

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Luke 1:46-55

Sunday, December 25, 2011

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How can a magnifying glass help you? How can the Bible serve as a type of magnifying glass? How can your soul magnify the Lord? How can your magnifying the Lord help others?

The magnifying glass can enlarge type, so some can read easier. Or, it can enlarge the features of something that you may want to look at more closely, perhaps something you need to work on but need a magnifying glass so you can see the fine details properly. The magnifying glass when magnifying does not change what it magnifies, but it makes something easier to see and understand.

The Bible is a type of magnifying glass in the sense that the Bible helps you understand God in greater detail or gives you more information about the nature and character of God and why He chooses to act as He does. The Bible reveals a multitude of truths about God that people cannot learn from looking only at God's creation. As with a magnifying glass, understanding more truths about God does not change God, but it does make it easier for us to have a loving and meaningful relationship with God.

Your soul can magnify the Lord when you praise God and thank God for Who God is and what God does in greater detail or more specifically than just thanking God in vague generalities. For example, rather than praying simply, "Thank You God for being merciful," you can pray in more detail, "Thank You God for Your great mercy in sending Jesus Christ, Your only Son, into the world to die for me and other sinners. I thank You for your great mercy that offers salvation to those who repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

By talking to others about God in greater specifics, based on what you learn from the Bible and your own personal relationship with God, you will be magnifying God before others and they may learn more about God and what Jesus can do for them in greater detail. As they learn more about God, their relationship with God can become what God wants it to become.

2. Why does Mary rejoice in the fact that God is her Savior (see Luke 1:47)?

She may have rejoiced that God through the Messiah, Who she would give birth

to soon, would save her and her people from their enemies. This fact would have been doubly confirmed for her by Elizabeth, who would soon give birth to John the Baptist.

Knowing that she was a young girl who was betrothed to Joseph, she may have rejoiced in the fact that God saved her from disgrace, divorce, and poverty.

She may have rejoiced because she knew that she had committed sins in the past, and that God would save her from her sins through the Messiah, though she probably did not know how He would do this.

3. How might you explain Mary's prophecy in Luke 1:48 in such a way that you could show someone that God fulfills prophecy, even today?

Mary has been honored and blessed for 2000 years by millions of people from generation to generation around the globe. The Bible recorded her prophecy, given to her by the Holy Spirit, and that prophecy has come true. In fulfillment of prophecy, Mary is still honored today among Christians (by some Christians in different ways from other Christians); therefore, all people have good reasons to trust the Bible, the whole Bible and its teachings, as a revelation from God. Literally, "all generations" have called her blessed, but of course not every person has honored her in every generation.

4. In what ways does Mary talk about the mercy of God? According to Mary, what type of people will receive God's mercy? Why do you think these types of people will receive God's mercy? Do you qualify?

Mary says that God's mercy is for those who fear God from generation to generation, and that includes those before us and those who will live after us. The condition that God sets for people to receive His mercy is that they "fear God." To fear God means to express to God a reverent trust and obedience that understands some of the consequences of disobeying God. These types of people will receive God's mercy because they are not living in open disobedience to God (sometimes "open disobedience" to God alone, for perhaps no one else knows except God) or rebellion against God. The Bible speaks of God forgiving repentant people, and they will receive God's merciful forgiveness because they want to live in obedience to God (though they may fall into sin from time to time, and so will need God's mercy always). When God extends His mercy to us so graciously, it leads us to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, which God understands and receives from us.

5. Why do you think Mary mentions God's promise to Abraham?

To show that God is faithful, that God does not forget, as people are prone to forget, His promises. To show that God will keep all of His promises, even though they were made long ago (perhaps 2000 or more years ago). To show that the Messiah's coming was not an afterthought of God or an experiment of God, but something God had carefully planned long ago and would do according to His timing.