

life group study guide

LOVE: WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

June 10, 2012



Bottom Line: Love sticks with it even when it's hard (Commitment / Faithfulness)

Items needed: Bibles, pens,

Get Started: (8-10 minutes)

I recently saw a photograph of an elderly couple on their 65th wedding anniversary. The caption underneath stated their answer to "How did you make it work for so long?" It read: "Because we grew up in an era that taught us to fix the things that were broken, not throw them away."

Wow. Great words – and I'm sure that couple has plenty of stories to tell about working through tough times, being committed during the ugly seasons, and staying the course. Inspiring!

Q: Let's think on that quote for a minute. How do you see our current culture handling things that are broken? (think lawn mowers, bicycles, furniture, telephones, etc.)

Q: How does this translate to our relationships? With spouses, friends, family?

Q: What is the danger in that type of thinking?

Q: How has this cultural norm affected your own life?

Get the Scoop: (8-10 minutes)

There are several great movies that showcase love overcoming all odds. Sometimes it's a romantic love, sometimes it's a friendship or comrade love.

Q: What movies have you seen that showcase love overcoming an impossible situation?

Assign these passages to several class members. Read them one right after the other...

Gen. 9:16, 1 Chronicles 16:17, Neh. 9:5, Ps. 41:13, Ps. 103:17, Ps. 119:142, Ps. 145:13, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 40:28

Q: What character quality of God do you see in these passages?

As His children, we are to reflect His character. He is an Everlasting God. Our love for others should mirror that character. *Love sticks with it even when it's hard.*

Dig In: (12-15 minutes)

Read Ruth 1-2:7

Q: What facts do you know about this account? (here are several. If your class members don't mention them, please share them so they have a better understanding of the setting, cultural impact, etc.)

**Moab was one of the nations that oppressed Israel during the time of the Judges. Not all people were friendly toward Moabites. The famine must have been pretty severe for Elimelech to move his family there.*

**Ruth was a Moabitess – which means she wasn't raised knowing the God of Israel. Her commitment to Him is an example of true spiritual character; she remained steadfast in her faith even when her life was a shambles.*

**Widows were most often overlooked in the ancient world – except through the provision in God's law. Because Naomi had no relatives in Moab, she had to go back to Israel in order to be cared for.*

**Even in her desperation, Naomi had a selfless attitude; she encouraged Ruth and Orpah to start their lives over. She discovered that when you act selflessly, others are encouraged to follow your example*

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**Israelite demanded that the corners of fields be left unharvested. In addition, any grain that was left was to be left for poor people. This was called "gleaning". The purpose was to feed the poor and prevent owners from hoarding.*

**Ruth wasn't afraid to admit her need/hardship. She was willing to work hard.*

**Ruth's willingness to faithful work in her hard times showed her character and provided opportunities for God to work.*

Q: What do you find the most challenging about this situation?

Q: How do Ruth's actions show her love for Naomi?

Q: In what condition was Naomi's attitude?

Q: How is your willingness to love affected by the attitude of the one you're loving?

Q: How can Ruth's example encourage us?

Q: How did Ruth show her love in action during this tough time? (There are several answers.)

Q: On whom did Ruth depend during these tough times? (Naomi, Boaz's field, and GOD!)

Take It Home (10-12 minutes)

Loving others in the tough times shows what our love is really all about.

Q: When have you been a recipient of real love in a tough time?

Q: How did that bring you closer to God? Others?

Q: How have you been challenged to love in a tough time?

Q: How did that affect your relationship with God? Others?

Q: How are you being challenged to love more deeply now?

Q: What is the hardest part of that challenge? What do you need to overcome to love that way?

Q: How will you turn over your challenges to God this week?

Divide into pairs. Share your love-challenge, and how you feel God directing you to love in a challenging situation.

Give permission to be held accountable.

Prayer time (5-10 minutes)

Pray with your partner about the current love-challenge. Spend some time talking through other prayer concerns and praying out loud for each other.