



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2018-19 Leader Commentary

Unit 1: You on Mission

Session 4: The Mission from the Manger (see pp. 114-117)

The Question: What should I say when I witness to others?

The Point: Focus on Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Background Passage: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25

Focal Passage: Luke 1:30-33; Matthew 1:18-23

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “What should I say when I witness to others?” and drive home this one truth: Focus on Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Focus on These Points

Jesus: A Ruler over Us
(Luke 1:30-33)

Luke, a physician (Col. 4:14) and Gentile believer wrote this Gospel from his unique perspective. His aim was to present the availability of the Gospel to everyone. He portrayed Jesus as a relatable and accessible Savior, Teacher, and Healer to all people who wanted to know Him. Luke opens his account of Jesus’ birth with an angel’s visit to a girl named Mary. His greeting to her started with a common salutation for the time period: “greetings” (v. 28); “Rejoice” (CEB); “peace be with you” (GNT). But, Mary became confused and afraid when the angel continued. He not only called her a “favored woman,” but he also told her “The Lord is with you” (v. 28). In verse 30, he elaborated: she had “found favor with God” (v. 30).

Mary was an average girl. Although Luke had described Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth, as “righteous in God’s sight” (Luke 1:5-6), he hadn’t done the same for Mary. Mary wasn’t sinless or otherwise unique. We have no reason to believe she was seeking anything in particular from God. Still, in His sovereignty God selected her for a high honor. Because He extended His grace to Mary, she was assured she would receive God’s full support and help. But that’s what favor is all about—unmerited honor and unearned blessings.

The name of Mary’s Child was meaningful. His name had special implications. *Jesus* meant “Deliverer, Savior.” In verse 32, Gabriel exalts Jesus, calling Him “Son of the Most High.” This further identified Jesus with God. As Most High, God supremely reigns over all creation. The Old Testament foretold that the Son of God would inherit everything—“the nations” and “the ends of the earth” (Ps. 2:7-9). And that the Son of God would come from the line of David according to the covenant God made with David in Psalm 89:26-29. As a descendant of King David, Jesus would inherit David’s throne, continuing the king’s just rule on earth (Isa. 9:7; Dan.7:14).

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In His covenant with David (Ps. 89:29), God also revealed that the Davidic dynasty would endure forever. Verse 33 makes a connection with that covenant, confirming that Jesus' reign as Messiah and King would be eternal: "His kingdom will have no end." The Old Testament view of the Messiah ruling in a kingly office would be fulfilled by Jesus.

Jesus: A Savior for Us (Matt. 1:18-21)

Matthew appropriately portrayed Jesus as the unique Son of God. His Gospel starts with Jesus' genealogy. Matthew's purpose is clear in his painstaking documentation of Joseph's family tree: to serve as proof to unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

After listing Jesus' earthly lineage, Matthew delves into the facts and events surrounding Jesus birth. Mary's Child wouldn't be ordinary. Matthew's goal was to convince Jews that Jesus was God's virgin-born Son and the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

Matthew began his account of Jesus' birth with the angel of the Lord speaking to Joseph in a dream. The angel of the Lord typically identified with God. Several people in Scripture responded with great fear upon interacting with the angel of the Lord. They believed they would die because they had seen God (Jdgs. 6:22-23, 13:21-22).

As God's messenger, the angel notified Joseph that he would become Jesus' legal father. A carpenter by trade, Joseph was a descendant of David (Matt. 1:6). Joseph and Mary were "engaged" (v. 18). Jewish marriages during ancient times consisted of three phases: engagement, betrothal, and marriage. The engagement was usually arranged by the parents of a young boy and a young girl. Later, the girl could refuse marriage when the time approached for betrothal. However, once she consented to the marriage she formally entered into a commitment—the betrothal—for one year. During this time, the girl continued living in her parents' home, but the couple was deemed husband and wife. They shared no sexual intimacy during this span of time. Unfaithfulness during a betrothal was tantamount to adultery. When the year's timeframe was completed, the marriage was official; the bride went to live with her husband. When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he and Mary were betrothed. This is confirmed by verse 19 because of the mention of divorce.

He decided he would secretly divorce her. After deciding on a private divorce, Joseph was visited by the angel of the Lord in a dream (v. 20). Others in ancient times had received divine revelation by an angel while they were dreaming (Matt. 2:12, 13, 19-20, 22). Today, believers get revelation from God through His Word, through the Holy Spirit, through preachers, and even during worship. Referring to Joseph as "son of David," the angel gave clear instructions to Joseph: he should not divorce Mary. Moreover, he should continue through the final phase of marriage. After Joseph received guidance from the angel about not entering into divorce, the angel explained the reason. Mary's pregnancy was the work of the Holy Spirit. The angel instructed Joseph to name the Child "Jesus" because His special purpose would be to save His people from their sins (v. 21).

Jesus: God with Us (Matt. 1:22-23)

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Matthew may have hinted toward Old Testament prophecy with his reference to Joseph as the son of David or by providing Jesus' detailed genealogy. But in verse 22, he makes it plain. He directly states that Jesus would "fulfill" prophecy. The word *fulfill* gives the impression of completion. Matthew uses the term more than 60 times in his Gospel alone. Surely his intent was to indubitably show his readers that Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecy.

Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy quoted in verse 23. Isaiah had declared that a virgin would conceive, birth a son, and name Him "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

Jesus is not only described as God. He is God. He does the works of God: creating (John 1:1-3), redeeming (Titus 2:13-14), judging humankind (2 Cor. 5:10), and more. All of these works are attributed to God elsewhere in Scripture (Ps. 42:5; Titus 3:4-5; Ps. 50:6). And today, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Jesus is the believer's Immanuel. He is with us and cares about our everyday affairs.