



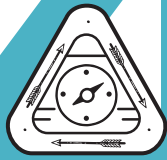
This week's **FOCUS**

If we are honest, we've all received both bad and good gifts. You may have been given socks when you really wanted an iPad. Sometimes the gifts we think are going to be great end up breaking and the gifts we thought were lame end up being really useful. It's hard to know the true value of any gift when simply looking at its face value. This was perhaps never more true than when Mary learned she was about to receive the gift of a child. Initially, Mary surely worried about the social problems that would arise from explaining her pregnancy. The child Mary would give birth to was God's Son, the promised Messiah who would fulfill God's plan of redemption—the very best gift of all.

Central **TRUTH**

Jesus is God's promised Messiah. He ultimately fulfills God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

D4



EXPLORATION

Luke 1:26-38

*Begin by reading
through the
passage.*

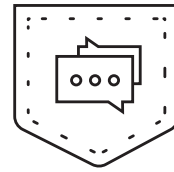
26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was deeply 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.

.01 WITHOUT SHARING THE GIVER'S NAME, WHAT IS THE WORST CHRISTMAS GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED? WHY DIDN'T YOU LIKE IT?

Talk it out

.02 WHAT IS THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT YOU HAVE EVER RECEIVED? WHY WAS IT SO GREAT?

CONVERSATION



Luke 1:26-29

.03 HOW DID GABRIEL GREET MARY (V. 28)? WHAT WAS SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THIS GREETING?

.04 WHY DO YOU THINK MARY WAS TROUBLED (V. 29) BEFORE SHE HEARD THE NEWS FROM GABRIEL?

.05 HOW DO YOU THINK MARY WOULD HAVE FELT ABOUT BEING PREGNANT IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IN ANCIENT ISRAEL? WHAT DIFFICULTIES DID SHE FACE AS A RESULT OF THIS NEWS?



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Luke here calls Nazareth a “town.” It was off the main trade routes and was relatively small in comparison to Jerusalem, where Gabriel’s previous appearance foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist had taken place. According to John 1:46, it must have had a reputation for being insignificant. And yet, this is the place God chose for Jesus, the Messiah, to grow up. The choice of Nazareth, however, should not surprise us as it is in keeping with the upside-down nature of Christ’s kingdom (see Phil. 2:5-11).

Luke 1:30-33

.06 HOW DID THE ANGEL RESPOND TO MARY’S FEARS (V. 30)? WHAT HAD MARY DONE TO FIND FAVOR WITH GOD?

Reflect and respond.

04

.07 HOW DID THE ANGEL DESCRIBE THE CHILD MARY WAS GOING TO GIVE BIRTH TO (VV. 31-33)? WHY WAS THIS SUCH GOOD NEWS?

Luke 1:34-38

.08 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT MARY FROM HER QUESTION IN VERSE 34 AND HER STATEMENT IN VERSE 38? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

.09 HOW DID GABRIEL ANSWER MARY'S QUESTION (VV. 35-37)? HOW MIGHT THIS HAVE EMPOWERED MARY TO EMBRACE GOD'S PLAN?

.10 WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM MARY'S EXAMPLE? ABOUT TRUSTING GOD'S WORD? ABOUT EMBRACING THE MISSION GOD HAS GIVEN US?

*Journal your
response here.*



LITERARY CONTEXT

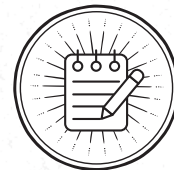
Popular culture's depiction of angels as cute winged babies or friendly strangers leave most people with misconceptions about angels. According to the Bible, angels are personal spiritual beings with intelligence, emotions, and wills. Angels that are servants of God (there are fallen angels such as Satan and the demons) are often seen ministering to people (Gen. 21:17, 18:2, 19:16, 31:11). However, angels in the Bible are also seen carrying out God's judgment on people for their sin (Gen. 19:13; Ex. 12:23; 1 Chron. 21:15-16). And furthermore, when God's people had encounters with the angel of the Lord, their hearts were filled with fear (Ex. 3:1-6; Jude 6:11-23; Judg. 13:21-22).



