sons died leaving Naomi with 2 Moabite daughter-in-laws, Orpah and Ruth.

Read Ruth 1:6-14

They are headed back to Bethlehem and Naomi stops and tells the girls to go home.

When a girl married a man she married into his family. She left his family and went to live with them. She was tied to that family.

I think Orpah and Ruth assumed that even though their husbands were dead, they were still going to live with Naomi. She was their family.

Whose decision, Orpah or Ruth's, made the most sense?

Read Ruth 1:15-18

What were some things you think Ruth sacrificed when she decided to go with Naomi?

Future, family, country

“Her decision required love and sacrifice.”

What strikes you as most alarming about this promise that Ruth made to Naomi?

Ruth chose Naomi and she chose Naomi's God

It was a life long commitment

When have you seen an example of sacrifice of one person to another?

Someone who devoted themselves to someone else?

Parents to children

Wives to husbands or husband to wife

Children to parents

Wife to her husband or husband to wife

Read Ruth 1:19-22

A new season, a new beginning

Read Ruth 2:1-3

Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Leviticus 19:9-10

God provided for the widows by instructing the Israelites to leave some behind in their fields

Gleaning the fields:

Danger; alongside people in desperate situations;

Boaz:

What do we know about Boaz?

Wealthy landowner, relative of Naomi, well respected

“As it turned out”

God has not left the scene

Have you ever had an “as it turned out” event in your life?

Read Ruth 2:4-9

What did we learn about Boaz in these scriptures?

Godly man; liked by those who work for him; wanted to protect Ruth

Read Ruth 2:10-16

People in the town noticed Ruth and her sacrifice and devotion to Naomi.

What do you think Ruth thought when she heard that the people in town were talking about her?

Surprised; she was devoting her self to Naomi to get noticed; “just doing my job”; she probably did not think what she was doing was extraordinary

Discuss verse 2:12, “The God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

God is our refuge:

Psalm 91:4 - He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psalm 9:9 - The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalm 18:30 - As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

What does it mean to you for God to be your refuge?

Safe place

Read Ruth 2:17-23:

She took what she gathered and then she went to thresh the grain and it came to about an ephah.

5 Gallons

Ruth worked very hard and the amount of grain she gathered would have probably been shocking to Naomi.

What were some of the sacrifices Ruth made for Naomi?

Left her family and country

Went to live in a new country as a widow where she would support Naomi

Worked hard to support them

Sacrificed not for her own glory

III. Day 3 – Taking a Risk

Ruth 3:1-6

The plan: Ruth is to lay at Boaz's feet; propose marriage to Boaz

Why was Naomi suggesting Ruth approach Boaz in this way?

She was looking for a protector for Ruth

She was worried about what would happen to Ruth if something happened to her

How do you think Ruth may have felt about Naomi's idea?

Nervous; unsure

Remember who she is, a poor girl from Moab, and who Boaz is, a wealthy Jewish landowner.

What was Ruth's response to Naomi's plan?

"I will do whatever you say."

*** What does her response tell you about Ruth?**

Willing to submit to Naomi

Took her advice without questioning her

Trusted her

It is important for us to have a Naomi, an older wise woman, in our lives who we listen to and seek guidance from.

Do you or have you had a Naomi in your life?

How would you describe that woman?

Is listening, taking advice from others something we have lost, or are losing in our society?

Read Ruth 3:7-9

What did Ruth risk when she went to Boaz on the threshing floor?

Rejection; ridicule

Did she think, "I am a poor, Moabite woman and Boaz is a wealthy Jewish man respected by many, why would he choose me?"

Ruth became the initiator in this situation and there will be times when you need to be the initiator in situations.

Read Ruth 3:10-18

*** How would you describe Boaz's reaction to Ruth's proposal?**

Shocked, honored, flattered

3:11 – “a woman of noble character”

What made the people say that Ruth was a “woman of noble character.”

