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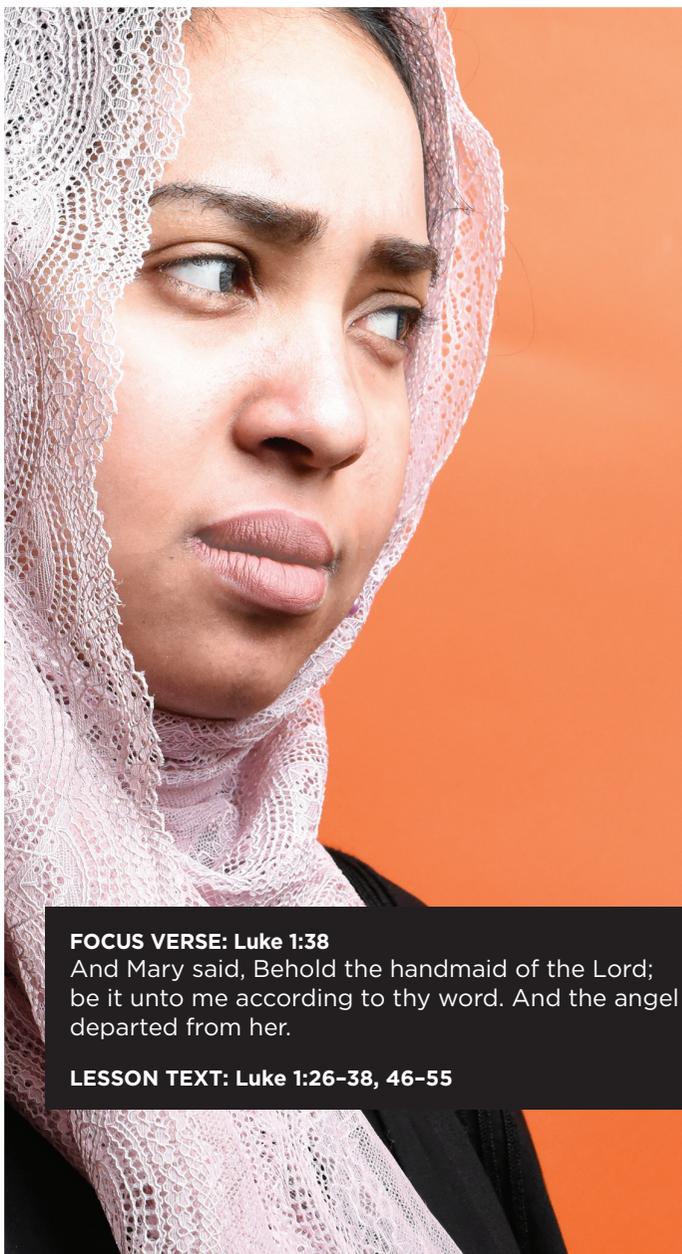
FOR HIS PURPOSE

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will commit my life to God so He can use me for His purpose.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God uses committed people to fulfill His purpose in the world.



FOCUS VERSE: Luke 1:38

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

LESSON TEXT: Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Luke 1:26–38, 46–55

Introducing the story of Jesus' conception, Luke interwove parallel accounts of John and Jesus, comparing and contrasting these two figures. The setting transitions from focusing on (1) John's father, a married, elderly male priest from the tribe of Levi serving at the Temple in Jerusalem, to (2) Jesus' mother, a young, peasant-class virgin residing in an insignificant village in Galilee (verse 27). Mary and Joseph were descendants of David, a member of the tribe of Judah. While both John and Jesus would be considered great (Luke 1:15, 32), Jesus' unique identity as "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35) would far overshadow John's lesser status as a prophet.

As with Zacharias (Luke 1:13), Gabriel instructed Mary prior to her son's birth on what name to give Him. Jesus (*Jesus*; meaning "Jehovah is salvation") is a name especially relevant to Luke's Gospel, which narrates God's ongoing acts of salvation.

Describing this great child's exalted, regal status (Luke 1:32; compare Luke 1:15), Gabriel announced that from His birth Mary's son was in fact "Son of the Highest" (Genesis 14:18–22; Numbers 24:16; Psalm 7:17; II Samuel 22:14; Daniel 4:24; Luke 1:76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17), an expression equivalent to "Son of God" (Luke 1:35). This messianic figure would ascend upon and restore the throne of the fallen Davidic dynasty. Unstable, fleeting secular empires are soon destroyed (Daniel 2:36–45), but His magnificent kingdom would last forever (Daniel 2:44; 4:3; 6:26; 7:14).

Gabriel revealed to Mary an aspect of the mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus' miraculous conception would take place as the Holy Spirit's power overshadowed her (compare Luke 1:15; 9:34). The resulting figure—who was both fully God and man—would thus be referred to as "the Son of God" (Luke 1:32; 3:38; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70; Acts 3:13, 26; 8:37; 9:20; 13:33).

These twin birth miracles fall beyond the range of human comprehension and ingenuity, demonstrating God's ability to perform anything is absolutely unlimited. (See also Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27.)

