



MOPS 2016-17 THEME: WE ARE THE STARRY EYED

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Every year MOPS comes up with a rallying cry - a concept that will guide our entire tribe of women for the coming year. This year we sensed a deep need to look at the ideas of wonder, kindness and hope. And because we know you like to understand the deeper parts of the theme, we wanted to share an exegesis (a fancy word meaning in-depth explanation) of our theme, and the Bible verses that inform it. So here it is, all the insider information on what is guiding our MOPS year.

WE ARE THE STARRY EYED

Sometimes we think we have to pick one, when in reality it is always both: light and dark, hope and fear, kindness and risk, wonder and mundane.

This is evidenced by the fact that we are people who are meant to live by both sunlight and moonlight. Our natural rhythms revolve around the circling of sun and moon. Yet often our tendency is to cling to one, the one that is more comfortable, forgetting that our fullest living comes when we embrace the swirly mix.

Starry Eyed means looking for the light even when darkness is enveloping. It is an opportunity to hope recklessly and to witness God's presence guiding things seen and unseen, comfortable and uncomfortable.

When we reflect back over our lives, this year is going to stand out. It will be the year that we decided to live fully by both sunlight and moonlight. Because audacity is rising in the deepest and wildest parts of our souls. And the best part is, we will experience it all together.

So the question becomes,

*When was the last time you felt fully alive?
The last time you were so swept up with wonder that it took your breath away?
That kindness made you feel powerful?
Or audacious hope unraveled fear?
This is the year to experience all of it.*

Because We Are the Starry Eyed. And Starry Eyed means ...

WONDER

Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it ... Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. -Jeremiah 33:2-3

Life has a way of draining the wonder out of us. We get betrayed, lose something or someone, opportunities don't pan out, we miss a year's worth of sleep, and slowly a layer of hardness develops. We become just a little bit more cynical and a little more worn out, completely forgetting how to be astonished. Wonder is wide-eyed. It is primal and unexpected. Wonder washes away any trace of stagnancy or hesitancy, any desire to numb the day away. It is a nod to the fact that life is wilder, weirder and more profound than we are comfortable with and that is thrilling. So, this year we will search out wonder like our lives depend on it. Because they do. We will stand under a sky full of stars and become overcome by the vastness of the universe, we will stay up too late laughing with friends, a sunrise will take our breath away and we will go out of our way to be moved. Wonder will bring us home to ourselves.

We choose wonder. Because We Are the Starry Eyed.

HOPE

Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You. - Psalm 139:12

We live on the edge of a dirt sphere hurling through the universe at 67,000 mph and we can't help but question how we got here and what it all means. Sometimes it is a heartbreaking mess, isn't it? But then there are those moments when it's something else, something good, something that matters, something more. We're made of bone, water and dust which reminds us of our connectedness to the universe; but we are also made of Spirit, an intangible spark that is bursting with questions while simultaneously insisting that there's a point to all this breathing and being. This is hope: the belief that it all matters. Hope is mysterious and surprising, obstinate and reckless. It is convinced that light is ahead of us and the path will unfold as we take our next step. Hope is the awareness that there is always more to the story and that every sunset brings an opportunity to marvel at a sunrise.

We choose hope. Because We Are the Starry Eyed.

KINDNESS

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. - Genesis 1:1-5

We can't sit by and idly suggest that something is not right but do nothing to offer solutions. We are responsible for one another. The pain of the world echoes in our depths, telling us that something must be done, but what? When the task of changing the world feels overwhelming, perhaps all we need to do is make a ripple. One small ripple can cause wars to cease, hope to be restored and gaping heart-wounds to heal. This year we invoke a movement of kindness. Letters will litter the globe, tucked between slats of wood at the playground, left on a subway seat, slipped under the tattered mat of a shanty in Guatemala. The words we breathe over strangers in the form of handwriting and paper will birth ripples of kindness throughout the world. Because we are not powerless. We choose to live fully in all gradations of illumination. The stars beckon us toward dawn even when the night is dark. We do the same. We are no longer spectators wishing for change, we are participants bringing warmth and light.

We choose kindness. Because We Are the Starry Eyed.

STARRY EYED IS ...