IV. Day 5: Loving-kindness

Ruth 4:1-10

Boaz was Ruth's redeemer just as Jesus is our redeemer.

We are undeserving, yet Jesus redeemed us to God.

Galatians 4:4-5

*** What benefits did Ruth receive when Boaz redeemed her?**

No longer had to glean in the fields; new house to live in

We have been redeemed and we received the benefits of sons and heirs.

Can you imagine how Ruth felt being accepted by the Israelites and taken as Boaz's wife?

The gratefulness and awe that Ruth felt we should feel that way knowing that Jesus is our redeemer. Through His death on the cross He redeemed us to God.

No doubt, being redeemed by Boaz changed Ruth's life.

Being redeemed by Jesus should change our lives.

Ruth 4:11-15

“better than 7 sons”

Ruth had captured the love and admiration of the entire town.

Ruth 4:16-22

Ruth took her son and gave him to Naomi. She wanted to replace the sons that Naomi had lost.

Ruth continued to make sacrifices and keep her vow to Naomi.

Loving-kindness:

Ruth 1:8, 2:20, 3:10

Ruth demonstrated loving-kindness, *hesed*, toward Boaz and Naomi.

Loving-kindness originates with God who has shown us His loving-kindness.

We are called to demonstrate loving-kindness to others.

Fruit of the Spirit; Colossians 3:12

***Through this study, what have you admired most about Ruth?**

V. Closing

In Ruth we see a woman who was willing to sacrifice, take risks, who had great courage.

Week 6

Naomi

I. Introduction

What are some things you believe about God, and no matter what you go through will change what you believe about God?

He loves us

He sacrificed His son for us

He is good

Naomi did not question God's existence. She questioned His goodness. She believed that God caused all of the tragedy in her life.

We see Naomi go from a woman who is bitter and angry at God to a woman who sees God's goodness.

II. Day 3

Ruth 1:1-2

Judges 21:25 - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit

Famine in the land, Elimelech moved his family to Moab.

Moab was enemy territory.

Review what we know about Moab from Ruth chapter.

Elimelech chose to leave God, His people, and His land when He went to Moab

Living outside of God's will

It is possible that we can put ourselves in a position that God cannot use us.

Do you think it is possible to live outside God's protection?

Read Ruth 1:3-5

She is now a widow. She has no one to speak for her, to protect her, and to provide for her.

***What are some difficulties that Naomi might have faced without a husband and son?**

She is an Israelite living in Moab, she is the foreigner

She may be taken advantage of

Who would protect her and provide for her?

Ruth 1:6-10

Why do you think Naomi chose to return to Bethlehem?

Naomi is headed back to Bethlehem as a widow. She is still in the midst of her grief and she must feel the burden of caring for her daughters-in-law. She has nowhere to live and she must worry about where her next meal is coming from.

***Why do you think Naomi encouraged Orpah and Ruth to return home?**

She knew what it was like to leave your home – she had left Bethlehem

She knew what it was like to live as a foreigner in strange land

She wanted what was best for them.

What is it like to live in a foreign country?

***What does it tell you about Naomi that she encouraged her daughters-in-law to return home?**

She is thinking about them; she wants what is best for her

She is not insisting that they take care of her

***What does the girls' reaction tell you about their relationship with Naomi?**

They loved her; they were concerned about her

They wanted to care for her; they did not want to see her suffer another loss

Read Ruth 1:11-15

“The Lord’s hand has gone out against me.”

Naomi did not doubt the presence of God, she believed He was the One who had caused her to lose her husband and 2 sons.

Along with everything she has lost, Naomi has lost her faith and trust in God.

Summarize Ruth 1:16-18

Ruth promises to be her companion for life.

Read Ruth 1:19-22

***What are the 4 things that Naomi says God has done to her?**

“Made my life very bitter”

“Lord has brought me back empty”

“The Lord has afflicted me”

“The Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”

Naomi does not question God’s existence, she is questioning His goodness.

