

"Mother of All Mother's Day Messages"
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Small Group Study Guide

1. Spend some time reflecting on the concept of the Church as a Mother.

"You cannot have God for your Father unless you have the Church for your Mother."
Cyprian of Carthage

"The Church is really the Mother of Christians." Augustine

2. John Calvin was one of the great protestant reformers (16th c). His view was that Christians need to relate to the Church as a Mother. As you look through this list, what Bible passages support his view?

Every Christian needs to relate to the Church as a Mother:

- The Church conceives new believers ... connection between the womb of the church and the action of the Holy Spirit and the Word (revelation of God) creates eternal life in people.
- The Church as the Body of Christ gives birth to new believers ...
- The Church nourishes Christians in their faith. "The Church nourishes us at her breast ..."
- Care & Guidance ... provided through all of our lives ... from birth to death
- Church is the agent of forgiveness and salvation in the world.
- Church cultivates godliness and piety (teaches us how to live like Jesus how to live for Jesus how to live with Jesus in this world)

For Calvin, seeing the Church as the Mother of all Christians was absolutely fundamental for a proper understanding of the Christian life and the Church in it.

3. Pope Francis:

"... it is also our mission to go forth and share in the maternity of the church by bringing others to a life of faith. And so we ask ourselves, do we love the Church as our Mother, who helps us to grow as Christians? And how do we go beyond ourselves in order to bring Christ to others? As faithful children, let us bring the light of Christ to the ends of the earth ..."

- How do you feel about the Church?
- Why is it important that we love the Church?
- What can we do to overcome any barriers that we have in our relationship with the Church?
- Why is forgiveness so important for our relationship with the Church and with people?

4. Pope Francis:

"The work of the Holy Spirit renders her (the Church) fecund."

Fecund definition: producing or capable of producing offspring in abundance, prolific, fruitful, very productive.

- Do you think that there is a crisis of infertility in the Church in the Western world? In our country? In our own Church?
- 5. What insights can we glean from stories of infertility in the Old Testament?
 - Sarah (Genesis 11-23)
 - Churches ... masking the pain of infertility by being busy doing great things but not sharing faith ...
 - Sarah's situation changed when she had a personal encounter with the Lord ... "Why did you laugh ... is this too hard for me?"
 - Rachel (Genesis 29-35)
 - Gen 30: Jacob ... give me children or I'll die! Prophetic statement ...
 - Desperate passion ...
 - Hannah (1 Samuel 1 & 2)
 - Desperate passion that she took to the Lord.
 - Key verses 1 Sam 1:15-19

***15-16** Hannah said, "Oh no, sir—please! I'm a woman hard used. I haven't been drinking. Not a drop of wine or beer. The only thing I've been pouring out is my heart, pouring it out to God. Don't for a minute think I'm a bad woman. It's because I'm so desperately unhappy and in such pain that I've stayed here so long."*

***17** Eli answered her, "Go in peace. And may the God of Israel give you what you have asked of him."*

***18** "Think well of me—and pray for me!" she said, and went her way. Then she ate heartily, her face radiant.*

***19** Up before dawn, they worshiped God and returned home to Ramah. Elkanah slept with Hannah his wife, and God began making the necessary arrangements in response to what she had asked.*

- 6. Our Response:
 - Luke 8 ... A farmer went out to sow his seed ...
 - Consider the context of this parable in the light of what you have discussed as a group. We go out to sow the seed of life in Christ ... Trust that God will make the necessary arrangements in response to what we ask for.
 - What are we going to do?
 - Ask God
 - Sow seed
 - Trust that God will make the necessary arrangements in response to what we ask for.