



“Stories” 2019 - Week One: Dr. Caroline Leaf

Leader’s Guide

Main Idea: We’re starting 2019 with our Stories Series. For the last couple of years, we’ve had the opportunity to hear others stories and how God has moved in their lives. These stories offer us amazing opportunities to see how God is working in others to change lives. This week we heard from Dr. Leaf about how we can control what we think, feel, and choose when we focus on how we are created and more importantly who we belong too.

Opening discussion Question:

During the story this weekend Dr. Leaf shared we need to avoid toxic habits. What are some of those habits people can fall subject to?

Read: Genesis 1:26 and Galatians 5:22-25

1. These verses show whose image we were created in and the characteristics of that image. What does that image look like, and how can we see it in each of our lives?
 - a. Obviously God did not create us exactly like himself, instead, we are reflections of His Glory.
 - b. Some feel that our ability to reason, be creative, our speech and self-determination is the image of God. More likely, it’s our entire self that reflects the image of God.
 - c. We’ll never be totally like God because He is our supreme Creator. But we do have the ability to reflect His character in our, love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness to Him and others.
2. How can knowing we are made in God’s image affect our lives both emotionally and spiritually?
 - a. Knowing that we are made in God’s image and thus share many of His characteristics provides a solid basis for self-worth.
 - b. Human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness, or public acclaim. It’s based on being made in the image of God, we can feel positive about ourselves.
 - c. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities he has given us.
 - d. Knowing that you are a person of worth helps you love God, know Him personally, and make a valuable contribution to those around you.

Read: Colossians 3:1-2

3. It is said, "What we focus on and let into our lives will be reflected in how we live and treat others." What does this passage encourage us to do? How will doing these things change the way we live?
 - a. True Christian behavior is putting on the new nature by accepting Christ and regarding the earthly nature as dead.
 - b. We change our moral and ethical behavior by letting Christ live within us so that he can shape us into what we should be.
 - c. Setting our sights on the realities of heaven means striving to put heaven's priorities into daily practice.
 - d. Letting heaven fill our thoughts means concentrating on the eternal rather than the temporal.

Read Colossians 3:15, Philippians 4:6-7 and John 14:27

4. It was shared this weekend we all: Think - Feel - Choose. Our hearts are the center of conflict. There are feelings and desires, fears and hopes, distrust and trust, and jealousy and love all clash. How can we deal with these constant conflicts and love as God wants?
 - a. We must decide between conflicting elements by using the "rule of peace".
 - b. True peace is not found in positive thinking, in the absence of conflict, or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control and we were created in His image.
 - c. We belong to Christ's Kingdom, our destiny is set and we have victory over sin. Let's God's peace guard your heart against anxiety.
 - d. Unlike worldly peace, which is defined by the absence of conflict, His peace is confident assurance in any circumstances, with Christ's peace, we have no need to fear the present or the future.
 - e. Learn to turn your worries into prayer. If you want to worry less than pray more. Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray.
 - f. Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and numerous other forces are at war within us. If your life is full of stress, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with Christ's peace.

Read Romans 12:2, John 13:34 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and 13

5. We heard about living in the "love zone" this weekend. Romans 12:2 shares that we must be firmly planted in the values rooted in our minds. Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. How can "thinking, feeling and choosing" love change us and those around us?
 - a. Only when we allow the Holy Spirit to renew, reeducate, and redirect our mind are we truly transformed. Once we have said yes to Jesus, we will want to continue following Him, because His way brings life and peace.
 - b. Like with a number of the commandments from the Old Testament, Christ amped up Leviticus 19:18, "Love others as you love yourself". John 13:34 commands we love others as "Christ" loved others. This was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us, not just how we love ourselves.
 - c. Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God.

- d. Jesus was the living example of God's love, as we are to be the living example of Jesus' love.
- e. Love is way more than just a feeling, Jesus' love is reflected in our actions. In other words, the love we read about in these verses help us choose the right thing to do towards God and others.

Next Steps: We discovered this weekend we can control our thoughts, feelings, and actions. However, this can only be done through giving our lives over to Jesus and remaining faithful to His teachings and commands. This coming week review the following

1. Have you truly turned your life over to Christ? This is done by believing, confessing, repenting, baptized (immersed) and remaining faithful. If not, or if you're unsure, talk with your Group Leader and/or a Pastor/Leader at Real Life.
2. Reflect on who you belong to and were created by in order to understand your true worth to Him and others.
3. Are you remaining faithful and following Jesus? Identify those toxic areas/behaviors in your life that need to change . Seek God's will and allow the Holy Spirit to help change you.
4. Look for ways you can encourage and love on others in the same way that Christ has shown love to you.

Reading Plan

Sunday – Galatians 5:22-25

Monday – Colossians 3:1-2

Tuesday – Colossians 3:14-17

Wednesday – Philippians 4:4-9

Thursday – John 14:27

Friday – Romans 12:1-2

Saturday – John 13:34 and 1 Corinthians 13