God’s goodness:

Where ever we find ourselves, whatever trial we are in, we have to remind ourselves that God is good.

God is good no matter what my circumstances are.

God’s goodness is not dependent on my circumstances – as long as things are good in my life, then God must be good.

How hard is it to see God’s goodness when things are not good in our lives?

III. Day 3 – Presence, provision, and protection

Summarize Ruth 2:1-18

God's Presence

Read Ruth 2:19-23

Where do you see God's presence seen in these events?

Ruth working in Boaz's field

Ruth staying faithful to Naomi

Naomi believed that God was responsible for the difficult things she had been through, could she see God working in the good things in her life?

God's Provision

Ruth 3:1-4

Do you see a change in Naomi?

Focusing on what is best for Ruth

Summarize Ruth 3:5-15

How was God providing for Naomi?

Ruth was her companion and took care of her.

Boaz was a provider and protector.

God's Protection

How is God protecting Naomi?

Boaz

When have you experienced God's protection?

How do you think Naomi's beliefs about God are changing after experiencing His presence, provision, and protection?

IV. Day 5

“Our sufferings take us into deeper realms of God's character and enlarge our vision of him.” *When Life and Beliefs Collide*, page 76

We will have difficult times in our lives but as believers in God, we need to look for God in those times.

When have you seen God during a difficult time in your life?

It is seeing God in the small things.

Summarize Ruth 4:1-12

***How did God use Boaz to bless Naomi?**

Kinsman redeemer who was willing to redeem

Read Ruth 4:13-17

How do you think Naomi felt when Ruth laid that baby on her lap?

The blessing of new life

Have you seen a family suffer a death and soon after they are blessed with a birth?

What is it about the birth of a baby that brings such joy?

Hope; new life

God continues to bless us when He blesses us with new life.

After feeling so empty Naomi is being filled with God's blessings.

Even during difficult times and trials it is important that we be grateful to God.

How can we have gratitude when we go through difficult times?

Naomi had to overcome her bitterness and anger toward God and I think she was able to do that by seeing God's blessings and goodness in her life.

Closing

We have to know that He is a good God and that He is with us when we go through difficult times.

We have to believe that He loves us even when it may feel like He has abandoned us.

We have to always be in His Word and continue to learn about Him.

Leader's Guide
Week 7
Widow of Zarephath

I. Introduction

Discuss taking a leap of faith

II. Day 1:

I Kings 16:29-33

What is going on in the nation of Israel at this time?

Baal worship

Sacrificing children

Immorality

Quote article Fertility Cults of Canaan, p. 106 *Used by God*

Tried to worship both God and Baal

I Kings 17:1-6

Elijah – name means “The Lord is my God”

Elijah was sent by God to speak to Ahab and to the people of Israel

Elijah’s message to Ahab – not going to rain

Deuteronomy 11:16-17

Elijah was sent to remind the Israelites of God’s promise that He would withhold the rain if they did not obey Him and if they worshipped other gods.

Kerith Ravine:

What did God provide for Elijah at the Kerith Ravine?

Protection from Ahab; food; water; rest; assurance that God is with Him

I Kings 17:7-9

The brook dried up

Would Elijah continue to trust God even when the brook dried up?

“Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon.”

Jezebel – daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians (16:31)

What do you think Elijah was thinking when he received this message from God?

Are you kidding?; Scared;

God protected Elijah at the Kerith Ravine, would God protect Elijah in enemy territory?

“I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.”

Not only was Elijah told to go to enemy territory, but he was also told he would get food from a widow.

It would be like God telling us to go get food from a homeless person.

Have you ever been called by God to go somewhere or do something that was hard to believe?

When have you been in a position where you felt that you were there to grow your faith?

What is it like to be in a place where God is growing your faith?

Trying; hard; difficult; uncomfortable

Maybe you have had a time of doubting you are doing what God wants you to do.