By means of a song of praise known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), Mary extolled the amazing God who had choreographed this marvelous chain of events. Mary's Song finds parallels in Deborah's Song (Judges 5:1–31), Hannah's Song (I Samuel 2:1–10), as well as various psalms (e.g., 33; 47; 113; 135; 136).

Mary, from humble origins (Luke 1:48), expressed the common Lukan theme of reversal: God brings down the rich and arrogant, while raising up the poor and meek (Luke 3:5; 10:15; 14:7–11; 18:9–14).

GOD'S ABILITY TO PERFORM ANYTHING IS ABSOLUTELY UNLIMITED.

DAY 1

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 10 11 12 13 | Mark 4

Luke 1:26–28

²⁶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

²⁷ to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Biblical Insight

Mary was espoused to Joseph. Both were descendants of king David, Joseph through Solomon (Matthew 1:7), and Mary through Nathan (Luke 3:31). Matthew's genealogy takes Jesus back only to Abraham (Matthew 1:1). Matthew, a Jewish author writing to a Jewish audience, had no messianic concern before Abraham. Luke, a Gentile author writing to a Gentile audience, traced Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:38). Whereas Matthew identified Joseph's father as Jacob, Luke said Joseph's father was Heli. It is important to note that Luke says Jesus "was supposed" to be the son of Joseph. From Abraham to David, both agree. The difference begins after David. Matthew 1:11 lists Jechonias, also known as Coniah, who was such a wicked king that none of his descendants would ever sit on David's throne (Jeremiah 22:28–38).

If Jesus had descended biologically from David through Solomon, He would have been disqualified from sitting on David's throne. The prophecies required the Messiah to sit on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7), however. This problem is overcome by Mary's genealogy. Jewish genealogies did not typically list immediate descent through one's mother, but the father. The best way to understand Luke's record is that Heli was Mary's father, and Joseph's father-in-law.

Daily Devotion

The "begats" section of Bible genealogy is where many New Year's resolutions go to die. Each January, we start reading chapters and checking boxes, but we know we are getting closer to that long list of names that tell us who was whose dad. We tend to warn new people about the begats as if to say, "Lock the doors, and drive through fast. If you make it out alive, join us in Ezra for more adventure." But the begats matter to God because they tell us our history and His story. As we will learn, Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah and the line of David. That matters because Moses prophesied the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), and Isaiah prophesied He would come from the line of David (Isaiah 9:7).

The Jews cared if Jesus qualified to be the Messiah. That is one reason God cared to build the begats. That is one reason we should care to read them. Jesus fit the qualifications as Judah's Lion and David's son. But that is just the beginning. As we will soon see, our Jesus truly is our Messiah.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 2

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 14 □ 15 □ 16 □ 17 □ | Mark 5 □

Luke 1:29–31

²⁹ And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

³⁰ And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

³¹ And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Biblical Insight

Mary could not imagine what Gabriel meant by his greeting. Gabriel sensed her confusion and said, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.” It was not an unusual angelic greeting. Gabriel also said to Zacharias, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard” (Luke 1:13). To the shepherds abiding in the field, the angel said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). To Paul, an angel said, “Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:24).

The frequency with which angels address people by their names is interesting. (See Daniel 9:22.) Because angels are God’s ministers, He shares with them the personal information they need to deliver His messages (Hebrews 1:7).

Daily Devotion

We love to hear our name at certain places: “Bumblehoffer, party of four, your table is ready.” At other places, we do not: “The court calls the State of New Jersey vs. Bruce Bumblehoffer.” Dale Carnegie said, “There is no sweeter sound to one’s ear than the sound of his name.”

For a maître d’ to know our name means we are about to eat. For a judge to know our name means we are about to sweat. But for God to know our name means we are about to hear from Heaven. That must be how Mary felt. She lived in the one flashing yellow lantern town of Nazareth. Her family and her fiancée knew her name, but no one from Herod’s fortress or Caesar’s castle did. Yet God did. And God sent His angel Gabriel to Mary and called Mary by her name.

That tells us what it told Mary—God knows where we are and who we are. And if we will listen, we may also hear His sweet voice call us by name.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 3

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 18 ☐ 19 ☐ 20 ☐ | Mark 6 ☐ 7 ☐

Luke 1:32-33

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

³³ and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Biblical Insight

In addition to identifying Mary's son as JESUS, which means "Jehovah will save" or "Jehovah-Savior," and as "the Son of the Highest" (i.e., the Son of God), Gabriel further connected to her baby an important messianic prophecy. He did so with three key terms: (1) the throne of David, (2) house of Jacob, and (3) kingdom. We could almost think Gabriel had read the Davidic covenant just before his visit with Mary: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Samuel 7:12-13).

Daily Devotion

Every parent wants their baby to grow up to make a difference in the world. Maybe our baby will cure cancer. Maybe our baby will end world hunger. Maybe our baby will introduce Baskin Robbins' thirty-second flavor and make all the world a happier place. Maybe our baby will be a missionary and take the gospel around the world.

