

WordOne Bible Study

Turning Back

by Steve Breitbarth

Text: Mark 1:4-11 for the Baptism of Our Lord, Lectionary Series B

OBJECTIVES

Participants will discover the power of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chairs in a circle

Newsprint and markers for every group of 6-8 youth

Index cards or small pieces of paper

Trash Can

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Divide the group in smaller groups of 6-8 people in each group. Give each smaller group a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Instruct the smaller groups to think of as many situations or examples as possible in which someone might have done something wrong and would ask another person to forgive them (allow 10 minutes). Now share those examples with the entire group.

As an entire group, describe the process that people must go through in order to be forgiven by another person.

In smaller groups, discuss this situation:

Mary, age 16, has been caught by her mother for lying about doing her homework before going out with her friends. This is the third time this week that Mary has lied to her mother about homework. Mary asks her mother to forgive her. Consider the dilemma Mary has presented to her mother. Discuss how often the mother should continue to forgive Mary.

Write a definition of what repentance and forgiveness is or isn't (take up to 15 minutes). In the large group share:

1. The reasons Mary's mom should or shouldn't forgive her.
2. The small group definitions of repentance and forgiveness and try to develop a single definition for each word as an entire group.

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

Read Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:20-23.

God uses his angels as messengers. This happens to be one instance when the message of the angel is both good and bad. Imagine this...Gabriel pops into Mary's house and says, "I have good news and bad news." ("The good news is you are highly favored, the bad news is that you are highly favored...by God.")

1. What is Mary's reaction to being told she is highly favored? (verse 29)
 - a. Briefly discuss the lives of "highly-favored" Moses, David and Job. What were the "highlights and lowlights" of their lives?
 - b. How is our concept of being favored by God different than that of Mary's (verses 30-31)?

2. Mary wasn't given much of a choice in being "favored." She was favored and that's all there was to it. She was obviously a little confused; after all, she was still a virgin (verse 34). But, with the explanation of Gabriel, things became a bit clearer. The power of God will overshadow you, the Holy Spirit will visit you and you will become pregnant with the Son of God. Not only that, but your "old" relative, Elizabeth, is already six months pregnant.
 - a. How do you think Mary felt about all of this?
 - b. If you were Joseph, what would be your initial reaction?
 - c. Discuss the faith and trust demonstrated by Mary and Joseph.

3. Mary doesn't argue, but accepts everything at face value and places her faith in God and says, "I am the Lord's servant" (verse 38).
 - a. Is Mary's concept of being the Lord's servant different than that of your own? How?
 - b. In what ways are you willing to be "The Lord's Servant?"
 - c. In what ways would you refuse to serve the Lord?
 - d. Do you see serving the Lord as doing a favor for God or being favored by God?
 - e. What is the difference?

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

TAG TEAM ROLE PLAY

1. One person plays Mary and another plays Joseph. (Mary's role may be played by a male and Joseph's by a female.) At different points during the role play, the leader will call switch and a new Mary and Joseph will take over the conversation. All members of the group should have the opportunity to participate in the role play.

Imagine you are Joseph going to visit your fiancée, Mary, and she says: "Honey, sit down. We need to talk. I had a visitor stop by today and he told me I was going to have a baby..."

- a. How will the discussion develop?
- b. Will Mary and Joseph stay together?
- c. Is Joseph going to be understanding?
- d. Would Joseph want to stay with her? Why or why not? (see Matt. 1:20-21)
- e. How will Mary and/or Joseph bring up the subject of telling their parents?
- f. How will they bring the subject of God into this discussion?
- g. Would Joseph be angry with God? Mary? Himself?
- h. Would Mary tell Joseph that Elizabeth is pregnant? Why or why not?
- i. Other considerations?

They can't keep it a secret, after all, Elizabeth already knows something is up.

2. Discussion: After the role play, have all group members discuss ways in which they may have changed the conversation and why.

CLOSING

Close with a prayer thanking God for Mary and Joseph and their faith example.

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