



# 02

## SESSION TWO

---

# The Angel Visited Mary

### SESSION SUMMARY

---

In this session, we witness Mary's first experience of God's remarkable call on her life—to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah. A young woman, probably still in her teens, Mary was confronted by the angel Gabriel with the news that God intended to use her to fulfill the greatest promise of His covenant. Mary's response as the Lord's servant became an example of all Christian obedience. In our own lives, we must recognize that God calls us to obedience, even when it is costly. Like Mary, we magnify the Lord through our obedience as servants of God and followers of Christ.

### SCRIPTURE

---

Luke 1:26-38,46-55

# THE POINT

---

**Mary responded in faith to God's call on her life.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

---

### Option 1

God's call does not usually lead to comfort. As in Mary's life, God's call often leads us to trust in Him to accomplish unbelievable things through us. What God asked of Mary—to be the mother of His own Son—probably seemed impossible. So, Mary asked a good question: “How?”

- **When has God asked you to do something that seemed impossible?**

Instead of reflecting disbelief, Mary's question indicated a desire to know the process of God's plan for her—how would He work this out? In spite of the incredible nature of God's plan for her and responsibility that would come with His call, Mary humbly submitted to God's will, calling herself His servant. Then, she took it a step further, singing a song of praise to her God.

- **How does Mary's response to God's call on her life demonstrate the way we should respond when He calls us to do difficult things for Him?**

### Option 2

Place students in groups of three to four. Make sure each group has at least one Bible. Then, tell the students to find at least two examples of people who responded in faith to God's call on their lives. After allowing adequate time for the students to find two examples, ask each group to share with the other groups. Then, ask:

- **What made their faith seem so extraordinary?**
- **How can we learn from their faithful response to God?**

Like many of these examples, Mary was just a normal young person. What God asked Mary to do likely seemed impossible, so she asked how He would bring about this miracle. When the angel told her, Mary responded with humble submission to God's will and praised Him for allowing her such a blessing. Certainly, the path following Mary's “yes” would not be easy. Still, she responded with a humble attitude of faith and praise.

- **When has God called you to a difficult path? In what ways can Mary's response teach us about ours?**

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

---

**Mary responded in faith to God's call on her life.**

## CHARACTERS

---

- **Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Mary** - Jesus' earthly mother
- **Gabriel** - one of only two angels who are named in the Bible. Mentioned in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

## PLOT

---

After looking at Jesus' genealogy and His connection with Abraham and David, we will zero in on Mary's life and her encounter with the angel Gabriel. How did this young, poor Jewish girl respond to the news that she would miraculously conceive a child, and that this child wouldn't be like every other child? This child would be God Himself, coming to dwell among His people and rescue them from their sins. How did she react to this call on her life? Our journey today answers those very questions.

## TIMELINE

### MARY PRAISES GOD

*God works in the heart and life of Mary.*

**GOD WITH US**  
*The good news of Jesus' Incarnation.*

**JESUS' EARLY YEARS**  
*Jesus grows in favor with God and men.*

## MARY SUBMITTED TO GOD'S DIFFICULT PLAN

It is not surprising to see that Luke, who was a doctor, was interested in the marginalized people of his day. After a brief introduction (vv. 1-4), Luke began the story of Jesus by telling of the miraculous promise of the birth of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. Miraculous promises were made to both sets of parents. Elizabeth and Zechariah, though well along in years, would have a son named John. Mary, who was twice described as a virgin, would give birth to Jesus. These were seemingly impossible promises, fulfilled through the poor and the marginalized.

**26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,<sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.<sup>28</sup> And the angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you."<sup>29</sup> But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be.<sup>30</sup> Then the angel told her: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.**

**31 Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.<sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.<sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?"<sup>35</sup> The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.<sup>36</sup> And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless.<sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."**

**38 "I am the Lord's slave," said Mary. "May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-38)**

- Gabriel's greeting troubled Mary. What should she have "rejoiced" over? What did the angel mean when he said she was "favored?" (p. 16, PSG)

Gabriel responded, as angels often do, with poetry. The passage began with two Greek words—their most literal translation being "no fear"—often heard from the lips of angels.