Imagine how Mary felt when she unwrapped Gabriel's baby shower gift. The angel prophesied that Jesus would not just be her Son; He would also be her Savior. If she thought nine months was a long time to wait before meeting Him, just think how long her ancestors had waited. For thousands of years, they prayed each day for God to send the Messiah. And each day, they waited. He did not come in their day, but thanks to the faithfulness and virtue of a virgin teenage girl named Mary, He was about to.

What promises from God are you waiting on in your life? God always comes through on His promises. Await His timing with faith.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 4

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 21 □ 22 □ 23 □ 24 □ 25 □ | Mark 8 □

Luke 1:34–38

³⁴ Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

³⁵ And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

³⁶ And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

³⁷ For with God nothing shall be impossible.

³⁸ And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Biblical Insight

Some people struggle with the idea of a virgin birth. How is this possible? The attempt to figure this concept out has resulted in faulty views of Jesus' identity. These notions usually fall into one of two errors: (1) a denial of Jesus' full and genuine humanity; (2) a denial of his deity. Mary knew she was a virgin, so she had her own question: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Gabriel's answer should remove all questions: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." As mysterious as it may be, this miracle means Jesus is fully God and fully man. (See I Timothy 3:16.)

Daily Devotion

You may have heard it. "You look just like your mom!" Or "You're the spittin' image of your dad." That last expression does not seem to be much of a compliment. Who wants to look like anything spittin'? We often look like our parents. We even act like them sometimes. If you do not believe it, just think back to the things you vowed you would never say when you became a parent: "Because I said so. I'll give you something to cry about. I don't care who started it—I'll finish it."

We get our genes from our parents. Jesus did too. But His dad was not this strong, steady carpenter named Joseph; His dad was God Himself. Jesus was Mary's son; that made Him human. And He was God's Son; that made Him divine.

When we look at Jesus' life, we see both parents. Jesus slept in a storm; then He calmed it. Jesus' stomach growled; then He fed twenty thousand with a value meal. Jesus is fully man and fully God. As man, He can identify with us. As God, He can save us.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

DAY 5

Bible Reading Plan

Numbers 26 27 28 29 30

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

⁵⁴ He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

⁵⁵ as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

Biblical Insight

Elisabeth's (Luke 1:42-45) and Mary's words upon their meeting resonate with many Old Testament texts. The encounter of these two special women gathers up and helps us understand messianic prophecies we may otherwise have missed. The ministries of John and Jesus were both anticipated by the Hebrew prophets, and their mothers were uniquely chosen to play their role in bringing the greatest redemptive event to pass. Elisabeth recognized the baby in Mary's womb as her Lord, and Mary's role is anticipated as early as Genesis 3:15.

Daily Devotion

Luke 1 is the BOGO (buy one get one) deal for miraculous birth. The angel Gabriel appeared to the virtuous, virgin teenage girl named Mary to announce she was going to have a baby before Mary was fully married. And she was still virtuous because she was still a virgin. Gabriel also appeared to an aged, faithful priest named Zacharias and announced to him that his wife was going to have a baby. She was virtuous as well, but she had been married for decades without a baby.

Luke 1 is also the BOGO deal for fulfilling prophecy. Isaiah prophesied a forerunner would come before the Messiah and pave the way for Him. That was Zachariah's and Elizabeth's son, John. Of course, Genesis 3 prophesied that a Messiah would come. And of course, that was Mary's son, Jesus. It seemed impossible to both women that either one of them would give birth, but Gabriel assured Mary and assuaged her fears when he read the back of God's business card: "For with God, nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

If God can do the impossible, and since He did so to become flesh and save us, we can trust Him for whatever we need in our lives.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this to your life today?*

Lesson Title: For His Purpose

Scripture Focus: Luke 1:38

The Lesson in Context

Choosing to commit to God's purpose is not a one-time event. In the same way, learning to love others is not a one-time event, but a lifetime of loving, learning, experiencing, and choosing to love and learn again. The prophet Jeremiah is a good example of someone who was chosen for a specific purpose but did not always like where that purpose took him. He had to choose again and again to submit to God's purpose.

Every believer has a purpose in God's kingdom. Each one of us is called to be involved in sharing Jesus. What that looks like and how God uses you depends on His call, His purpose, and your response. Today is the day to believe God and commit to Him. If you have already committed, then today is a day to remember His purpose and rejoice as you walk in that purpose. If you are not walking in God's purpose, then make the decision to listen to God as He speaks to you today. You have value and purpose in God's plan. Your identity can be found in Him, and you can trust Him with your future.

Group Discussion

1. How would you think and respond if an angel appeared and spoke to you?
2. Why is it important for us to listen to God's voice, His direction for our lives, and the leading of His Spirit?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you were at a loss for words?
4. Is our human need for control so strong that when God is in control we automatically doubt? Explain.
5. Can you think of a time when you committed something to God and He gave you confirmation? How did that make you feel? Did it have an impact on a later decision you had to make in your commitment to God? Explain.

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week

How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?
