



SESSION 3

MARY'S TRUST

▶ **The Point**

Embrace God's call on your life.

▶ **The Passage**

Luke 1:26-38

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Let's admit it, we interact with things every day we're clueless about, but we trust them anyway. Perhaps one of these applies to you: Many of us don't understand how an internal combustion engine works, but we still trust our cars to get us around; You may not comprehend electricity with its ohms, amps, volts, and watts, but you still turn the lights on; The technology behind cell phones and Wi-Fi befuddles most of us, yet we still log on and send a text or an email. I felt clueless in college. I did not even know what a "major" was, but I felt the pressure to figure out what I wanted to do for the next fifty years. I was clueless, but I asked God to show me what He was engineering for my life. I asked and I trusted.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, surely didn't understand what was about to happen in her life, but she trusted. We see in her experience that, even without fully comprehending everything in God's plan, we can trust and embrace what He wants us to do.

▶ **The Setting**

While Matthew's Gospel tells of Jesus' birth from Joseph's point of view, Luke's Gospel looks more from Mary's point of view. Therefore, Luke began with the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth, Mary's relative. The supernatural birth of Jesus was preceded by the supernatural birth of His forerunner. John's birth was supernatural because Elizabeth was old and barren; Jesus' birth was supernatural because Mary was a virgin. God's gospel plan was coming on the wings of these miraculous events descending upon Israel.

What does the Bible say?

Favored woman (v. 28)—
Based on the Greek word for grace, it describes a recipient of great grace rather than a person who has earned standing of her own.

Deeply troubled (v. 29)—
An intense concern based upon perplexing or troubling circumstances.

Overshadow (v. 35)—
Conveys the idea of the holy presence of God, such as the cloud that covered the tabernacle (see Ex. 40:35) and the mount of transfiguration. (See Matt. 17:5.)

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

27 to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you."

29 But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be.

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 name him 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 had sexual relations 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.

36 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.

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-30 Commentary

[Verse 26] Luke's story of Jesus' birth starts with a barren woman named Elizabeth, who miraculously conceived a child with her husband, Zechariah. (See Luke 1:5-25.) Their child would prove to be the forerunner of Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist. Luke located the announcement that Mary would have a child as **the sixth month**. This is not a reference to the sixth month of the year but the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John. At that time, Mary had a heavenly visitor, the angel Gabriel, who had also announced Elizabeth's upcoming pregnancy to Zechariah. (See v. 19.) There Gabriel is described as one who "stands in the presence of God." God's presence was coming to Mary through one of His messengers, an angel **sent by God**, who made two big announcements in Luke 1. The angel found Mary in **Galilee**, the territory north of Samaria that contained the city of **Nazareth**, a small village about 70 miles northeast of Jerusalem. |

[Verses 27-28] Gabriel came to deliver a message **to a virgin**, a woman who had not engaged in sexual relations. Mary was **engaged** to be married, a Jewish process more legally binding than modern engagement because it required a formal divorce to be broken. However, the couple did not participate in sexual relations until the marriage was finalized. Joseph was **of the house of David**. Thus, when Joseph "adopted" Jesus, it meant Jesus also was legally from the lineage of David, fulfilling prophecies God had made to David about an eternal place on the throne for his descendants. (See 2 Sam. 7:16.) Gabriel delivered typical greetings based on the same root as the next word, **avored woman**. By calling her **avored woman**, Gabriel identified her as the recipient of grace. She had done nothing to gain God's favor and give birth to the Messiah. Rather, God had poured His grace upon her by giving her that opportunity. In addition to highlighting God's grace, the angel also emphasized the presence of God: **"the Lord is with you."** Before God ever called Mary to be part of His plan, He assured her His presence was with her.

[Verses 29-30] Mary felt **deeply troubled** by the angel's statement. Zechariah had feared the angel (see Luke 1:12), but Mary's concern was more with the saying she was highly favored. Why would the angel greet her with such an exalted greeting? Grace is often hard to understand in a world that mostly operates on merit. Seeing an angel was enough to stir one up, but hearing the angel pronounce you as favored by God is even more perplexing. Mary wondered what kind of greeting the angel had given to her. Gabriel told Mary not to **be afraid**. Gabriel reminded her she had **found favor** with God. The word **favor** is the usual word for grace. Nothing is said before or after the announcement about Mary's piety or ability to curry favor from God. She was God's sovereign choice to bring the Messiah into the world. Her job was to rely on the presence of the Lord and receive His grace in her life. We too have a similar job, regardless of what God has prepared for us in His kingdom.

Luke 1:31-34 Commentary

[Verse 31] This verse echoes Isaiah 7:14's prophecy of Jesus' birth. Mary would **conceive and give birth to a son**, as Isaiah had said. Gabriel's words were consistent with the words of God to Isaiah. In Gabriel's conversation with Zechariah, the angel had given the name John to the elderly parents. (See v. 13.) Gabriel was also the one to tell Mary her baby's name would be Jesus. Isaiah had said the child would be named Immanuel, meaning, "God is with us." Jesus means, "the Lord is salvation" or "the Lord saves." Both names are fitting of Jesus' role in the plan of God.

