

# **Included in This Study Guide**

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## Message Outline

### Whistling in the Dark

*Luke 1:26-38, 46-56*

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Faith...

is preceded by grace.

pursues understanding.

generates courage.

reminds us we're not alone.

inspires action.

## LOOKING BACK

### Love's Pure Light: Whistling in the Dark

*Luke 1:26-38, 46-56*

Choosing faith over fear is a nearly constant decision point and struggle in life. While we wait for Jesus' return to set things right in our world, we are confronted with disappointment or decision points that create a crossroads where we either move toward faith or drift toward fear. Mary received unexpected news that could have created alarm, joy, or both. She chose faith and became our example, teaching what happens when we make the same choice...

Thinking It Through (agree/disagree/consider/contemplate)

*I think of faith as a kind of whistling in the dark, because in much the same way it helps to give us courage to hold the shadows at bay. ~ Frederick Buechner*

*The disruption caused by God's coming and our alienation is too great for us; we cannot bear it alone. And so we gather together to light a candle in this fearsome time. We come here to find others who know something about darkness and yet dare to look for the light. We come here to wait together. The church might best be defined as the community of those who wait, who remember their losses, acknowledge their failures, their suffering, and their confusion, and yet continue to look for wholeness. ~ Ellen Davis and Austin McIver Dennis*

*Acknowledging this present darkness roots us in the Advent anchor of hope: a longing for our redeemer to make all things right again and a confident anticipation of that reality. ~ Kelley Matthews*

Working It Out

1. Read Luke chapter 1 paying special attention to Mary's interaction with the angelic messenger and her response.
2. Mary and Zechariah both received messages from an angel. How do you imagine you would have responded in their situations? How are their responses contrasted? How did their responses affect or influence God's actions?
3. How has God demonstrated his faithfulness to you in the past? How do we trust him now and in the future when we feel disappointed, confused, or that what we need is impossible to realize?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

### **While You're Waiting**

*Luke 2:22-33*

Waiting..... I hate it. Most of us do. The problem is not only is waiting a significant part of our lives, it's actually a core part of how God works in us and in our world. So while we would do away with waiting altogether (I know I would!), God intentionally weaves waiting into much of our lives. What's God up to in this? And how does He want us to live while we wait? These are some of the questions we explore as we study the example of Simeon – a man who waited for and experienced the coming of the Christ child.

### **Working It Out**

1. Read the passage. What words or phrases stand out to you? What do you notice about Simeon?
2. How long do you think Simeon was waiting? (we don't know exactly!) What can you observe about how he lived while he was waiting?
3. What do know of the historical context surrounding this time? What was Israel waiting for? How long had they been waiting?
4. Talk about what waiting is like for you. Is it difficult? If so, why? What about waiting can be a challenge for you?
5. What is something you're waiting for right now? What do you think God is doing in you (or wanting to do in you) while you're waiting?