

The Way to Happiness

Faith

by Annette Gulick 10/1/2001

Lesson Two

Lesson Objective: That students learn to trust God's goodness even in tough times.

Bible Passage: John 11:1-45

Bible Truth: God proved to Mary and Martha that they could trust Him even in the middle of a very difficult situation.

Memory Verse: Hebrews 11: 6

Before You Begin:

- ♦ blindfolds
- ♦ paper
- ♦ pencils

Opening:

Faith Walk. Have the students form pairs and give each pair one blindfold [if you can not get enough blindfolds, have the students close their eyes, but remind them that they ruin the activity for themselves if they open them.] Explain that one of the partners will blindfold the other, take them by the hand, and lead them on a walk, preferably where they have to go up and down stairs, and/or jog over uneven ground [this works best outside.] Halfway through the allotted time, have the partners switch roles. Remind the students to be cautious and use their common sense. Throughout the activity watch that no one gets into a precarious or dangerous situation. After everyone has returned to their seats discuss:

- *How did you feel during your walk?*
- *Which was easier for you, following or leading? Why?*

Even though God has given us the gift of sight that helps us see where we are walking literally, we frequently experience these same feelings of dependence, powerlessness, and frustration at not knowing what is going to happen next or exactly where our lives are going. Today we continue learning about the way to happiness and the faith that knows that God is holding our hands, guiding us through life.

Interactive Learning

Ask for examples of the kinds of things that make people feel powerless or frustrated and write some of the answers on the board. Make sure you get quite a few answers. If they have trouble thinking of things, you can give them ideas like a sickness or an accident. Explain that sometimes these things happen as a consequence of our actions; for example someone destroys his liver by drinking too much alcohol or a student fails a class because he or she doesn't study, but some are totally beyond our control. Then choose a few of the specific answers and ask what they think most people believe as to why those things happen. (For example, ask "If you went up to someone on the street and asked him why a person who is a good husband and father would get cancer, what would they say?") Then ask them why they think some of these things happen.

Frequently, what disturbs our happiness are unexpected events that are beyond our control in our lives or in the lives of people we care about, like getting sick, having an accident, or a conflict with difficult people. Today we are going to learn from Mary and Martha how to trust God in the middle of difficult situations.

Bible Application

Divide the students into three groups. Give each group a passage from John 11 (verses 1-16; 17-37; 38-45) and give them a few minutes to prepare a skit that acts out the verses. Remind the groups that all group members must participate in their skit. Have the groups present their skits and then discuss the following questions (these questions are not difficult so make sure that the students and not the leaders answer them.)

- *What did Jesus do when he heard Lazarus was sick? [he stayed where he was two more days] Why? [so that God's son may be glorified through it]*
- *What did Martha say to Jesus when she saw him? [v. 21,22]*
- *What did Mary say to Jesus when she saw him? [v. 32]*
- *How do you think Mary and Martha felt when Jesus didn't come immediately?*
- *Jesus knew that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, so why do you think he cried in v. 35? [v. 33]*
- *What was the result of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead? [v. 41, 45. People believed that Jesus was sent from God and they put their faith in him]*
- *How do you think Mary and Martha felt after their brother was raised from the dead and when they saw the reactions of the people?*
- *What can we learn from this story to help us in our Christian life?*

All of us will go through times in our lives when we feel like Mary and Martha, confused and hurt because we don't understand why God doesn't seem to care about what is happening to us. We can imagine them praying and praying that Jesus would

arrive soon. They knew he could have prevented Lazarus' death. But he didn't come, and Lazarus died. In this story God has given us the blessing of being able to know what was going on inside of Jesus' mind. He did hear their pleas for help, he really did care, and he was carrying out God's plan even when they didn't know it. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This story should help us be sure of God's love for us, even when we don't see Him answering our prayers the way we wish he would.

- ***Read 1 Peter 1: 6, 7. What does Peter say is the result of the suffering of Christians?***

Commitment

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil and have them write the words "Past", "Present" and "Future" on it. Then have them think about specific situations in their lives in the past, in the present and in the future in which it is/has been difficult for them to trust that God is in control of the situation. Give them examples to stimulate their thinking, for example, past: they could have trouble trusting that God was in control when their father abandoned their family or their parents got a divorce; present: they could be worried about relational problems in their family or among their friends; future: they might be concerned about their future career or spouse.

When everyone has written three things, have them write out on their paper Hebrews 11:6.

Closing

Ask the students to break into pairs and share one of the three things that they have written on their sheet. Then the partners should pray for each other about that situation, that they would have more faith in God's goodness and love, and that God would work it out “for the good of those who love Him” as He promises.