

Raising Helen

Study Guide



In this romantic comedy from Buena Vista Pictures, Kate Hudson (*Almost Famous*) plays Helen Harris, a rising agent in New York’s modeling scene. When her sister passes away in an accident, she is left to care for three young children, and she has to choose between the life that she loves, and the loves of her life. When she meets a hip, friendly youth pastor (John Corbett, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), the two fall in love and with the help of her friends, Helen begins to raise her makeshift family, learning some lessons about responsibility, trust, maturity, and perseverance.

Raising Helen is not just a funny comedy; it is a heartfelt film that stirs up every kind of emotion, from laughter to tears. *Raising Helen* illustrates the reality of life. We have ups and we have downs. In reality anything and everything could happen at anytime, but as we follow Helen on her journey, we realize the importance of perseverance. Explore with us now as we walk through the different lessons and observances that we can gain from this touching, hilarious and uplifting movie.

Make it a Group Event!

~CREATE THE BUZZ~

Before attending the film, you should try to create some “buzz” about the event. Even in these media-rich days, it’s still rare that any group, let alone a church group, goes to attend a movie with the idea of formally discussing the film afterward. That your church has planned such an unusual event at all will attract some, but be sure to remind them of the great qualities that this film has that spoke to you when you saw it.

~MEETING PLACE~

After attending the film, arrange a discussion in a place where there will be few distractions. A multi-purpose room at a church would be fine, but conversation at the quiet end of a restaurant near to the theater might be more appreciated. Nothing like sharing a plate of french fries to make the conversation happen.

~ICEBREAKER~

There are a variety of characters in *Raising Helen* that people will certainly identify with. One idea for an icebreaker: the group does a quick go-round introducing themselves and naming their favorite person from the film. Keep track of the names of the favorites. When everyone has had a turn, check your list of favorites, and divide the class up into five-minute fan clubs to share briefly within that fan club why they chose that particular person, and so on for each favorite. (If the whole class isn’t that large, instead of five minute fan clubs, have everyone explain why they chose who they chose to the whole class). This will get everyone introduced, as well as thinking and talking. Have a volunteer from two or three of the largest fan clubs report some of the reasons to the full group.

THE STUDY

1. SUCCESS

At the beginning of the movie we see that Helen is very successful in her life. People of today view success in a variety of ways –

- What is your view of success?
- What does success mean?
- What did being successful mean for Helen?

All of the things that made Helen successful at the beginning of the movie quickly disappear after the loss of her sister.

After reading the following verse and applying it to the film what would you say the secret to success?

Read John 13:34

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I [Jesus] have loved you, so you must love another."

Did Helen's view of success change at the end of the film? Do you think that she considered herself a success at the end?

Yet, do you think Helen was still successful? Why or why not?



2. LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Tragedy and loss afflict every family at some point. Often, it is difficult to talk openly about how you feel during these times, instead only reactions tend to come out. Helen, Jenny, Audrey, Henry and Sarah each had different reactions to the death of their sister/mother.



- How did Helen react?
- How was Jenny's reaction different from Helen's? Why? Is there only one way to react to the death of a family member?
 - How did Henry mask his pain?
 - How did Audrey react?
 - How did Sarah react?

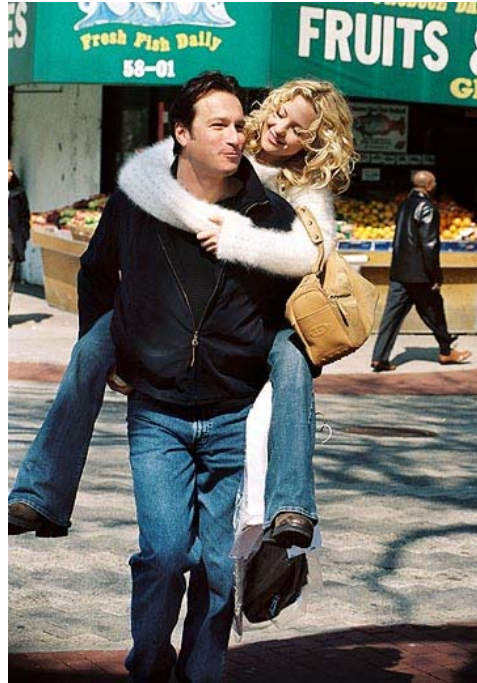
Discussion:

- Have you experienced loss like this before?
- If you are willing, can you talk about how you reacted and/or felt?

3. HOPE

One of the main themes of *Raising Helen* is Hope.

- Would you agree? Why or why not?



- How is hope one of the main themes in this story?
- How is hope revealed?
- What things give Helen Hope?

Hope is a very Biblical concept. It is one of the greatest virtues that follows Faith and Love, as we see in I Corinthians 13. Hope tells us that our circumstances in the present won't stay the same forever; it pushes us into imagining ourselves in better time, a better place. In the Bible, hope is what we have when we think of our salvation, even our salvation from death itself.

Read Colossians 1:5

"The faith and love that springs from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you."

Discussion:

- What does hope mean to you?
- What situations, things, people give you hope and why?

4. FAMILY

Activity: Make a list of three ingredients that according to you are most necessary to make a family and discuss amongst your group why you chose those three ingredients.

Take a look at a family formed in the Old Testament.

Read Ruth 1:1-17

- In this passage of scripture what can we personally learn about family?
- What did family mean to Naomi?
- Does a family need to look a certain way for it to be called a "family"?

In the beginning of the movie, the Davises look very much like an ideal family: mom, dad, three kids. At the end of the movie the family looks very different.



What was the basic and most important ingredient needed for Helen and the kids to make a family?

What did they have to learn in order to become a family?

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Guide created in conjunction with:

Reel Spirituality at Fuller Theological Seminary www.reelspirituality.com

Movie Mission www.movieimission.com

Touchstone Pictures <http://touchstone.movies.go.com/main.html>