III. Day 3

I Kings 17:10-12

2 very different people, 2 different countries and God was using both of them to accomplish His will.

Neither knew what was going on.

When has your life intersected with someone from a different place to accomplish God's will?

This is a reminder that God is much bigger than one person, than me. He is working in many ways throughout this world to accomplish His will.

In Elijah's day, the Israelites viewed God as their God and the idea that He was present and using people in different countries would be surprising to them.

Widow:

She was preparing for her and her son's last meal.

How do you think this woman felt as she gathered sticks to prepare what she thought was her last meal.

Sad; hopeless; out of options – maybe she had struggled for a long time but now she believed this was the end.

What would be more surprising, that God spoke to this woman or that this woman listened to God?

God commanded and she listened.

Why do you think this woman listened to God?

Nothing to Offer:

When the brook dried up, God commanded Elijah to move on to Sidon.

When the woman had no food, God told her to give food to Elijah.

Do you think maybe the brook had to be dry for Elijah to be willing to leave the safety of the Kerith Ravine?

Do you think the widow had to have nothing in order for God to get her attention?

“God often works when we have expended all of our own resources, when we think we have nothing to give.”

Have you ever experienced God using you when you felt like you had nothing to offer – your brook had dried up?

Why do you think God sometimes waits until all of our resources are gone and when we have nothing to give to work in our lives?

So that we will trust Him; to see Him and not see us as the source; His timing is not our time; more willing to listen to Him

I Kings 17:13-16

What were Elijah’s instructions to this woman?

Make a small cake for him, take it to him, and then make one for her and her son.

That is absurd, ridiculous. Who would do that?

What would you think if a total stranger told you to give your last piece of bread to him?

What would her son think of her if he sees her baking their last meal and giving it away?

Why do you think this woman listened to Elijah and did what he said?

Maybe she was willing to try anything

There must have been something very convincing about the command she received from God.

Taking a step of faith

This woman was willing to step of faith.

When have you had to take a step of faith?

What does it feel like to take that first step of faith?

Unsure of what will happen or where it will lead;

IV. Day 5:

I Kings 17:17-18

Elijah and his God were the reason this woman had not already died of starvation. When her son dies she blames the ones who had kept them alive.

What do you think this woman was thinking when she blamed Elijah?

She needed a reason for this tragedy.

When have you ever seen God blamed?

Who else did she blame?

Herself

Isn't it interesting how we will look to someone to blame – God, others, or even ourselves.

I Kings 17:19-23

This is the first instance in the Bible where someone is raised from the dead. Elijah had never seen it.

Why do you think he was willing to even ask God for this miracle?

He had seen God do amazing things. Everyday Elijah and this widow lived a miracle.

Ephesians 3:20 - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Do we approach God as the God who can do “immeasurably more than we ask or imagine?”

Would our prayers, our lives be different if we lived that way?

When have you seen God do something that was bigger than anyone could ask or imagine?

I Kings 17:24

Belief

It took her son being raised from the dead for this woman to believe.

What she said to Elijah.

What does the fact that she did not believe until her son was raised from the dead tell you about this woman?

She was not easily persuaded; lived in a miracle but yet did not believe

Who benefitted from this miracle?

Elijah; woman; son; everyone who saw; God was glorified

What does this miracle tell you about God?

He was willing to do whatever needed to be done to make His presence known in this foreign country and to convince this woman to believe.

V. Closing

Through this widow we see that God is not bound by nationalities when He chooses people to use for His purpose.

Once again we see God use an unlikely woman for His purpose.

Week 8 – Deborah
Leader's Guide

I. Introduction

Talk about women as leaders.

II. Day 1

Judges 2:10-15

Judges 2:16-19

Cycle: Turn from God

Handed over to enemy

Cry out to God

Raise up a judge

Judge would die and they would begin cycle again

Read Judges 4:1-4.

What were Deborah's 3 roles?

