



SESSION 4

GOD'S LIVING WORD SAVES

The Point

Jesus is the ultimate Word from God who brings salvation.

The Passage

Psalm 119:41; Luke 1:30-35

The Bible Meets Life

We can read books or follow news stories about an individual, but our understanding—and relationship—with that person changes dramatically when we meet him or her face to face. We can learn much about God as we read the Bible, but the best understanding of God comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus is God Himself, and He came to fully reveal God and bring us salvation that makes a relationship with God a possibility.

The Setting

Psalm 119:41 focuses on the psalmist's hope in God's faithful love and promise of salvation. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear a son who would be the Messiah, the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation from sin and death for His people. This son is Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, who died for our sins so that we could receive salvation by placing our faith in Him.

What does the Bible say?

Favor with God (Luke 1:30)—
This phrase describes how God views and acts toward someone on whom He bestows His blessing(s). God favored Mary with His choice to send His Son into the world through her.

Psalm 119:41; Luke 1:30-35 (HCSB)

Ps. 119:41 Let Your faithful love come to me, LORD, Your salvation, as You promised.

.....
Luke 1:30 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.

32 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.

33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

34 Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?”

35 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.”

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 37 of the PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“When have you had big news you couldn’t wait to share?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 38):

Ever had a brush with someone famous?

- » A backstage pass to meet a singer
- » A quick handshake at a political rally

- » A celebrity spotting at the airport

You’ll know if a friend has such an encounter—because he’ll post it on Twitter® or Instagram®. Something as significant as meeting a celebrity will definitely rate a picture and catchy line on social media. After all, something like that doesn’t just happen every day!

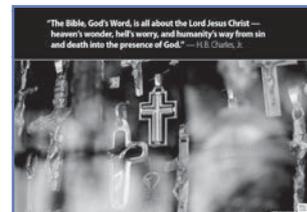
Running into a star at the airport or meeting someone famous is a memorable experience, but it doesn’t compare to a personal encounter with Jesus. Psalm 119 and Luke 1 tell of Jesus’ birth and our only hope for salvation. The good news is that we don’t have to wait for unexpected chances to bump into Him. No, we’re offered a real relationship with the Son of God.

LEADER GUIDE: Bring your group’s attention to **Pack Item #5**, “Nativity” poster, as you discuss the point.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** on page 38 of the PSG: **“Jesus is the ultimate Word from God who brings salvation.”**

PRAY: Transition into the discussion with prayer. Thank God for sending His Son so that we can experience salvation and a relationship with Him.

TIP: This session is a great opportunity to talk about salvation with any group members who aren’t yet believers. Use the inside front cover of this Leader Guide for assistance.



Display Pack Item #5 to highlight the topic of today’s session.

PLAYLIST PICK: “Born in Bethlehem” by Third Day

Psalm 119:41 Commentary

God promised His salvation would come to us. Verse 41: The translation of the first word of verse 41 as “let” to introduce this prayer request does not quite capture the full meaning of the psalmist’s words. In contemporary English, the word “let” means to allow. The psalmist certainly was not asking God to allow His action to occur. Rather he was pleading with God for God to make it happen!

The psalmist desperately wanted God’s faithful love to come to him. Surprisingly, this is the first time in this psalm that the psalmist had mentioned God’s faithful love; however, the Hebrew term (*hesed*) for God’s faithful love is used about 250 times in the Old Testament. The Book of Psalms contains 127 of those occurrences, with 7 appearing in Psalm 119 (vv. 41,64,76,88,124,149,159). *Hesed* is a common term the Old Testament uses for God’s covenant love for His people, which is, of course, faithful. Because of the term’s wide scope of meaning, scholars have translated this word in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to): “faithful love,” “loving kindness,” “steadfast love,” “unfailing love,” “covenant love,” “covenant faithfulness,” and “unfailing mercies.”

Using parallelism in the two parts of the verse, the psalmist connected God’s faithful love with salvation. The Hebrew term the writer used for salvation normally has as its meaning God’s deliverance of an individual from some type of physical danger or enemies. In this verse the psalmist sought rescue from his persecution.

The psalmist made his prayer request to the Lord (Hebrew: *Yahweh*). This term for God is a translation of God’s personal name first revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14-15), which is frequently rendered “I AM WHO I AM.” The term is based on the Hebrew verb “to be” and emphasizes God’s faithfulness, consistency, and unchanging nature. Whereas in many English translations of the Bible the title “Lord” refers to a master or boss, God’s personal name is rendered “LORD.” God is both Lord and “LORD.”

In verse 41, the psalmist was referring to salvation from his persecutors rather than salvation from sin and death. Nevertheless, God rescues His people from sin just as He saves us from our distresses. The rest of this session will focus on the salvation God promised He would bring to His people from sin and its penalty of death, judgment, and eternal separation from God. As recorded in the Old Testament, God promised through His prophets that He would send a Redeemer to save us from our sins (for example, see Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13–53:12). This promise was fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:30-33 Commentary

Salvation comes through Jesus, who is fully man. Verse 30: Mary's conversation with the angel Gabriel began with Gabriel appearing to Mary and greeting her. "Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you" (v. 28). God's choice of Mary made her favored. Mary's response to Gabriel's greeting was that she was "deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be" (v. 29). In verse 30, Gabriel addressed Mary saying, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." The word "favor" is the Greek word *charis*, frequently translated "grace." The Greek term describes how God views and acts on behalf of the person on whom God bestows His blessing(s). God favored Mary with His choice to send His Son into the world through her (v. 31).

