

Title: An Unbelievable Message

Text: Luke 1:26–38

Advent, (from Latin adventus, “coming”), in the Christian church calendar, the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas and also of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.

Dec 3 - An Unbelievable Message (Luke 1:26-38)

Dec 10 - A Magnificent Song (Luke 1:39-56)

Dec 17 - An Extraordinary Birth (Luke 2:1-7)

Dec 24 - An Unexpected Welcome (Luke 2:8-21)

When a friend urgently texted Florida mom Stacey Philpot about a Facebook post she just had to see, she wasn't sure what to expect. The post showed a teenage boy standing alone at the flagpole, and it seemed as if everyone had something to say about him. And that's when it hit Stacey - she was looking at her son!

SHOW PIC

As a blogger, Stacey Philpot spends a good amount of time online. So, she decided to take a little break from Facebook. But then a friend sent her an urgent text about a post Stacey "wouldn't want to miss."

The post showed a boy standing alone at the flagpole praying as part of See You At The Pole Day.

This yearly event encourages students everywhere to gather at their school's flagpole to pray for their school, friends, families, churches, and communities. Usually, the event draws a crowd. But at Minneola High School, only one young man turned up. The brave boy stood all alone, praying by himself. - <https://www.godupdates.com/inspirational-stories-of-faith-and-hope/>

This kid had a big-hearted faith in a God who answers prayer. His fear did not stop him from obeying God to be a young man of prayer.

After all God's word says...

Colossians 4:2 ESV

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

This young man knew God's message and obeyed it. God was glorified, and many people were blessed.

I know of another teenager who received a message from God, believed it, and obeyed it at great personal cost. God was glorified, and millions of people are blessed even to this day because of her obedience.

I'm sure many of you have heard of her - Mary, the mother of Jesus.

But before she became known for her auspicious role in the incarnation, she was a simple, godly young woman (14-16) years old.

And this young lady was so full of faith in her God that regardless of the message, she was all in on following His will.

There is much we can learn from this girl. I hope to have the level of faith she had.

Main Idea: God's Message Should Lead to Big Hearted Faith Not Small-Minded Fear !

What do I mean?

The situation Mary finds herself in can teach us a lot on how difficult it can be to be a person of faith...

1. God's Messages Can Be Perplexing (Verses 26-29)

Luke 1:26-29 ESV

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, **O favored one, the Lord is with you!**" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

Okay, so I've had strange things happen to me at different times throughout my life. Inexplicable things. But I have NEVER had an angel show up and talk with me personally.

Frankly, this kind of thing doesn't happen in the bible very often. In fact, throughout the entire bible, spanning some 1600 years, there are only 35-40 accounts of angels interacting with humans. That's not a lot.

So, one can conjecture that when God does send an Angel (messenger), it is very important indeed.

"In the sixth month" is in reference to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

And as if that were not significant enough (an old woman giving birth to the forerunner of the Messiah), God sent Gabriel to deliver a very important message.

He had just delivered a message to Zachariah about Elizabeth's future birth of a baby boy to be named John ([Luke 1:19](#))

And now the Angel had even more important news. News that any good Jew would delight in hearing.

Every Jew longed for the Messiah to deliver them. And finally, the deliverer was on his way.

Gabriel was sent from God - What an amazing thought this is. He left the throne room of heaven to a town with not a great reputation to have a very special meeting with a certain young lady.

Luke 1:27 ESV

to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

Her virginity was prophesied about in [Isaiah 7:14](#)

Isaiah 7:14 ESV

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

This virgin - Mary was betrothed. What does this mean? She was legally bound to Joseph for all intents and purposes, so technically, she was his wife. Their betrothal was as binding as marriage is today.

There was a betrothal period in which the husband would prepare for his bride, and then at the end of this period, he would come and collect her to bring her to the home he had prepared for her.

This is very similar to what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing. He is preparing a place for his bride, and He will, at the end of his betrothal period, come and take her away to be with him always.

Important point - There was absolutely no sexual intimacy happening during the betrothal period. That did not happen until after at their official wedding ceremony.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Joseph was of the **"House of David."** this would come in handy later for Jesus because of his adoption by Joseph. He would have a legal connection to the throne of David. This was a must for any would-be Messiah.

Gabriel greeted Mary, and no surprise here, she was **PERPLEXED!** This is a great word, and it means greatly troubled.

Frankly, you would be as well. If an angel of the Lord showed up to you, you would be strongly tempted to worship such a glorious being.