Prophetess, wife, and leader of Israel

Prophetess:

Deuteronomy 18:14-22

What was the prophet to do?

How did the people know if someone who claimed to have a word from the Lord was a prophet?

I Corinthians 14:3

The role of the prophet: Strengthen, encourage, and comfort.

How do you, or have you, received strengthening, encouragement, and comfort?

God's Word

Others, fellow Christians

How can we strengthen, encourage, and comfort one another?

First have to know what is going on in their lives

Kind words

Wife

I think it is so interesting that God made sure that we knew Deborah was a wife.

Why do you think God listed that Deborah was a wife?

It is important for women reading this. If we didn't know that we would say, "well of course she could be a prophet and leader of Israel, she did not have people at home demanding her attention."

List of various duties that we are juggling.

Relying on God to get it all done.

Deborah had to rely on God.

We have to look to God for help.

Juggling various responsibilities – there will be times when we have a lot on our plates. We will have seasons in our lives that are very busy.

There will also be times when we need to eliminate some of the things on our plates.

There may be times when you have to let go of some things to focus on something that God is calling you to focus on.

“God may call you to handle a lot and He can give you the strength, energy, patience, and whatever you need to handle those things.”

What should be our most important role in life?

Followers of Jesus

Barna study from August 2011

Mothers as Followers of Jesus

When asked what their most important role in life is:

62% say being a mother or parent

13% believe that their most important role in life is as a follower of Christ

When we place our relationship with God first in our lives then we are better able to be good mothers, wives and every other role.

Deborah had many roles, but I would say that her most important role was as a leader of the people of Israel.

II. Day 3 – Available to serve

Read Judges 4:-8

***What keeps us from being available to God to be used for His purpose?**

Busy, priorities, available to everyone else first – noise

Deborah made a choice to:

Listen to God

and

Serve others – 1 Peter 4:10

We are called to do the same.

Do we make a priority in our lives to listen to God and serve others?

Which of these do you find most difficult to do, listen to God or serve others?

What can we do to make these things a priority in our lives?

Military Leader

Judges 4:6-7

Deborah was the messenger. She was told to deliver a message to the Army General.

The people they were told to fight:

Sisera – 900 chariots; 4:3

Judges 5:6-7 – the people are afraid

God likes to go to war as the underdog.

Judges 4:8-10

Barak insisted that Deborah go with Him.

Why did Barak insisted that Deborah go with him?

Was it a lack of faith?

Why did he want a woman with him?

Barak is listed in Hebrews 11. He is praised for his faith.

How do you think Deborah felt about going to war?

Did not like it
She trusted God

She was available to God and willing to follow Him whatever that meant.

When has God used you in a surprising way?

“When we make ourselves available to God and have a close relationship with Him, we will be willing to follow His commands even when they are difficult.”

III. Day 5 – Leader of Israel

The battle:

Judges 4:11-16, Judges 5:4-5, 21

“Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?”

Deborah encouraged Barak to join God in the battle.

God is working in our world today. Are we going to join him in the battle?

Deborah was a leader who pointed others to follow God.

Beware of leaders who point people to themselves.

She praised God and praised the men who fought the battle.

Judges 5:2-3

She also gave God the glory.

Judges 4:17-24

We have to be open to God leading us where He wants.

He may lead us to some uncomfortable places, like He led Deborah into battle.

IV. Closing

Deborah was willing to be led wherever God led because her primary purpose was to lead the people of Israel back to God.

In Deborah we see God use a woman in ways that goes against everything their culture says.

God is no limited to using people by what roles we assign them.

Week 9 – Abigail
Leader’s Guide

I. Introduction

Women in crisis

Depression – 12 million women suffer from clinical depression each year

Addiction – 4.5 million are alcoholics or alcohol abusers; 3.5 million misuse prescription drugs; 3.1 million regularly use illicit drugs

Eating disorders – 7 to 10 million American women

Abuse – As many as 29 million say they have suffered abuse in a relationship (CDC statistics from 2011)

There are millions of women who are in crisis.

