

Word One Bible Study

Whose Shoes?

By Richard A. Bolland

Text: Luke 2:25-40 for the First Sunday after Christmas, Lectionary Series C

OBJECTIVE

Participants will evaluate the difference between faith and doubt in the lives of others and in their own eyes.

GROUP GUIDELINES

1. If the group is larger than ten people, divide into smaller groups selecting, to the best of your knowledge, the best facilitators to lead the (each) group.
2. When the groups have completed their discussions, reassemble the larger group to share findings and insights.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

1. The leader gives the following instructions to the group: In the Indiana Jones movie, *The Last Crusade*, remember the scene when Indiana Jones was in the temple of the Holy Grail and he was trying to figure out the clues from his father's book to enable him to get to the Grail? There was one point when Indiana stood at the edge of a seemingly bottomless ravine. It became evident that it would be necessary to step out, in faith, into the ravine if he was to cross it.
 - a. Everybody's life has moments calling for acts of faith. Can you describe such a moment in your life that you'd be willing to share?
 - b. Can you anticipate moments that are yet to come in your future that may require an act of faith? Share them with the group.
2. Every act of faith is preceded by moments of doubt. Think back on those moments of faith and think about the doubts that preceded it. If you are willing, share some with the group.

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

1. Read Luke 2:25-40.
 - a. What acts of faith or elements of doubt do you find in this account?
 - b. If you found yourself in Simeon's shoes, what would you have thought of this baby? What doubts might have entered your mind? What conclusion would you have come to about who this baby was?
 - c. How many babies do you suppose were presented to Simeon at the temple for circumcision in a week's time?
 - d. What was it that Simeon had faith in?
2. Read John 18:28-40.
 - a. Here another man is confronted by the very same Jesus Christ, but his conclusion is quite different than Simeon's.
 - 1) Why is the end result so different in Pilate's case?
 - 2) In what ways do you see yourself in Pilate? In what ways do you see Simeon in yourself?
 - b. What "evidence" existed as Pilate considered this man before him?
3. Some might say that since the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would live see the Messiah, that he had an edge that Pilate didn't have or that we don't have.
 - a. In what ways has the Holy Spirit revealed to us His will for our lives? What means does the Holy Spirit use today to let us know what God has in mind for us? Who has more information, you or Simeon?
 - b. Which creates more doubt: faith or evidence?
4. If God would have decided to reveal to us all the answers to our questions, would we need to depend on Him for anything? What?
 - a. Why, then, do you suppose God made faith a primary element in our relationship with Him?
 - 1) From God's perspective, what is gained when your people must have faith in you?
 - 2) From our perspective, what are the positive aspects of faith for us?
 - b. If you were a hardcore atheist, in what would you have faith?

CLOSING

1. Read the following passages:
 - a. I Corinthians 2:4-5
 - b. Hebrews 11:1-3.6
 - c. John 20:27-31
 - d. Galatians 2:16
2. In whose shoes do you stand as you behold the Christ today? Do you see the Lord through the eyes of Simeon or Pilate? All of your life hangs in the balance awaiting your answer.

Originally published in Discovery Bible Studies VI, 1993.

Updated for youthESource in December 2015

youthESource is published on the Web by the LCMS Office of National Mission—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; www.youthesource.com. Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 12 NO. 12. December 2015.