The angel's poem addressed Mary's fears. He told her that God would show her favor by giving her a Son, who would be called "Yeshua" (Jesus). He would be the fulfillment of the promise God made to David and his descendants, of whom Mary was one. He would reign over the house of Jacob forever in the kingdom that would never end. From the poverty-stricken Nazareth, an obscure town, would come the King to sit on David's eternal throne.

Mary's question was reasonable. How could she, a virgin, possibly have a child? Gabriel's gentle response was that the spirit of God would "overshadow" her; this is the same word the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament used to describe the spirit of God "hovering" over the face of the waters of creation (Gen. 1:2). In order to build up confidence in the Lord's ability to fulfill this promise, Gabriel revealed to Mary that her relative, the elderly Elizabeth, was already six months pregnant.

Mary responded with faith. She declared herself to be the servant of the Lord, her master. This was her identity. After all, servants have no choices; they surrender themselves to their masters. Even though there was much that Mary did not know, she had a deep-rooted faith and trust, and that is where her submissive spirit came from. She was ready to submit to God's difficult plan for her life.

## 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Angels (p. 18, PSG)

*Besides the creation of humanity and animals, the Bible also speaks of other beings that God created—angels, who are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God,” “holy ones,” “spirits,” “principalities,” and “powers.” In the original languages of the Bible, the word “angel” carries the meaning of a messenger, which indicates one of their primary reasons for existence. Angels carry out a number of other functions throughout Scripture: bringing God glory, carrying out God's plans and purpose, and reminding humanity that the unseen world is real.*

## MARY MAGNIFIED GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS

One of the beautiful aspects of Luke's gospel is the rebirth of song in the early chapters. Nearly everyone sang, or at least spoke poetry: The angels sang to the shepherds, Gabriel sang to Mary, and Mary sang in response, as did Zechariah just a few verses later.

The birth of Jesus was about more than just a baby being born—it was the birth of a new hope. The only appropriate response (whether you're a poor girl in an impoverished city or a glorious angel sent from heaven) is to sing. Let's take a look at how Mary's song magnified God for His goodness and mercy.

**46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:46-50)**

- **Make a list of things Mary praised God for in verses 46-50. What are the common themes?** (*p. 17, PSG*)

Beginning with the poem Adam uttered upon first seeing Eve (Gen. 2:23), the natural response to the grace and unexpected mercy of God has often been lyrical. When the Israelites experienced God’s deliverance in the wilderness, they responded in song (Ex. 15:1-18). In the Psalms, David constantly sang about the unexpected mercy God extended to him. And whenever God’s covenant faithfulness seemed absent or distant, the Psalms held onto hope that God would eventually fulfill His promises.

Such songs of hope remained silent in Israel for about 400 years, and then the birth of Jesus became the theme of new songs. The angels, Zechariah, Simeon, and Mary could find no better way to voice their new hope.

Songs often better express the workings of the heart and imagination than prose. Songs evoke memories every time we sing them. The beautiful submission of Mary was on display in her song, which magnified the goodness and mercy of the Lord. Only after we let go of our choices and submit ourselves in obedience to our Master can any of us truly begin to sing. As the slave of the Lord, she was, in fact, free.

## MARY TRUSTED GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISES

Mary’s song concluded with a chorus that celebrates the truth that the world would be turned upside down. This is Luke’s favorite theme of radical reversal, presented in poetic form.

**51 “He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” (Luke 1:51-55)**

Mary’s language revealed a heart and mind that must have been saturated with the Psalms. For the moment, she became a psalmist herself. And, like David, she understood that the new hope being born into the world was based on an ancient hope.

The God of the Gospels is a God who is always in the process of turning the world upside down. The new hope that was born—the hope that is the subject of so many songs in the Scriptures—was granted to the outsiders, to the poor in spirit. In order to be rich, we learn to let go of our riches. In order to become wise, we embrace the foolishness of the cross. In order to become mature, we become like little children. In order to become truly free, we become slaves. Jesus wins everything by losing everything.

## TIMELINE

### JESUS’ BAPTISM

*The meaning of baptism in the life of the believer.*

### JESUS OVERCOMES TEMPTATION

*Where Adam and Eve and the early Israelites failed, Christ succeeded.*

*\*Special session*

### WHO IS HE?

*The disciples learn Jesus’ identity and the purpose behind why He came.*

## CHRIST CONNECTION

---

It would be difficult to overstate Mary's obscurity. She was a young woman living in a culture that marginalized women. Yet, it was Mary of Nazareth who received God's impossible call to bear His Son. Her immediate and intuitive response to the angel Gabriel exposed the shape of her heart for God. She seemed to instinctively understand that He was her master, and she was His humble servant.

