

Mary: The Gift of Waiting For With God! – December 21 & 22, 2019
Follow-up Bible Studies

Written by Maggie Baxter

Day One: Genesis 18:1-15

- Set the scene (1-2). Why do you think the Lord appeared as “three visitors” to Abraham? How did Abraham know who they were? What normally tips *you* off to God’s presence? What hospitality did Abraham offer to the three men (3-8)? Visualize this scene: what do you see, hear and smell in all of this activity and interaction?
- What did one of the men say about Sarah (9-10)? How did she respond (10-12)? What do you make of this? Had she given up all hope, or were her feelings on the matter more complex than that?
- What did the Lord then say to Abraham (13-14)? Throughout the Bible, God gives clarity based on his character, not people’s circumstances. Today, as you face down any confusion or fear, what does this mean for you? How did Sarah react to what the Lord said (15)? She was afraid to be her authentic self. What about you? Jesus sets you free to be fully yourself with God. Instead of hiding or disguising, pray you’d walk in this freedom.

Day Two: Psalm 23

- To David, who is the Lord (1)? In what ways do *you* think of God as your shepherd? Throughout Advent, what direction has he provided? What about during the Christmas season and in the New Year; where will he take you? May you follow him.
- Why does David “lack nothing” (2-3)? At rest or on the go, in what ways do you sense God is with you? In times of waiting, how does God refresh you? What “right path” does he chart for you?
- What unnerving situation does David describe (4)? Why does he “fear no evil” (4)? What is the “darkest valley” in your life these days? Picture God there with you now. Keep your eyes on him. How is he protecting you? What is he saying to you?
- Where else does David commune with the Lord (5)? In what ways (5)? What does this make him certain of (6)? Can you say the same? If not, ask God to help you in your unbelief.

Day Three: Psalm 34

- What will David always do (1-2)? Whom does he invite to join him (2-3)? When you’re afflicted, what makes it possible to exalt God? In the midst of fear and loss, what good comes when you pause to acknowledge the Lord’s presence in your life?
- Why is it good to seek the Lord (4-7, 19-22)? David describes himself in verse six as “this poor man.” And yet, so many riches come his way: deliverance, radiance, salvation, protection, wholeness, justification. Compare this to Mary’s song in Luke 1:46-55. What similarities and differences do you observe?
- How can we discover “that the Lord is good” (8)? Think about the time and attention it takes to truly taste and truly see something. What spiritual habits help you to taste and see God’s goodness?
- What does David say about fearing only the Lord (9-14)? Whom does God notice (15-17)? Whom is he close to (18)? What sense do you have of God seeing, hearing and drawing near to you?

Day Four: Isaiah 41:8-20

- How does God describe his people (8)? What has he done for them (9)? Why should God's people not be afraid (10)? Imagine the Lord calling you by name and speaking these three verses to you, saying he is with you. What stirs within your heart?
- What is the fate of our enemies (11-12)? How will this be (13-16)? In verse 14, why do you think God calls his people a "worm" and "little"? In the midst of fear, what hope can these verses plant in someone? Today, what do they plant in you?
- Describe the plight of "the poor and needy" (17)? How will God intervene (17-19)? What poetic imagery would *you* use to describe the hope and relief God's presence provides? When he reveals himself in this way and gives such good gifts, what impression does the Lord make upon the world (20)? Consider the gift of Emmanuel, God with us. This Christmas, receive him and celebrate him, and share him with the world.

Day Five: Luke 2:41-52

- What is the setting of this story (41-42)? After the festival, what happened (43-44)? Imagine it: a community so large and so trusted, that a day could go by without seeing your son.
- In order to find Jesus, what did Mary and Joseph do (45)? After three days of searching, where did they find him (46)? Describe the scene in the temple courts (47-48). Mary was blunt: she was offended and worried. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God, but he's also her 12-year-old son. Over the years, from his infancy to his death, how do you think she lived in this tension?
- In response to his parents' concerns, what did Jesus say (49)? How does the story conclude (51-52)? Mary didn't fully understand her son, but she "treasured all these things in her heart." We can't fully understand Jesus either, but he *is* with us and there's much to treasure. This Christmas, what about Jesus do you treasure?