

The Christmas Experience

Week 2: Favoured One

1. What do you think about how Mary was portrayed? How would you describe her demeanor or attitude?
 - Read Luke 1:26-38
 - The video presentation began with the question, "Why Mary?" Out of all the women in the world at the time, why do you think God chose Mary to bring his son into the world?
 - Kyle recognized that it was Mary's humble spirit that drew the favor of God. "God often chooses to work through a humble person," he said. "Humility opens the door to God's favor." How does humility "open the door" to God's favor and calling
 - Another of Mary's sons, James, said, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10). God's grace is manifested through humble people. James wanted his readers to see the parallel between humility and grace. He had quoted Proverbs 3:34: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). When we learn to live in humility, we understand that our identity and worth come from God alone, not from any good we have done.
 - In humility we can come to terms with our true identity-no higher than we really are (Romans 12:3) but also no lower than what God has made us, for believers are new creations in Christ! As Kyle put it, "A secret to humility is to not take credit for God's goodness in your life." In humility we put others first, we consider others better than ourselves, and we put their interests above our own (Philippians 2:3, 4). Our model for this kind of humility is Mary's son, Jesus.
 - In humility, we recognize that we do not on our own efforts deserve God's favor and calling; he treats us not as our sins deserve but gives us unmerited favor out of his love for us. This is grace.
 - In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable to those who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else. He compared two men, a religious leader and a lowly tax collector, who both came to the Temple to pray. The proud religious leader prayed about how great he was and all the good things he had done for God. The tax collector, on the other hand, bowed and humbly asked God to be merciful on him. Jesus summarized the parable

by saying, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

2. To follow the example of Mary in living as a humble servant who received an incredible gift, what thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors need to change in you?
 - Read Luke 1:39-56
3. What do you think about Elizabeth's greeting when Mary arrived?
4. Look at Mary's song, also called "the Magnificat," in verses 46-55. How would you describe Mary's feelings and attitudes in this song of praise?
5. What else do you learn about Mary's priorities and attitudes in this song?
 - Note that Mary's song contains many quotations from and references to Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Psalms and the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, which Mary saw coming to fulfillment in her circumstances. Mary had hidden God's Word in her heart (Psalm 119:11) so that it naturally flowed out of her. In the original language, she used the words, "He has" in reference to God eight times in these ten verses. Mary gave praise to God, not to herself.
6. What do you learn from Mary about what God may have in store for those who humbly follow God's will for their lives and serve him wholeheartedly?

Between the Meeting Options

- Mary knew that she was a treasured child of the most high God and lived humbly in that reality. As you go through your week, repeat this phrase to yourself during your prayer time, as you drive, at meals, and at other various times each day: "I am a treasured child of the most high God!"
- Repeat the prayer/praise time as a devotional time with your family. Allow each family member to fill in the blank: Oh, how I praise you, Lord. How I rejoice in you, oh God, my savior!
- Call another member of the group this week and ask how he or she desires to be a humble servant, like Mary. Offer to pray for the person on the phone.
- Read and meditate on Matthew 1:18-24 throughout the week.