The Gospels don't provide any scenes of her struggling inwardly to come to grips with the demands of becoming the mother of the Messiah, but it is not hard to imagine that she had a definite impact on Jesus' life as He grew to manhood. Did her life of humility and obedience shape His heart and life as well? Was her instinct toward obedience imprinted on Him from an early age? Could His mother's example of complete submission to God's plan for her life have inspired Him as He came to grips with the fact that He had also come as a servant (Phil. 2:6-11)? Such are the beautiful mysteries of the incarnation, God taking on human flesh and entering the world through the womb of a woman!

# YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why was Zechariah's question a sign of his weak faith but Mary's question a sign of her strength? What can we learn from the way Mary responded to the angel's message?** *In one sense, we can learn that even though we may not fully understand what God is doing or may have questions, we can still have full assurance and trust in God and believe that He is working for our good and joy.*
- **How does Mary's response—calling herself the Lord's servant and willingly submitting to His will—reveal the posture every faithful Christian should have? What does submitting to God's plan look like in our culture today?** *Since people are prideful and are constantly in pursuit of their own will, making the switch to saying "His will be done" instead of "my will be done" is nothing short of miraculous. Christians are called to live this way in all times and in all places, even though the way that gets lived out may vary from place to place. Help students think through particular ways that pursuing God's will may look like in their context.*
- **Name two or three of your favorite songs that magnify the Lord for His goodness and mercy. Why do these songs resonate with you? What aspects of God's character do they celebrate?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some ways that your church can display the "upside-down" nature of Christ's kingdom? How does your life challenge the values of the world with the values of the Kingdom?** *Answers will vary.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

---

Mercy, by definition, is something we need the most when we deserve it the least. When God, in His mercy, sent His own Son, the natural human response to His over-the-top gift of hope was poetic and lyrical. Though we have no right to expect anything from Him, He gives us everything, including His one and only Son. That is the nature of His lovingkindness. We need mercy the most when we deserve it the least. That's exactly what Jesus' birth would perfectly provide for the world.

- **Why does mercy fail to be mercy when it is something that is deserved?** *By its very definition mercy is something that is not earned. If it is deserved, then it would be a wage or payment, instead of being the free gift of mercy.*
- **Why is it important to always keep in mind that God gives mercy to undeserved sinners like ourselves?** *Keeping this in mind will help us to see others as potential recipients of God's saving mercy and love and keep ourselves humble and free from the belief that we earned salvation.*



## HEART

---

The image of the great angel Gabriel appearing to a marginalized teenager in an insignificant and impoverished village like Nazareth establishes a contrast that Luke maintained throughout his Gospel. Earlier in the story, Gabriel was forced to explain his identity to the unbelieving priest in the holy place (Luke 1:19). Zechariah questioned the truth of Gabriel's words, despite Gabriel's declaration that he stood in the presence of God (Luke 1:18). But Gabriel found a more faithful person in Mary. She also asked how Gabriel's message could be, but hers was more a question of process than disbelief. Luke intended for us to appreciate the contrast between the disbelieving priest in the magnificent temple and the trusting girl in impoverished Nazareth.

- **How does Mary's faith as a young teenager encourage you in your own obedience to God?** *Answers will vary.*
- **If you were to compose your own song of thankfulness to God for His mercy in your life, what themes would you touch on and why?** *Answers will vary.*



## HANDS

---

The stories of church history reveal that following Jesus cost His disciples everything. With the exception of John, death was the ultimate price of faithfulness for Jesus' closest followers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German martyr, famously wrote: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."<sup>1</sup> New life in Christ is not intended to be easy. Jesus never promised earthly security—He calls us to be willing to give up everything to follow Him (Matt. 16:24).

- **What is your response to Jesus' command when He says, "Follow Me?"** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some hindrances in your own life that you need to abandon in order to live faithfully for Jesus?** *Answers will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

---

### SOURCE

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 11.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17](http://lifeway.com/TGPRescueSpr17))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**