

youthESource Bible Study

Inns, Stables and Hearts

by Keith Loomans

The purpose of this devotion and Bible study is that participants will affirm their belief that God, in His love and care, generates and sustains our love for Him and our love, care and compassion for others, and will respond to God's love in their relationships with others.

DEVOTION

Invocation: O dearest Jesus, holy child, prepare a bed, soft, undefiled, a holy shrine within my heart, that You and I need never part.

Optional Activity: Use a fitting Christmas hymn or carol.

Scripture Reading: Read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-12. (Suggestion: Read the Scripture in unison or divide group into left and right and read antiphonally verse by verse.)

Litany: (Duplicate the litany for group use or have two individuals read responsively.)

Male: Thank You God,

Female: For coming to a simple stable to share Your love.

Male: Thank You God,

Female: For coming to a sinful heart to share Your love.

Male: Thank You God,

Female: For coming to me, a "no-room-in-the-inn" place and making me Your palace, O King.

Male: Thank You God,

Female: For giving us the opportunity, like angels and shepherds, to share the Good News of Your love, and to live as instruments of Your care.

All: Amen.

BIBLE STUDY

Divide group into small groups of two or three. Appoint a leader in each group - the one whose birthday is closest to Christmas Day.

Ask everyone to share in their groups the following. (Give three to four minutes to respond.)

- What is the nicest thing someone has done for you?
- What is the nicest thing you have ever done for someone?
- What is the most caring or compassionate thing you have done for someone?
- Share with each other how being a "caring person" makes you feel.

Get everyone back into one group and ask the following:

How do you feel toward a person who cares for you?

- What words describe a caring person? (Make a list on chalkboard or newsprint.)
- Why is it difficult at times to care for another person? What does that tell us about ourselves? When it comes to caring, what differences are there between you and God? (Make a list on chalkboard or newsprint. Make two columns, label one "Me" and the other one "God.")
- What keeps us from caring? (Listen for responses such as, "We look at faults rather than good qualities of others;" "We are centered on ourselves, our own successes and accomplishments;" "We try to make people over the way we want them to be;" etc.)

Read again Luke 2:1-12. In the large group discuss the following:

- Why is the Christmas story such a tremendous demonstration of God's love and compassion?
- How do you receive and feel that same love and compassion of God today?
- How do you feel about God, who gives you His complete love and care?

- Share some ways that each of us at this time could respond to God's love and care.
- What are some ways that we as a group in this season could respond to God's love and care?

CLOSING

Close the Bible study with prayer. Let participants share thoughts. Take a few moments to review ideas expressed during the study which could be incorporated in the prayer. After the prayer, join in singing another Christmas hymn or carol.

ALTERNATIVE LITANIES

Women: God sent His Son from heaven above to be our Lord and Master.
Men: God's love and care beyond compare...
All: Enrich us for our loving!
Women: From sin and death and devil's power we are free; we have a Savior.
Men: God's love and care beyond compare...
All: Enrich us for our sharing!
Women: We serve Him now, wherever we are, with hearts filled with compassion,
Men: God's love and care beyond compare...
All: Enrich us for our caring!
All: With hearts filled with Your grace, mercy and peace we pledge our faithful service,
All: Amen.
Women: We praise You God, maker of all,
Men: The God of our creation.
Women: We praise You God, savior of all,
Men: The God of our redemption.
Women: We praise You God, comforter of all,
Men: The God of our salvation,
Men: We thank You for sending Your Son to be our Savior.
Women: Your love and care are beyond compare!
Men: We thank You for granting us such measures of Your love,
Women: Your love and care are beyond compare!
Men: Fill our hearts that we may love.
Women: Your love and care are beyond compare!
Men: Fill our hearts that we may share.
Women: Your love and care are beyond compare.
Men: Fill our hearts that we may care.
Women: Your love and care are beyond compare.
All: Use us in Your service. Amen.

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