[Verses 32-33] Gabriel revealed four realities about Jesus. First, He would **be great**. Zechariah was told the same thing about John the Baptist. (See v. 15.) John's greatness centered upon his calling to be separate from the world and set apart for the Holy Spirit, but Jesus' greatness would be unfolded in the other three realities mentioned in these verses. Second, Jesus' greatness came from the fact He was **the Son of the Most High**. **Most High** is a typical reference to the God of Israel. (See 1:35,76; 6:35; Acts 7:48.) Zechariah's prophecy over John referred to his son as a *prophet* of the Most High (see Luke 1:76), but the angel referred to Jesus as the *Son* of the **Most High**. Jesus was uniquely different than John or any other being ever born on the earth.

A third reality highlighted by Gabriel was that God would give Jesus **the throne of his father David**. God had promised David an eternal reign (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16), and Jesus stepped in as the Messiah who would fulfill that role. As the Son of God and the Messiah from the line of David, Jesus would establish a kingdom that would be both spiritual and everlasting. The final reality about Jesus in this passage is that Jesus would **reign over the house of Jacob forever**. This was a typical way of referring to the kingdom of Israel. But unlike other earthly rulers, Jesus' kingdom would have no end. Saints in the Old Testament had longed for such a kingdom (see Isa. 9:6; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 4:7), and now that would become a reality in Jesus.

[Verse 34] Mary moved from being perplexed (see Luke 1:28) to being curious about how she could have a child. She asked, **"How can this be?"** It would be enough to wonder how her child could be the Messiah and the initiator of an eternal kingdom, much less how her child could be the Son of the Most High. These grand visions of what her child would be could have caused anyone to question. But that was not what had her questioning. The part that perplexed her was that as a virgin, she had not had sexual relations. She was engaged to Joseph, but they had not completed the marriage ceremony, much less consummated the marriage. Unlike Zechariah, Mary did not doubt the angel or ask for a sign to prove its veracity. She accepted the pronouncement but asked for more information of how it could happen. She trusted in the plan of God, even when it was difficult to understand how it could happen.

Luke 1:35-38 Commentary

[Verse 35] In response to Mary's request for more information, Gabriel encouraged her to trust in the power of God. First, he explained that the Holy Spirit would **come upon** her. The language avoided the connotation of mating with God or sexual relations. Rather it reflected the creative power and work of the Holy Spirit. Second, the **Most High** would **overshadow** Mary. The word carried the idea of the holy, mighty presence of the Lord. The idea describes the way the cloud covered the tabernacle when it was filled with God's glory (see Ex. 40:35) and the mount of transfiguration when God revealed He was pleased with His Son. (See Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34.) The result of the Spirit's activity in Mary's life would be a child who was human but also **the Son of God**. Only God's power could produce such a miracle in Mary, and it was difficult for her to comprehend.

[Verses 36-37] As an example of the power of God, Gabriel cited the miracle God had done in Mary's relative Elizabeth. God had opened her womb even though she was barren and advanced beyond the age of childbearing. Doubtless she and Zechariah had tried unsuccessfully through the prime years of her youth, but she probably had long ago given up hope she would have a child. Despite everything working against Elizabeth, she was now in her **sixth month** of pregnancy. God was calling upon Mary to trust in His power. The angel of the Lord made an incredible pronouncement to Mary: **For nothing will be impossible with God**. This was not the first time an expression like this was spoken. Abraham and Sarah (see Gen. 18:14), Jeremiah (see Jer. 32:27), Job (see Job 42:2), and later Jesus' disciples (see Matt. 19:26) heard similar words. These examples of the power of God encourage us to believe in the power of God more than our own senses.

[Verse 38] Mary responded favorably to the angel's pronouncement: **"I am the Lord's servant."** She surrendered to His plan and purpose for her life. Who was she to question the God who was present and so full of grace? Her simple surrender to the Lord despite the consequences was impressive. Mary responded simply, **"May it be done to me."** Her service to the Lord was not a begrudging obedience to the will of God but a joyous surrender. Mary's attitude mirrored Hannah's in the Old Testament when the barren woman surrendered her will to God's will. (See 1 Sam. 1:18.) Both women were committed to what God wanted to do in their lives.

Mary said God could do with her **"according to your word."** The word of the angel was the Word of God, and she joyfully submitted to God's Word in her life. Her joyful submission was followed by the words, **the angel left her**. Gabriel's purpose was done. He had announced the birth of Jesus and prepared Mary for the changes that were about to take place in her body and in her life. She would have to trust God. His presence was with her through the Holy Spirit.

Read the article "Zechariah and Elizabeth" in the Winter 2018–2019 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Nazareth in the First Century" (Spring 2017), "Mary, a Woman with God's Favor" (Spring 2015), "Of Marrying Age" (Winter 2011-2012), and "Angels as Heralds of God" (Winter 2008-2009) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 36 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications.



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Commit.** Commit your fears to God. Write a list of fears you struggle with. One by one, prayerfully commit them to the Lord.
- ▶ **Obey.** If you feel you're facing an impossible situation, maybe there's a step of obedience that needs to be your first step. Meditate on the verse: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).
- ▶ **Serve.** Mary's response was one of a servant. Do you see yourself as a servant of God? Ask God to open your eyes to a way you can serve someone. Look for ways to live out your calling by yielding your rights and living as God's servant.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 36 of the PSG:

There are circumstances in life that will certainly catch us by surprise. It's good to know that the One in whom we trust is never caught off guard. He can be trusted with our lives!

PRAY: Conclude by asking the Lord for wisdom for each group member to hear His call and to have the courage to respond as Mary did. Thank Him for the example that Mary has given us.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

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