CENTRAL TRUTH

Jesus is God's promised Messiah. He ultimately fulfills God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

NOW WHAT?



.11 HOW HAS YOUR HEART OR THE HEART OF SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU BEEN TROUBLED LATELY? HOW MIGHT REMINDING OURSELVES AND OTHERS OF GOD'S PROMISES HELP US IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLE?

.12 HOW DID GOD'S PLAN IN MARY'S LIFE CHANGE EVERYTHING? HOW DO YOU SEE GOD WORKING IN YOUR LIFE TODAY?

How does this apply to your life?

.13 HOW DID KNOWING NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD EMPOWER MARY? HOW DOES THIS TRUTH COMFORT OR EMPOWER YOU TO EMBRACE THE MISSION TO GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES (MATT. 28:18-20)?

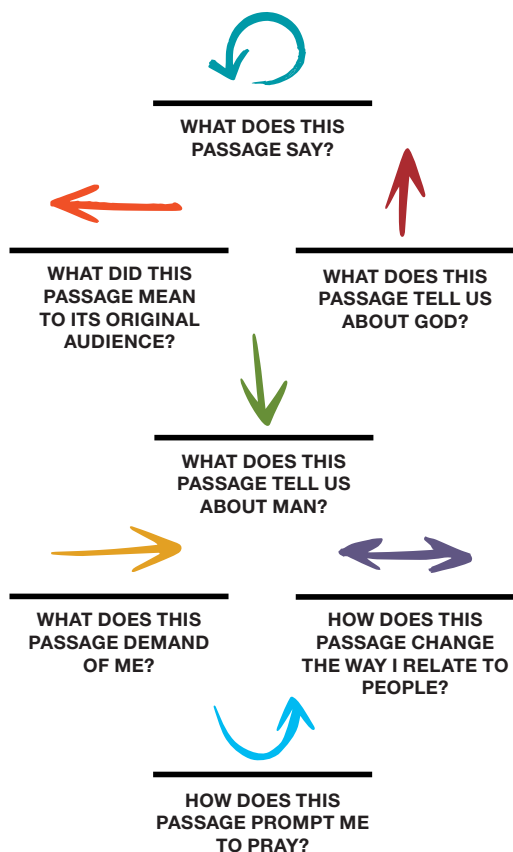
.14 IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU NEED TO TRUST GOD AND SUBMIT TO HIM LIKE MARY DID? HOW MIGHT WE ENCOURAGE FRIENDS, PEERS, AND OTHERS?



Daily DEVOTIONS

Choose five days this week to set aside time to dig deeper into God's Word with the following Daily Devotions. We hope you'll make this a priority and encourage others in your group to do so as well.

7 Arrows FOR BIBLE READING



Day One LUKE 1:26-38

Dwell

While she was initially troubled by her meeting with the angel Gabriel, Mary fully submitted to God's will and plan (v. 38). Her son, Jesus, would be the promised Messiah who would fulfill God's promise to establish His forever kingdom on earth.



.01 HOW DID GABRIEL DESCRIBE WHO JESUS WAS AND WHAT HE CAME TO EARTH TO DO?



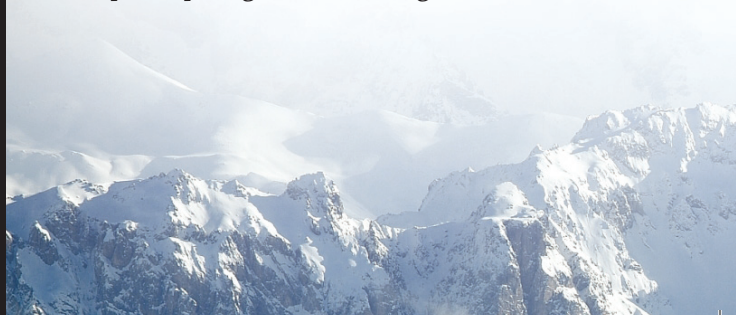
.02 WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU, LIKE MARY, TO SUBMIT TO YOUR ROLE IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM?

