

More Than a Manger #3
The God Who Encourages

Word

Scripture Reference

Luke 1:39-56

Discussion Questions

1. How has God encouraged you this week?
2. God is deserving to be praised and cheered, but we should not forget that He also cheers us on. He is a God who stands alongside and journeys with us in our faith walk. How does He reveal Himself as the God Who loves to encourage? Read Luke 1:39-56. Mary had received the message that she would be the mother of the Lord Jesus. To prove that God can do the impossible, the angel told Mary about Elizabeth's pregnancy, Mary's relative who was way past her child-bearing years. What did Mary do after hearing the news about Elizabeth (v. 39)? What is the significance of Elizabeth being already in her sixth month of pregnancy when Mary saw her? How do you think Mary felt, seeing Elizabeth pregnant, as the angel said?
3. In the great revelation of who God is as seen in the incarnation story, we see how God shows Himself as the God who encourages. He encourages us through His assurances (v. 41-45).
 - a. He assures us through people (v. 41-42). What astonishing things happened as soon as Mary greeted Elizabeth (v. 41)? Discuss how that is significant. How does Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant with the Son of God? How did Elizabeth react (v. 42)? Share how the Lord has encouraged you recently through another person.
 - b. He assures us through words (v. 43-45). How do you think Mary felt about hearing Elizabeth's reaction to her greetings? How does God's Word give you assurance? How does words of affirmation coming from your loved ones and people you work with encourage you? Have you encouraged anyone lately by being generous in your words of affirmation and assurances? Share with the group.
4. God's encouragement of His children is also seen in His acts of kindness (v. 47-49). What did Mary say in response to Elizabeth's greeting? Discuss how verse 47

debunks the Catholic doctrine of an Immaculate Conception. What does this verse tell the people who venerate Mary? Why is Christ's incarnation God's greatest act of kindness toward mankind? Do you think that your accomplishments and your possessions are things you deserve? Why or why not? How has God encouraged you through His acts of kindness in the past? When you think of these undeserved blessings, how do you respond to Him?

5. God's encouragement is also seen through His mercy (v. 50-55), as Mary's song tells us. To whom does God show His mercy (v. 50)? In contrast, what happens to the proud (v. 51)? How does God show mercy to His people (v. 54-55)? We often complain that we don't get what we deserve, but what if we did? Discuss the times when it was a good thing that you did not get what you deserve. Without God's mercy, what do you think would have happened to you? How do you show gratitude to God, who extends His mercies to you every single day? How do you extend mercy to others—stepping out so that someone else can step in, as Jesus Christ did for you?
6. Mary returned to her house after John was born (v. 56). How do you think Mary (the mother of the Savior), and Elizabeth (the mother of the forerunner) have felt for each other after God, in His act of kindness and mercy, have brought them together to encourage one another? Is there anyone with whom you have shared a bond of mutual encouragement? When you look to Jesus, what do you see in Him that becomes your source of encouragement?

Walk

As a recipient of God's encouragement, are you willing to be used by the Lord as an encourager to others? Since words matter, how can you be generous with your words to affirm others? How can you assure your family members that you love them? How does God encourage you through His act of kindness? God in His mercy has stepped in so that you can step out in life. What is your response to His mercy?

Worship & Prayer

Father, everyday has its difficulties. But I thank you for Your Word that gives me assurance and hope. I thank You for the people you've surrounded me with who remind me that You are the good, good Father. I am grateful for every act of kindness and small blessings I receive. In these things I see how much You care for me. Most of all, thank You for not giving me what I deserve, for giving me second chances again and again—chances to live a life in obedience, a life that pleases You. You are faithful in giving me daily strength, and I pray that I may see the evidences of Your encouragement everyday and respond to You in praise and thanksgiving always. In Christ's name. Amen.