

Life Application Notes: Joy Week 2 – Dave McNee

“Joy to the disappointed” – Luke 1:5-25;57-66

Introduction

Dave started on Sunday referencing the Pixar film UP and the emotional opening montage – **do you get teary eyed watching any particular films? If so, why do you think that is?**

Digging In

The story of Elizabeth and Zechariah can be easy to gloss over at this time of year as all eyes go to Mary and Joseph and the birth of Jesus! However, it can really help us work through how we deal with disappointment and dig down into our inner motivations and what really, truly, brings us joy.

Discuss: Why do you think disappointment often leads to bitterness?

Read Luke 1:5-25 together.

1. Value - God loves to use people whose lives have been far from perfect.

Dave noted on Sunday that we can have a terrible tendency to think that God can only use ‘great’ people to do great things. It is all too easy to define our measure of greatness by the successes of others. When looking at the bible however we see a very different picture.

Can you think of any examples of times when God has used the unexpected? (Gideon, David, Jonah, Zacchaeus, Saul/Paul, Peter – the list goes on and on!)

God as a wonderful habit of using people whose lives have been less than perfect!

Challenge: Do these biblical examples spur you on and encourage you? What aspects do they have in common? (Faith?, obedience?)

When we encounter disappointment – what steps can we take to remind ourselves of how much we are valued by God?

2. Reorientation - A life that doesn't depend on the joys in this world.

Read Luke 1:26-38 together.

Looking at the story here of Zachariah – **what is different between Zachariah's reaction to God's message and the reaction of Mary in v34?**

When we consider the Christmas story what are they key things that immediately come to mind?

What is the underlying focus of the angel Gabriel's message to Zechariah and Mary? (GOD getting to know us. Good news of great joy!)

Christmas gives us an opportunity to re-focus our attention away from ourselves and towards the real central message.

3. Liberty - from needing to compare ourselves to everyone else.

Read Luke 1:57-66 together.

Dave pointed out on Sunday that we can all too easily feel the pain of disappointment when seeing both the joy and frustration of others. We need a way to shift our mindset away from comparing ourselves to others.

What do you notice about Zechariah's actions in these verses?

How can we model the example of Zechariah?

How can we nurture our faith into a habit of looking up (to God)?

Rounding Off – PRAYER

Luke 2:10 - “Behold I bring you good news of great joy”

We can look joyfully forwards to the Christmas season – knowing what God is offering us – a life that doesn't depend on the joys of this world. For many though the Christmas season doesn't bring joy.

Spend time praying as a group particularly for those in Southampton who don't yet know the joy of Christmas.

Pray together as a group:

For our city:

- *Pray for the Night Shelter, that preparations would go smoothly and that it would be a great resource for those in our city who need provision.*
- *Pray for those who are serving hard in our community, that they would be strengthened to persevere as they serve faithfully.*
- *Pray for all those who are facing trial and disappointment, bitterness or pain. As we head towards Christmas all of these things can be overwhelmingly apparent. Pray for God's peace to settle on Southampton, into people's homes and hearts.*

For us:

- *Pray for a greater realisation of the vastness of God's love. That any bitterness or disappointment we have in our hearts would melt away as we look to God.*
- *Pray for opportunities for showing God's love to our friends and neighbours – so that the Joy of Christmas and Christ's coming would shine through more and more.*