Memorize

Write Luke 1:33 on a note card and tape it to your bathroom mirror.

Pray

Ask God to help you submit to His will and His plan for your life. Pray that He would give you a heart for building and participating in Christ's kingdom.



Day Two

LUKE 1:39-56

Dwell



.01 HOW DID MARY RESPOND TO THE PROMISE THAT SHE WOULD GIVE BIRTH TO THE MESSIAH?



.02 WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM MARY'S HEART AND ATTITUDE EXEMPLIFIED IN HER PRAYER OF PRAISE?

Mary was overwhelmed by God's grace in choosing her to participate in the coming of King Jesus, and also by the promise that God's kingdom was indeed coming to earth. However, such thoughts did not fill her heart with pride, but with humility. She was overwhelmed by the undeserved kindness of God.

Memorize

Read Luke 1:33 aloud several times today and write it out in your journal as you strive to commit it to memory.

Pray

Write a list of attributes of God that you are grateful for and write out your own prayer of praise.

Day Three

GENESIS 30:22-24

Dwell



.01 WHAT DOES VERSE 22 TELL US GOD DID? WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT HIM?



.02 HOW SHOULD KNOWING THAT GOD SEES WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH AND PROMISES TO BE WITH YOU CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE? HOW SHOULD IT CHANGE HOW WE PRAY?

God remembered Rachel (v. 22). This is what theologians call an “anthropomorphism.” The Bible is describing God in human terms for our benefit even though He is far greater than any human. It is not as though He suddenly stopped and recalled that Rachel was barren. God remembered in the sense that He looked on her situation and chose to bless her with what her heart desired most.

Memorize

Recall Luke 1:33 as you walk or exercise. Consider recording the verse or using an app to read it aloud to you.

Pray

Thank God for remembering you in your sin by sending you a Savior.

Day Four

GENESIS 30:25-36

Dwell

Laban and Jacob's relationship was marked by tension from the very beginning when Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah first, and then worked it to where he got 14 years of labor out of him. Understandably, Jacob would want to get some space between the two of them. Here we see God keep His promise to extend the promise of Abraham to Jacob (Gen. 28:14).



.01 WHY WAS LABAN HESITANT TO LET JACOB LEAVE? WHY DID JACOB WANT TO SEPARATE FROM LABAN?



.02 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD FROM THE FACT THAT HE BLESSED THOSE WHO BLESSED JACOB (SEE GEN. 12:1-3 AND 28:14)?

Memorize

Ask a friend or family member to quiz you on Luke 1:33. Continue to practice reciting it from memory.

Pray

Ask God to open your eyes to the various ways He has been faithful to you and to your family. Thank Him for His many undeserved blessings in your life.

Day Five

GENESIS 30:37-43

Dwell

Jacob and Laban's contentious relationship continued as Jacob attempted to control the breeding process of Laban's flocks of sheep and goats so as to benefit himself. This is an odd story—there was nothing about the sticks that Jacob placed beside the watering troughs that should have had any impact on the flocks, and yet the strong animals kept winding up in Jacob's care and the weak in Laban's.



.01 HOW DID JACOB END UP BECOMING WEALTHY? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS WAS?



.02 WHETHER YOU HAVE A LOT OR A LITTLE, HOW DOES GOD WANT YOU TO USE THE THINGS HE HAS GIVEN YOU?

Memorize

Treasure God's Word in your heart (Ps. 119:11), and continue to reflect on Luke 1:33 in the days and months to come.

Pray

Ask God to help you be responsible with the gifts, talents, and resources He has given you. Pray that you would use them for His glory.