Verse 31: Gabriel instructed Mary to listen carefully as he told her God's message—she would conceive and give birth to a son, and was to name her son Jesus. In Scripture, names given by God, either personally or through His emissaries, usually have significance and meaning. God gave Abram the name Abraham ("father of many nations," Genesis 17:5) and Jacob the name Israel ("he struggled with God," 32:27-28). The name Jesus means "Yahweh saves."

Verse 32: Gabriel told Mary three additional facts about Jesus. First, Jesus would "be great." Second, Jesus would "be called the Son of the Most High." In the Bible, the word "son" sometimes referred to a father's male child. At other times "son" referred to "one like" the father. In the context here, many scholars conclude this is the meaning in verse 32. The New Testament repeatedly speaks of Jesus as the exact image of God (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3); certainly that's much stronger than Jesus merely being "one like" God. Jesus is one with both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (one in essence or nature, but three Persons). The words "Most High" are a common way to refer to God the Father in the Old Testament to distinguish God the Father from other lesser (false) gods.

Third, "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David." Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus' genealogy through His earthly [adoptive] father, Joseph, tracing Jesus' genealogy back to both David and Abraham (Matthew 1:1-17). Although Luke only mentioned Jesus as the king of Israel ("throne of His father David"), we know from other passages in the New Testament that Jesus is the King over all nations on the earth (Revelation 15:3; 19:15-16). Jesus is the promised Messiah and King.

Verse 33: The eternal nature of Jesus' rule is emphasized by Gabriel's statement, "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever." Gabriel's statement is explained more fully in the second line: "His kingdom will have no end." The words "house of Jacob" are another way of referring to the people of Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:10).

Luke 1:34-35 Commentary

Salvation comes through Jesus, who is fully God. Verse 34: Mary asked for an explanation as to how Gabriel's words to her (in vv. 30-33) could come to pass. Mary asked, "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" The demonstrative pronoun "this" referred to Gabriel's announcement in verses 30-33. After all, Gabriel's announcement was amazing news that was difficult to understand. "According to the original Greek, Mary's words do not express doubt; but overwhelmed by the incomprehensible grandeur of the announcement, she merely enquires as to the manner in which that which has been promised will take place."¹ By this question, she actually affirmed God's fulfillment. This is confirmed by Mary's final words of obedience expressed in verse 38.

In Mary's time, betrothed couples were forbidden from having any sexual contact. Mary's question indicated her sexual purity (which she retained until after Jesus' birth, so there would be no question about who Jesus' Father was; Matthew 1:24-25).

Verse 35: Gabriel explained what would happen to Mary. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you," explained the conception. The term "Holy Spirit" indicated the role of God, who supernaturally would cause Mary's conception. Gabriel next explained the "how" of Mary's conception more fully. Referring to Mary's virginal conception, Gabriel stated, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." The word "power" refers to the Holy Spirit. The words "Most High" refer to God the Father. The word "overshadow" refers to the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit in Mary's virginal conception.

The last part of verse 35 describes who Jesus would be called—the Son of God. The word "holy" describes God's character or someone (or something) that reflects God's character and is set apart for God's purpose. The words "to be born" do indicate a future time, but the context demands a time in the near future. Finally, Jesus would be called the Son of God (see also for example Luke 3:38; 4:3,9,41). The title "Son of God" is a highly important description of who Jesus is. Jesus is and always has been the Son of God.

The apostle Paul described the wonder of the incarnation of Jesus in his Letter to the Philippians (Philippians 2:6-8). We cannot fully comprehend the mystery of the incarnation, when God Himself became one of us for the purpose of taking our sins upon Himself for our salvation. But we do know that the incarnation speaks about the depths of God's love for us.

1. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 76.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

SAY: “What will you do this week with the truth that Jesus is the Word who brings us salvation?”

GUIDE: Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 44 of the PSG.



- » **Accept the gift.** Jesus is God who came to earth to give you life. Believe that truth and trust your life in His hands. To know more about how to become a Christ-follower, read the inside front cover of this book and talk to your Bible study leader.
- » **Live the gift.** A life in Christ is a changed life. Pray daily that Jesus would make you more and more like Him.
- » **Share the gift.** Many people are aware of the basics of the story of Jesus’ birth. Make it your goal to tell them the significance of that event—God came to earth as a man to save us. Identify one person you know who might not know Jesus as Savior. Pray, ask for God’s favor, and share the hope of Christ.

Wrap It Up

SAY: “Musicians, government leaders, and celebrities will come and go; none compare to Jesus. **God’s great promise of salvation is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.**”



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