Many of them probably wonder how God could possibly use them. Many probably believe that God would never use them.

Abigail was a woman who lived in a difficult situation yet she was available to be used by God.

II. Day 1 – Difficult Situations

I Samuel 25:1-3

From the outside it may have looked like Abigail had it all – wealthy, intelligence, and beauty.

Did her neighbors look at her and think she had it made?
But she was married to Nabal.

How is Nabal described?

Surly and mean; wicked;

He may have been wise in business dealings but he was mean and wicked.

What do you think Abigail's life was like living with this difficult man?

Hard; miserable;

How do some women deal with difficult relationships?

Seek substances to fill them; isolate themselves;

Women in difficult situations can relate to Abigail

I Samuel 25:4-9

Sheep shearing time – a time of celebration

David is on the run from Saul

David's men – I Samuel 22:2; 23:13-14

I Samuel 25:10-11

What was Nabal's response to David's men?

Who are you; refused to share

I Samuel 25:12-13

What was David's response to Nabal?

Do you remember why David was not allowed to build God's temple?

He was a fighting man – 2 Samuel 7:1-2; 1 Chronicles 22:5-10

I Samuel 25:14-17

Where did the servant go when the household was in danger?

What qualities do you think Abigail had demonstrated to this servant that led him to go to her?

Wisdom; kindness; loving; caring; strength of character

Abigail did not live her life in isolation, in self-pity. She was a woman who did not allow her difficult relationship to determine the way she lived her life.

She was not helpless or weak; she did not spend her time feeling sorry for herself.

Her difficult situation did not keep her from being used by God.

God can use us in spite of difficult circumstances. He can use us in the midst of our difficult circumstances.

III. Day 3 – A Wise Woman

In this lesson we look at several qualities that show us how wise Abigail was.

I Samuel 25:14-17

Listener

The servant knew who that Abigail would listen to him.

Proverbs 1:5 - let the wise **listen** and add to their learning,

Proverbs 18:13 - He who answers before **listening**— that is his folly and his shame.

Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man **listens** to advice.

Proverbs 15:31 - He who **listens** to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.

Proverbs 19:20 - **Listen** to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.

James 1:9 - My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to **listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

Describe a good listener.

Ask yourself if you are a good listener.

Are you thinking about what you are going to say while talking to people?

Do you interrupt while people are talking?

Do you often finish people's sentences?

Do you often find yourself day-dreaming or thinking about other things while people are talking to you?

Do you look at people while they are talking?

Are your hands often doing other things while someone is talking? (Such as checking your phone messages or texting?)

Good listeners attract people.

Abigail was willing to listen.

I Samuel 25:18-19

She showed her wisdom through her discernment.

dis·cern·ing: showing good or outstanding judgment and understanding

How do you see Abigail's discernment in this situation?

Acted quickly

She chose not to tell Nabal what was going on

She chose to go to David – she could have sent someone

We show wisdom when we show good judgment.

By what we say
By what we don't say
By our actions

Everyday we are faced with making good judgment and showing discernment.

I Samuel 25:20-25

Humility

How do you think Abigail felt as she headed out to meet David?

What do you think David thought when he saw Abigail coming to him?

Got his attention

Abigail acted with humility as she bowed down to David.

Proverbs 11:2 - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with **humility** comes wisdom.

Proverbs 22:4 - **Humility** and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

Philippians 2:3 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in **humility** consider others better than yourselves.

James 3:13 - Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the **humility** that comes from wisdom.

I Peter 5:5 - Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

How did Abigail show her humility?

Bowed before David

Took the blame

How do others react when we act in humility?

Surprised

Off their guard

God calls His people to act with humility.

Abigail showed her wisdom when she was willing to listen, she acted with discernment, and she humbled herself before David.

