

Word One Bible Study

Faith vs. the Future

By Kirk Hille

Text: Luke 3:39-45 for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, Lectionary Series C

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Be able to appreciate the faith given Mary.
2. Apply her example of confidence in God's promises to the uncertainties in their own futures.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles

3x5 index cards

GROUP GUIDELINES

This study is intended for groups of 4-8 people. If your group is larger, form two or more smaller groups. Each group should choose as its leader whomever has a birthday closest to Christmas. The leader's job is to make sure the group stays on track, everyone has the opportunity to share and the group completes the study in a meaningful and timely way.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

1. On a 3x5 index card or on a separate piece of paper, each group member should write down what they would like their life to be like fifteen years from now. Take a few minutes to dream up what you think would be ideal for you. What will you be doing? Where? With whom? When everyone is ready, take turns sharing your ideas with the group.
2. After everyone has had a chance to share, each person should pass their ideal future to someone else, so everyone has a card that is not their own. Reading the future dream you've received, think of a major obstacle which would keep that person from achieving their dream, and write it down on the opposite side. For example: an automobile accident might leave you paralyzed. Think of some tragedy which could end that particular dream.
3. Return the card to the original owner.
4. When everyone has received their future dream back and read the obstacle which might block it, take turns sharing with each other how you would respond to having this tragedy destroy your future plans. What would you do?

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

1. Read Luke 1:39-45. Mary had just been given two bits of shocking news: not only was she going to be pregnant with God's Son, but her elderly aunt Elizabeth was already six months along. Why do you suppose Mary immediately went to visit Elizabeth? (Choose one or more answers and share them with the group.)
 - a. to avoid having to tell her parents right away
 - b. to get out of town before Joseph, her fiance, found out
 - c. to confirm what the angel had told her
 - d. to get advice on pregnancy from her aunt
 - e. to celebrate with Elizabeth what God was doing
 - f. to seek guidance from her uncle, a priest
 - g. other:
2. What color best describes how you would have felt if you were Mary?
 - a. red -- I'd be mad at God
 - b. orange--I'd be full of joy
 - c. yellow --I'd be afraid what people would think
 - d. green --I'd be worried sick about the responsibility
 - e. blue --I'd feel sorry for myself
 - f. purple --I'd feel honored

g. other --

3. What did Elizabeth bless Mary for? Do you think it was an encouragement to Mary? How?
4. How do you know that what God has promised you will be accomplished? Does knowing God's promises help you to accept difficult circumstances? Why or why not?

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

1. Think of a difficult situation in your life which will affect your future. If you can't think of one, use the obstacle written for your dream future. What could you do to demonstrate your faith in God despite this difficult obstacle? How could others encourage you?
2. Mary responded to Elizabeth's encouragement by making up a song to express how she felt and to praise God for His faithfulness. Write your own song lyrics to express how you feel about God's faithfulness, despite the uncertain future and difficult circumstances in your life.

CLOSING

End with a prayer thanking God for His faithfulness and asking for more faith in His promises. Include parts of the group's song lyrics in the prayer. Sing a song of praise, or one about faith.

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