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Birds of Prey and the Emancipation of One Harley Quinn (2020)

Purpose & Connection | BIBLE STUDY

Facilitator Note: We encourage facilitators to take this Bible study and expound on it throughout the week, allowing it to be a springboard for deeper conversation and personal meditation.

PRESS START

Birds of Prey and the Emancipation of One Harley Quinn focuses on five female anti-heroes who must overcome past trauma and learn to trust each other to defeat a common enemy. Black Mask (Roman Sionis), the leader of a local crime family, is currently trying to take over Gotham City for himself. He is emotionally unbalanced and accompanied by an equally unbalanced Victor Zsasz, who enjoys killing people who upset Black Mask, even unintentionally. None of these characters have healthy coping mechanisms for their issues or anyone they can trust or confide in. This causes a lot of internalization of emotion that manifests itself in explosive anger, crying, or rash decisions that end in hilariously bad ways.

ASK: God never intended us to live in isolation or to "deal" with our problems alone. Have you ever confided in a friend or group of people (friends, family, church, etc.) about a problem you're having that you were trying to handle alone? Did you find it to be helpful? Why or why not?

EQUIP

Proverbs 18:24 "There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother."

At the beginning of the movie, we see the story from Harley's point of view. She's struggling after a bad break-up and feels like she has no one left to rely on. Most of her "friends" were part of Joker's crew, so now everyone is out for revenge for what she and the Joker did to them. Along the way, she meets four other women who are dealing with different situations, but the same isolation and loneliness.

Huntress (Helena Bertinelli) watched her entire family be murdered by another gang they thought were friendly. She alone survived. She was taken in by one of the henchmen and sent to Italy to learn how to be an assassin. Orphan (Cassandra Cain) is in the foster care system and her current home is hostile, so she basically lives on the streets. She takes care of herself because she doesn't trust anyone else to care enough. We see Black Canary (Dinah Lance) helping her out since they live in the same apartment. Canary lost her mother, the first Black Canary, when she was young. We're not given details other than the police did not uphold their promise to protect her mother while she helped them fight crime. Because of this, Black Canary trusts no one, especially cops. Renee Montoya has been betrayed by everyone she's trusted on the police force, including her own partner and a friend in the DA's office. She doesn't let anyone see the real her and she's learned not to trust anyone because they will eventually betray her.

ASK: Is there anything you're dealing with right now you're keeping to yourself? Can you think of one person you could trust with that problem who could help you through it?

PRAY AND ACT: Ask God to reveal one hidden thing you are currently facing and write down one person you will choose to trust with this problem.

LEVEL UP

1 Peter 5:8 "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."

Satan does whatever he can to convince us we must fight our battles alone. He whispers in our ear that "no one else cares" and "God doesn't want to listen to your problems." When we try to fight alone, we are easily overtaken. The bible says in *Ecclesiastes 4:12* "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated," so when we are battling painful circumstances but we are isolating ourselves, there is very little hope that we can overcome. The verse continues to say, "but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." When we are able to open up and trust even one other person with our pain, we gain a foot-hold over the enemy and a new hope of overcoming.

When Black Mask captures Harley, he wants to be rid of her once and for all and attempts to take her life. Thinking quickly during an interruption, Harley realizes the Bertinelli diamond Black Mask purchased has been stolen, so she offers to get it back for him if he agrees to "call off his dogs." He agrees, but puts a bounty on Orphan's head as security and to make Harley's job difficult.

Initially, Harley considers just handing Orphan over to Black Mask and washing her hands of it. But, as she spends more time with the young girl, she grows attached and feels a need to protect her, something that was never done for Harley. Black Canary and Renee Montoya are also looking for Orphan because they know about Black Mask's bounty. Huntress only becomes entangled because Zsasz is involved. He was present when her family was murdered and she is seeking vengeance. As the Birds begin to come together to fight against Black Mask and protect Orphan, there is quite a bit of friction and distrust. Despite this, their motive lines up: Protect Cassandra Cain (Orphan) from Black Mask. To do this, the Birds must fight back-to-back against all of Black Mask's hired hands and other villains who want the bounty money.

ASK: Have you ever shared a painful experience with someone? Did you find it caused the burden to become a bit lighter? Or has someone shared an experience with you and you were able to provide assistance with their burden?

PRAY: Think of someone you know who is experiencing hardship right now, whether big or small, and ask God to reveal one way you can lighten that burden for that person.

MOD

Romans 12:17-21 "Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, 'I will take revenge; I will pay them back,' says the Lord. Instead, 'If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.' Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good."

Throughout the movie, we see Huntress has been meticulously hunting down every person involved or responsible for her family's murder. In the end, she finally kills the remaining person on her list, but still doesn't feel the fulfillment she expected. Harley even remarks, "Psychologically speaking, vengeance rarely brings the catharsis we hope for." Holding grudges and seeking vengeance against those we believe have wronged us only leaves us angry and empty inside. A good saying to remember is: "Holding unforgiveness against someone is like setting yourself on fire and hoping the other person dies of smoke inhalation." It just doesn't work the way we imagine it will in our minds.

Sometimes people know exactly how they hurt us and refuse to apologize, but more often, people have no idea they've caused offense or pain. They just go about their normal lives, blissfully unaware, while we stew in our anger. In both cases, it's better for us to forgive quickly and release the stranglehold that it has on us rather than to hold onto it hoping the other person will recognize their fault and repent.

Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Although this verse says "Israelite," we can translate this to just neighbor. A neighbor is simply the next person you encounter or the person closest to you, whether by proximity or relation. Huntress learns working with vengeance alone isn't fulfilling and instead discovers working against evil with other like-minded sisters (or brothers) is the better way.

ASK: Is there anyone you're currently holding a grudge against or someone you need to ask forgiveness from? If you'd rather not share, can you think of a time you forgave someone you believed didn't deserve it? Did you feel better or worse afterward?

PRAY

Ask God to reveal any grudges you hold in your heart. Then ask Him to help you forgive that pain and be forgiven for holding the grudge yourself.

THE NEXT LEVEL

Romans 12:4-5 "Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other."

We were designed to be in community. God made us relational beings not only so we would have the comfort of friendship, but to also encourage each other, hold each other accountable, and lift each other up in dark times. God adopted us into His family and gave us brothers and sisters in Christ. We are never truly alone because we are part of the biggest family in the world! We need people around us we trust covering us in prayer so Satan won't even get the chance to attack. It's a beautiful thing to be part of a family.

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