Seeing the light in the darkness and choosing to live courageously in both.
It is opening our eyes to wonder and choosing hope over fear.
Starry Eyed is significant acts of kindness that send ripples of light into the world.
It is a choice to live fully and wholly and to breathe our way back to life.

If you feel anxious and don't know why ...
If you are busy and distracted from the things you truly care about ...
If you are restless for an unexpected encounter with God ...
If you long to feel alive, to regain a sense of wonder, to hope a little freer and to be a powerful force of kindness in the world, then we'd love for you to join us in becoming Starry Eyed.

This year, we will run wildly toward wonder, hope and kindness, because We Are the Starry Eyed and we choose to see the light.



EXEGESIS:

This year our theme starts at the very beginning. After all, our origin story is founded on the ultimate acts of wonder, hope and kindness.

In Genesis 1, we read ...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day ... Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth," and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. – Genesis 1:1-5, 14-19

Our collective narrative begins with a situation described as formless and void. The original language describes it as wild and waste, chaos and empty. We read that God's Spirit hovers over this chaos and darkness.

This is where things get really interesting ...

The Hebrew word for Spirit is *Ruach*, and can be translated as breath. Anytime this word shows up in the Bible it signifies life, or bringing to life. It is the ultimate act of kindness. It is an intentional act of life-offering that hovers over our empty places to bring order out of chaos, hope out of fear, purpose out of waste.

A side note (because we find it fascinating): For thousands of years, people have understood that this divine breath that hovered over the wild and waste is the same physical breath that we all possess. One scripture says that when God takes away the *Ruach* – the breath of all living creatures – they die and return to the dust. But when God sends the *Ruach*, or the Spirit, they are brought to life. Examples of this can be found throughout the scriptures ...

Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life, and man became a living being. – Genesis 2:7

The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. – Job 33:4

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. – Psalm 33:6

So saying, He showed them His hands and His side. And when the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Then Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! [Just] as the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you." And having said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" - John 20:20-22

The Divine Breath that started it all flows through you, and it flows through the person next to you. You are a mixture of clay and breath - or in other words, holy ground - and so is everyone you meet. Which demands from us an awareness that there is an expectation of how we treat one another. No one is less, each one deserves kindness. All of us are in the process of having our chaos turned into purpose, this means we can be infinitely patient with our unfolding creation. Kindness rules over our breathing in the world.

Continuing on in Genesis, we read that the hovering Divine Breath separates light and dark. So ends the first day. Water and land separate, vegetation appears, days two and three are called good. This leads us to day four; the sun, moon and stars appear. They are said to be four signs and seasons. Signs can be understood as hope, and seasons can be understood as time. The sun, moon and stars were created for hope, and they are visual reminders that there is always light in the darkness. They are also reminders of time passing, helping us to understand that it will not be night forever, because the dawn is coming. Conversely, the light of day must turn into the hibernation of night. There is always a new gradation of illumination coming, and it is good. Darkness and light are good, necessary even.

As David writes ...

Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You. - Psalm 139:12

Both good. Not to be feared. Hope is infused into the heavens with light and darkness. So ends day four.

Lastly, we flip a few pages and end up in some words written by a guy named Jeremiah. We find him in jail, chosen to pray for the restoration of God's people. God says ...

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. - Jeremiah 33:3

We believe these words weren't just for Jeremiah, but for all of us who search for restoration. God says, "Call to me with your breath, which is really my breath, and I will give you a clear understanding - or supernatural insight into things that are unknown, into that which might be chaotic, wild or waste. There are wondrous things to experience, hidden truths that can only be revealed when you ask with your breath. So, ask. Pray. Go outside and wonder at the stars. Ask for great insights that you haven't yet known."

This is our year to experience the wonder of wide eyes and holy breaths, twelve months where God desires to replicate Genesis 1 in our lives, from empty and void to full and whole. Whenever we see some aspect of our lives that is chaotic, disorderly, empty, dark or broken, we can invite the Spirit of God to hover near, to sort out our chaos and soothe our fearful places with hope. Then our responsibility will be to acknowledge the holy breath in the people around us, and to do cool things that remind them they are holy ground. These are the things that will bring us back to life.



WONDER/ WE BREATHE IN WONDER LIKE OUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT.

KINDNESS/ WE EXHALE KINDNESS INTO THE WORLD.

HOPE/ EACH BREATH IS AN OPPORTUNITY.