

Bible Study

Led by: Hannah Brown

Aim: To share in individual and group reflection on a bible passage, and to grow in understanding and faith together. Each week, we will share a bible passage and some questions and techniques for individual reflection, in your own time. Then, you can remotely discuss as a group the ideas you explored through the reflection.

Length of time: Approximately 2 hours

Notes:

Before you begin this time of bible study, take a moment of quiet. Notice anything that might be distracting you. You might want to ask God for peace and quiet in this moment of reflection.

Reading: Luke 1: 46 – 55

Read the passage once through. If you're comfortable, you might like to read it aloud to yourself. This can help us slow down and read each word.

Take a moment to pause. What stands out to you from the passage?

Read the passage once through again.

Did you notice anything this time which you didn't notice before?

It might help you to write down the things you've noticed.

Questions:

- What do Mary's words tell us about who God is?
- Does Mary's understanding of God match with how you understand God? What characteristics stand out?
- The passage talks about how God treats different people. It says God 'Has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.' Does this feel unusual, or normal to you?

Reflection

In Luke Chapter 1, we hear Mary speaking to God during the time she was pregnant with Jesus. Often called the Magnificat, or Mary's Song, these verses show Mary's discovery of a God who turns things upside down.

Mary encounters God, who comes to perform the mightiest act of salvation the world has ever seen, but does so without power or pride. In fact, she encounters a God who chooses instead to be found with the humble and the hungry. The God Mary meets favours the marginalised, casts pride to the wayside and invites the poor as guests of honour to the feast.

A God who chooses to see value in those who may look unpromising to human eyes. This is certainly a far cry from the earthly displays of power and leadership Mary would have been used to, where strength and might were powerful. This God tips the balance of power. Mary encounters a God of justice, service and humility, and her world is transformed. Through his choice of arrival, God foretells of Jesus' ministry to come – one of holy disruption, interruption and change.

Questions:

- When have you seen God 'lifting up the humble'?
- What difference does this understanding of God who prefers those without power make to the way we understand power in our world?
- Do you think the church models this kind of Godly understanding of power?
- Verse 53 says 'He has filled the hungry with good things, but he has sent the rich away empty'. When have you seen God filling up the hungry?
- What does this tell us about God's priorities?

This passage speaks of a God who transforms the status quo – who does things differently.

- Where – in the Church or in the World – do you think things need to be done differently, to look more like God's behaviour?
- Where might you be able to take action today, to reflect God's preference for the humble and the hungry?
- What changes could you see in your local community, that would lift up the humble and fill the hungry with good things?
- What changes could we see in the world, that would lift up the humble and fill the hungry with good things?

Mary's life is interrupted by God telling her she will give birth to Jesus. Because of this, her world is turned upside down and she encounters God differently.

- When has God turned your life upside down?
- Is there anything you think needs to be turned upside down in the world, in order for us to see God more clearly?

As you reflect, you might wish to take some notes and write down some ideas that you can share with others in the group.

As you come to the end of your reflection, you might like to spend some time praying to God about the thoughts and ideas which have stood out to you today. You might like to use this prayer:

God,

who in grace chooses people over place and status,
we rejoice that when you came to earth,
you chose to be found amongst the humble and the hungry.

We rejoice that you care about the voices of those the world chooses to silence.

Help us to see the riches of your Kingdom amongst those who haven't been served well by the systems and structures of our world.

Help us to lift up the humble in everything we do,
And seek to discover your presence in the world.

Amen