Gabriel greets her as the **"favored one,"** and she is. After all, even though she didn't know it, she would be the first person to **carry the gospel.**

Sometimes, God doesn't make sense to our finite, faithless brains. While God doesn't send us Angels to communicate His Will to us, He has given us His Word. And sometimes, there are perplexing and troublesome things in his Word that are difficult for us to grasp. Things like eternity, trinity, substitutionary atonement. These are difficult teachings that can leave us perplexed.

But even more perplexing than difficult doctrines are the areas of obedience that we are to follow. These passages can be significantly bothersome.

Maybe things like loving your neighbor as much as you love yourself are perplexing and troublesome for you. Or loving God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Things like these that we know we are called to do but struggle to obey God.

It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand. - Mark Twain

Mary would prove to be a faithful follower of Christ, regardless of the cost. She longed for the Messiah and was about to discover that she would play a crucial role in His arrival. The exciting thing is that she would demonstrate the faith to obey God in one of the most significant ways possible.

Review - God's Message Should Lead to Big-Hearted Faith, Not Small-Minded Fear!

- God's Messages Can Be Perplexing

2. God's Messages Can Be Overwhelming (Verses 30-33)

Luke 1:30–33 ESV

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

God's messages can be overwhelming!

First of all, Gabriel must have been a bit intimidating because he first tells Mary, **"Do not be afraid."** I mean, have you read the descriptions of angels in the bible? Multiple wings, and eyes, so brilliant people are tempted to worship them. I have to believe they are terrifying.

But Gabriel, regardless of his appearance, wants to comfort this young girl and let her know that the faithful life she has led has not escaped the notice of God. What an amazing title to receive - *"found favor with God."*

Do you live with that goal in mind? I mean, I know we who are in Christ are saved by faith in Christ, and there is nothing we can do to deserve his gracious offer of salvation, also there is nothing we can do to lose it.

That being said, do you live your life in a way that pleases God?

2 Corinthians 5:9 ESV

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

This was the life of Mary, and God, through Gabriel, commended her for it.

After this beautiful greeting, a disquieting prediction.

"You will become pregnant and have a son and you will name Him Jesus."

Gabriel goes on to make it clear who this son will be.

- **He will be great** - Every mom thinks their child is amazing, gifted, and well above average. But in Jesus' case - God says this is so of Him.

- **He will be called the Son of the Most High** - A Clear reference to God Himself

Acts 7:48 ESV

Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

2 Chronicles 2:6 ESV

But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him?

- **He will have the throne of David** - Jesus was not only David's legal descendant through his adoption through Joseph, but Jesus was also David's physical descendant through Mary's line.
- **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever** – Eternality of Jesus = divinity
- **He will reign over a kingdom that will never end** -

Can you imagine being a 14 -16-year-old girl taking in this kind of information? That you will not only become pregnant, but your child will be the long-awaited messiah who also happens to be the Son of God - God very God Himself!

I think the word OVERWHELMING is insufficient.

Chosen by God for a task that will dramatically shift not only her current plans but also her entire future. She would never be the same.

Frankly, when we sign on to follow Christ, we should expect a radical departure from where we thought our lives would head verses where God will inevitably send them.

Trusting God's will for our lives will change the trajectory of our lives! And by the way the trajectory is often very difficult!

Jim Elliot's life changed dramatically as he followed the will of God...

Listen to the words of his wife after he was martyred...

"Christians ought to be the people most ready to face reality. And yet, how evasive we are. How many people came up to me after my husband died and said something about my husband passing away? Isn't that just plain silly for a Christian? He didn't pass away. He was caught up to glory. He died. As far as I'm concerned, he's gone. Period. I'm not going to see him again, not the flesh, not going to sleep with him again, not going to be able to feel that body that I knew every inch of. That's the reality. The Christian looks at the visible world and recognizes that the whole interpretation of what we see is in the unseen world, the invisible. I said to you, look higher! Don't be looking at your circumstances, feeling so sorry for yourself and having a little pity party and sitting down and wallowing in a heap of misery. Look higher. Lift up your heart. Lift up your hands. Receive the gift of God! – Elizabeth Elliot.

Is God asking you to do something difficult? Will it change the trajectory of your life? Is it causing fear in your heart?

Well, be not afraid. How can I say this? Let me give you some good reasons.

- **God's Character can be trusted.**
- **God's plan is the best plan for your life - no matter what!**
- **In the end, you will not be disappointed with your reward for serving Christ!**

Matthew 5:12 ESV

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Your new trajectory may be uncomfortable, but take it from me: you will not regret following the will of the Father. Especially when that amazing day comes, and you hear the voice of your Savior say, **"Well done my good and faithful servant."**

You can NEVER go wrong by trusting the Lord!