IV. Day 5 – Peacemaker

I Samuel 25:26-31

She is pleading for the lives of many people.

Verse 26 – “The Lord has kept you...from bloodshed.”

Verse 28 – “Please forgive...”

Verse 29 – “Bound securely...”

Verse 30 – “leader over Israel”

Verse 31 – “my master”

What qualities do you see in Abigail in these words she spoke to David?

Wisdom; humility; courage; knew how to appeal to David

Abigail’s message to David kept him from shedding needless bloodshed.

David was angry and he was not going to let Nabal get away with acting this way.

I Samuel 25:32-35

What was David’s reaction to Abigail’s message?

David appreciated that Abigail kept him from acting foolishly.

Abigail was used by God to keep peace.

Describe a peacemaker.

Do you know someone that you would describe as a peacemaker?

How have you seen people keep peace?

Should it be important to us to keep peace?

Matthew 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Romans 12:18 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at **peace** with everyone.

Romans 14:19 - Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to **peace** and to mutual edification.

I Corinthians 7:15 - God has called us to live in **peace**

What does keeping peace look like in our daily lives?

Apologize; leaving things unsaid;

1 Peter 4:15; Ephesians 4:2; Ephesians 4:29, 32

I Samuel 25:36-44

Nabal died and Abigail became David's wife

“Wash the feet of my master's servants.”

Her attitude led her to be loved by her servants.

V. Closing

Abigail was a woman who did not allow her difficult situation to keep her from being used by God.

She was married to a difficult man but she was a wise woman who was willing to listen and show discernment and humility.

If you find yourself in a difficult situation know that God can use you.

Week 10 – Esther
Leader’s Guide

I. Introduction

Esther is the favorite story of many little girls.
Is there more to this “princess” story?

II. Day 1

Esther 1:1-8

2 parties:

First one lasted 180 days, 6 months.

Who was at that party?

Military leaders of Persia and Media, princes and nobles of the provinces

2nd party lasted 7 days.

Who was at that party?

All the people from the citadel of Susa

Esther 1:9-12

While the men were having their party Queen Vashti was giving a banquet for the women.

Why did King Xerxes want Vashti to come to his party?

Verse 11 – display her beauty

What do you think about her refusal to be paraded in front of a bunch of drunk men?

Strong; courageous; self-worth

Summarize verses 13-15: Xerxes consults experts

Read Esther 1:16-22

What were some of the views that men held of women in the time of Queen Vashti?

Serve and obey their husband; not valued

How do you see women devalued today?

Objects; body image; to be of value you have to look a certain way;

Esther 2:1-4

What were the criteria for a new queen?

Beautiful young virgins

If a national search was conducted for a woman to be a first lady or a queen of England, what are some of the criteria you think would have to be met?

Highly educated; beautiful; great personality

Esther 2:5-11

Mordecai's family ended up in Persia when God allowed the Babylonians to take them into exile and then the Persians captured the Babylonians.

What do we know about Esther?

Orphan; raised by Mordecai; beautiful

Jew

Esther 2:12-18

Esther was chosen to be queen.

How do you think Esther felt about being chosen to be queen?

Excited; chosen; the only 1

Worth and Value

Vicki Courtney quote on page 160 (U by G)

What does our culture lead girls to believe about how their worth is measured?

By their looks, popularity, how well they do in school (grades)

III. Day 3

Summarize 2:19-23

Mordecai finds out about a conspiracy to kill the king. He tells Esther who tells the king. The conspirators were killed and Mordecai was credited with saving the king.

Read 3:1-15

What does it tell you about Mordecai that he refused to bow down to Haman?

Willing to put himself in danger because Haman was a powerful man; stood up for his beliefs; didn't care what others thought

Haman's reaction to Mordecai was to have every Jew killed.

King Xerxes went along with the plan.

Kill all the Jews, including women and children, and plunder their goods.

Verse 15, "The city of Susa was bewildered."

