

The Way to Receive God's Mercy
International Bible Lesson
Luke 1:46-55
Sunday, December 25, 2011
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“And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50—KJV).

“From one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honor him” (Luke 1:50—GNB).

“His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50—NRSV).

When we know we deserve punishment, we usually ask for mercy. Sometimes people will ask for mercy when an unjust person threatens to hurt them. After Mary learned that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah, she rejoiced that many who deserve God's just punishment would receive mercy through her Son. She proclaimed that with the conception of Jesus, God “has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Luke 1:54-55). Furthermore, she declared that God's mercy is for all who fear God.

Fearing God does not mean the cowering dread that a person might feel if they were facing a hideous, threatening monster. Because Mary knew God, she did not fear God as though God were a tyrant. From the Bible, we learn that those who fear God show forth a loving reverence and obedience toward God; while at the same time, they know that just consequences can follow

disobeying or rebelling against God. A person who fears God loves and worships God. They love God so much that they do not want to disobey God or disappoint God by their thoughts or actions. They live in loving submission to the will of God. The Bible teaches that from generation to generation God offers mercy to those who deserve His just punishment, but accept His forgiving love and choose to bow in loving reverence. On Christmas Day, millions celebrate the birth of Jesus because they know they need the saving mercy that God the Father promised He would give to everyone who believes in His Word.

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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?

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

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?

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?

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

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