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- God's Messages Can Be Perplexing
- God's Messages Can Be Overwhelming

3. God's Messages Can Seem Unbelievable (Verses 34-37)

After all this information was dumped on her, Mary, understandably, asked a question.

Luke 1:34 ESV

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

This question wasn't born out of disbelief or a lack of faith. Rather, it came from a heart of curiosity. She legitimately is wondering how she could conceive a child without ever having sex with a man.

I think that is a fair question, seeing how this is an unprecedented claim!

An UNBELIEVABLE idea, to say the least.

There is a lesson here: Just because we don't or can't understand something God says doesn't make it untrue or impossible.

I don't understand trigonometry. That doesn't mean it is false. It just means I'm not bright enough to comprehend the complexities of the formulaic structure of this mathematical system.

God's ways are way outside our ways. He can do things that do not adhere to the structures and systems of this world. His ways are outside this world. And when His ways, which are outside our world, intersect with our world, there is a special word for this - MIRACLE!

Listen to how God will override the world's natural order in Mary's life...

Luke 1:35–37 ESV

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Just like the Holy Spirit hovered over the earth in the creation narrative, so God will hover over Mary's womb, and the physical body of the Christ will be conceived thus infused with the Second person of the Trinity! Now, an entire class could be taught on this event and its significance.

But listen to the words of S. Michael Houdmann...

Only God can make something out of nothing; only God could perform the miracles of creation, the incarnation, and the virgin birth.

The virgin birth is important in that it preserves the truth that Jesus is fully God and fully man at the same time. His physical body He received from Mary. But His eternal, holy nature was His from all eternity past (see John 6:69). Joseph the carpenter did not pass on his sinful nature to Jesus for the simple reason that Joseph was not the father. Jesus had no sin nature (Hebrews 7:26). - S. Michael Houdmann (gotquestions.org)

This child will be like no other. He is 100% God very God and 100% man. This is called the hypostatic union. The dual nature of Christ. And it is his sinless human nature coupled with the eternal sinless nature of God that enables him to be called *"Holy - the Son of God."*

"The nativity mystery "conceived from the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary", means, that God became human, truly human out of his own grace. The miracle of the existence of Jesus, his "climbing down of God" is: Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary! Here is a human being, the Virgin Mary, and as he comes from God, Jesus comes also from this human being. Born of the Virgin Mary means a human origin for God. Jesus Christ is not only truly God, he is human like every one of us. He is human without limitation. He is not only similar to us, he is like us."
— **Karl Barth**, *Dogmatics in Outline*

Gabriel also mentions that the mother of the forerunner (John the Baptist), is six months along in her pregnancy. While this conception was not as miraculous as Mary's, it was spectacular because Elizabeth was well past childbearing years.

Luke 1:36 ESV

And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

Now, it is very interesting to note her relation to Mary.

The text says - *"...your relative Elizabeth."*

It seems most reasonable to regard the genealogy of [Luke 3:23–28](#) as Mary's. This would make her a direct descendant of David. Yet, Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. Therefore, Mary must have been related to Elizabeth through her mother, who would have been of Aaronic descent. Thus, Mary was a descendant of David through her father. The MacArthur Study Bible (Chapter 1)

But here is the point. Hearing from God in His Word can be unbelievable unless you truly have faith to believe that God can accomplish anything He wills.

God willed for Elizabeth, in her old age to bear her son, John. And it happened.

God willed that Mary would conceive without a man and that she would bear the Savior of the world. And it happened.

Why?

Luke 1:37 ESV

For nothing will be impossible with God."

By the way, that phrase is the same one used in [Genesis 18:14](#) When God promised Sarah would have a child in her old age.

God loves confounding the wisdom of the wise!

I can imagine as Mary was processing all that Gabriel was telling her, that she was feeling a bit overwhelmed because this was so unbelievable.

I mean, think about it. How would she tell her parents?

What would the town's people think?

In a shame culture, how would she and Joseph show their faces?

This would impact their lives very negatively on many levels.

If Mary were like me, I would think through all the possible outcomes of my decision. And that would cause great overwhelm, anxiety, and worry.

But would Mary listen to the wise words of the Angel of God?

Would she trust that her God is the God of the impossible?

In ancient Egypt, under a cruel edict, a Hebrew mother faced an impossible decision: to save her newborn son, Moses, from certain death. With faith stronger than fear, she crafted a papyrus basket, sealing it against the waters of the Nile. Gently, she placed her precious child among the river's reeds, entrusting his fate to God's hands. As she watched from a distance, her heart

heavy with hope and trust, she set a powerful example of unwavering faith in God amidst the most daunting circumstances.

