

God chooses people for special tasks, but only uses the available, Bible teacher says_80904

August 6, 2004

Posted: 8/06/04

God chooses people for special tasks, but only uses the available, Bible teacher says

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

WACO—God chooses certain people as his instruments for particular times and purposes but can use them only when they make themselves available, a Bible study leader told the Texas Leadership Conference.

Gaynor Yancey, director of the baccalaureate program in Baylor University's School of Social Work, taught a Bible study on the conference theme, "Christ Followers." Woman's Missionary Union of Texas sponsored the annual missions training event on the Baylor campus.

Yancey focused on four women in Scripture whom God used to meet special needs—Queen Esther; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and Mary and Martha of Bethany.

The Old Testament book of Esther is peculiar among the Scriptures in that God never is mentioned by name. "But Esther was significant to God's plan, and we can see God's fingerprints literally all over Esther's life," Yancey noted.

God allowed Esther to become queen of Persia so the Jews would have an advocate before the king when a law was passed that could have resulted in their extermination, she said.

She pointed to two key phrases spoken by Esther's relative, Mordecai. He suggested to Esther that she had been elevated to royal position "for such a time as this." And he told her if she remained silent, "relief and delivery" for the Jews would come from somewhere else.

Yancey, who served 25 years with the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board in inner-city Philadelphia, urged the women in her seminar to ask themselves if God had brought them to a place of influence at a particular time to set right some injustice or meet an urgent human need.

"God has a plan for your life and mine," she said. "If we don't follow that plan, God will use someone else. But the needs will be met."

Turning to the New Testament, Yancey pointed to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as God's chosen instrument for a one-of-a-kind task.

She stressed the angel's words to Mary, "Nothing is impossible with God." And she challenged Texas Baptist women to echo Mary's words, "I am the Lord's servant."

Yancey urged the women to say in response to God: "If you are calling me to ministry to this person, if you are calling me to meet the needs of this group, if you are calling me to help with this organization or this committee, may it be to me as you have said."

Yancey also briefly examined Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus.

Their household—three single adult siblings—was not typical for that time, she observed. But their home became a much-needed “place of safety” for Jesus during his Judaeen ministry—due in part to Martha's spiritual gift of hospitality and in part to Mary's attentive devotion to Jesus.

As a university professor, Yancey observed that many of her most dedicated Christian students understand what Mary knew—the importance of spending time with Jesus.

She noted some of her students set aside time on their daily planners for Bible study, prayer, journaling and reflection, and they treat that time as inviolable.

“In order to be effective instruments of God, we have to have time when we draw aside and experience Jesus,” she said.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.