Why were the Jews, who had lived among the Persians for many years, now going to be killed?

Read Esther 4:1-3

They were given less than 1 year to live.

What do you think your reaction might be if you were told you and your people had less than one year to live?

Disbelief; denial; unsure what to do

Esther 4:4-8

Interesting that she sent clothes first. Was she embarrassed by the way he was dressed?

If he was in sackcloth something was wrong but she first wanted him to change his clothes.

Esther 4:9-11

What did Mordecai want Esther to do for her people?

Beg the king for mercy; plead for her people

What was Esther's response?

"I can't just go talk to the king."

Does it seem to you that she cares more about protocol than the fact that her people were about to be killed?

What does Esther's reaction tell you about her life as the Queen of Persia?

Esther lived an isolated, privileged life.

Remember: no one knows she is a Jew.

Esther 4:12-14

Most famous words in this book.

Stirring plea for action.

Mordecai's words are an attempt to get Esther's attention.

"Mordecai's words were meant to shake Esther out of her privileged, lackadaisical, easy, lifestyle."

There is a crisis and Esther is in a position to help.

Up to this point in her life, what do you think Esther thought was her purpose in life?

Look beautiful and serve the king

Acts 17:26

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. **27** God did this so that men would **seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him**, though he is not far from each one of us."

God placed Esther in her position not for her own comfort, but that she would seek Him. Esther was the one God chose to be in the position to save her people. But it took a crisis for her to remember her heritage and her God.

Describe a time in your life when it took you living in a certain place at a certain time for you to seek God?

Have you ever lived in a place where it made a difference in your relationship with God?

God places each of us where we are so that we will seek Him and find Him.

Esther's decision:

Esther 4:15-17

Esther knew it was going to take great strength to do what she needed to do.

“When we realize why God has placed us where we are it may mean bold and fundamental change is our lives.”

God will give us the strength to do whatever He calls us to do.

When we look at our selves and our own strength, we will believe that we can't do whatever we need to do. God's Spirit living in us gives us what we need.

IV. Day 5

Read Esther 5:1-7.

The king extends his scepter and accepts Esther to the point of telling her he would give her up to half the kingdom.

She invites King Xerxes and Haman to a banquet and while they are at the banquet she invites them to another banquet.

Summarize 5:8-14

Haman leaves the banquet all happy until he sees Mordecai. Then his anger takes over and he goes home and asks his wife and friends what he should do about Mordecai. They suggest building a gallows 75 feet high and having Mordecai hung on them.

Summarize 6:1-11

In the meantime, the king can't sleep and so he has the record of his reign read to him and he is reminded about the time that Mordecai saved his life.

The next day he asks Haman how to honor someone and Haman, the aggie, thinks he is talking about him so he suggests putting the man on the king's horse and parading him through the town for all the people to see. So the king tells Haman to do that for Mordecai.

Read Esther 6:12-14.

God is working through all of these events.

Second banquet; king's sleepless night; Haman's anger; Haman's friends advice

Read Esther 7:1-10.

What fears do you think Esther had before she made her request that the king save her people?

Feared for her life; would she be sent away like Vashti?;

Esther faced her fears and did what was right. She approached the king and saved the lives of all the Jews.

How do you think Esther felt when the king ordered that Haman be killed and the Jews saved?

Relieved; did she see her self and her purpose differently?

Read Esther 8:1-6.

Summarize 8:7-14

King Xerxes ordered another decree be signed that saved the Jews. He gave them the power to protect themselves.

Read 8:15-17

Summarize 9:1-17

The Jews defended themselves and the enemies of the Jews were destroyed.

Mordecai has become the leader of the Jews.

What are your impressions of Mordecai?

He was a man of conviction who was blessed by God.

10:3

In what ways did you see Esther change throughout her story?

V. Closing

In this study we have seen God use women of different ages and different nationalities and various economic levels.

It is up to us to step out of our comfort zones and be willing to take risks so God can use us.