God delivered that baby Moses. His Mother, who let him go down the Nile, was actually asked by Pharaoh's daughter to feed and care for this boy - her own son!

God's ways are not our ways. His way is way better! Always!

God is amazing - *"For nothing is impossible for God."*

What is overwhelming you these days?

If you are in Christ, your biggest problem, being an enemy of God, is solved! That's amazing. You have no reason to be overwhelmed with your relationship with God or where you will spend eternity.

And if God has solved your biggest problem, don't you think you can trust Him with your lesser problems? Whatever they might be?

Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Psalm 55:22 ESV

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

The point is this. God, in his word, might be calling us to believe something that seems unbelievable. But remember, this God is the God of the impossible! He can handle your unbelief.

But I think there is one last thing that we can learn from Mary that will help us overcome the unbelievable...

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- God's Messages Can Seem Unbelievable

4. God's Messages Must Be Received in Humble Faith (Verse 38)

Luke 1:38 ESV

*And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."
And the angel departed from her.*

What an amazing declaration from this young woman of faith.

Mary didn't have any claim on her own life. She recognized to whom she belonged.

δούλη = Slave, bondservant

κυρίου = Master, Yahweh

"Listen! I am only a slave of the Great I AM."

Now, I want to remind you of the seriousness of her decision.

- This was an exceedingly embarrassing situation for her to be placed in.
- The stigma of being an unwed mother.
- Joseph would have to raise a child that was not his.
- She would wear the Scarlet Letter A for adultery. By the way, the Jewish Law required stoning for such behavior. ([Deut 22:13-21](#))

This was a remarkably humiliating situation for her to be placed in.

She had all of this and more stacked up against her, and what was her response?

Luke 1:38 (ESV)

...let it be to me according to your word."

Wow! What a towering spiritual giant in the body of a teenage girl!

After this breathtaking response, Gabriel's job with Mary was complete. And so, he left her.

What a report he must have given in Heaven to his fellow Angels expressing his awe for a human girl, so tender in age, who stood ready to obey the Father's will.

Do you stand ready to heed the will of the Father?

My friend, Larry Norman, the former Ottawa County Jail Chaplain said this in a sermon I once heard him preach in regard to the will of God.

He said this, **"We KNOW far more than we DO!"**

Those words have always convicted me in my heart. Thank the Lord our salvation is not based on what we do, but instead, it is based on what He did!

However, as a follower of Christ, I am expected to do as a demonstration of my faith in Christ.

James 1:21-22 ESV

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Mary heard the Word of God, the perplexing, overwhelming, unbelievable Word of God, and she received it in humble faith and obeyed the Father.

When I see her response, I remember the saying, Like Mother, like Son.

Jesus faced a similar point with the Father in heaven when he prayed to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, facing the stark reality and imminency of His impending death.

And do you know he said something very similar to what his mother said some 34 years earlier...

Luke 22:42 ESV

saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

And because Mary said yes, we have a Savior. And because our Savior said yes, we have salvation. I only hope you have said yes to salvation!

After all, it is available to you today. Because the Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation!"

Can I encourage you to say yes to God in humble faith for your salvation?

But not only your salvation but your sanctification as well. Say yes to the will of God. Whatever He is asking you to do, say yes to Him in Humble faith and see what amazing things He will accomplish through you in the years to come!

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Conclusion

Mary had a big-hearted faith, not a Small-minded fear. This kind of faith led to a significant change from what her life would be otherwise...

How could Mary have such a big-hearted faith? Because of what her faith was placed in - her God!

My faith rests not in what I am, or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is, in what he has done, and in what he is doing for me. - CHARLES SPURGEON

I wonder what might happen if Christians exhibited a faith like the one of the young girl Mary, some two thousand years ago?

I wonder if the church in America would stop her decline and actually start to thrive again. I think so.

If the faith of one young girl can change the world, imagine what the faith of an entire church could accomplish for the glory of God!?

Matthew 17:20 ESV

He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever received a message or guidance from God's Word that seemed perplexing or confusing at first? How did you respond to it, and what did you learn about trusting God in times of uncertainty?
2. Think of a time when God's plan for your life felt overwhelming or too grand for you to handle. How did you reconcile your feelings of overwhelm with your faith in God's greater plan?
3. Can you recall a moment when God's promise or message to you seemed unbelievable or impossible? How did this challenge your faith, and what steps did you take to strengthen your belief in God's power?
4. In what ways can you practice receiving God's messages with humble faith, even when they don't align with your expectations or understanding of the situation?
5. Who are you praying for daily?
6. Who are you engaging with weekly?
7. Who are you sharing the gospel with monthly?