

Community Group Questions Guide

Ice Breaker (10min):

Help people to loosen up and share. Take one more week to go around and have people share their name, and what their plans are for the weekend.

Opening Prayer (5min):

- **Introduce time of prayer-** After the group welcomes one another, open in prayer. Let your group know what to expect during prayer time, something like: As we start our group time I will open with a word of prayer, there will be a minute or so of silent reflection and then I will read the scripture from Sunday and then close in prayer and we will enter into our discussion time.
 - **Open with a brief word of prayer-** God we thank you for this time together, we open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us, allow us to hear your voice and experience your spirit at work. Come Holy Spirit.
 - **Sit before the Lord in silent prayerful reflection for 1-2 minutes**
 - **Read the scripture listed below aloud for the group to reflect on.**
 - **Close in a word of prayer:** God thank you for your word, come holy spirit and allow us to understand what it means for our lives, lead us in our time of discussion together. In Christ's name, amen.

Main Scriptures from Sunday:

Luke 1:26-38 NIV

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." **29** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." **34** "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" **35** The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called [b] the Son of God. **36** Even

Community Group Questions Guide

Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.” 38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Read this message overview to the group: (5min)

In Sunday’s message Pastor Josh Bueno taught on three themes found within the story of Mary. These themes sing like a song of hope over our lives. He talked about:

1. **God's grace.**
2. **A miraculous delight;** that joy has come from beyond the walls of this world — for nothing is impossible for God.
3. **A moving desire to trust and serve the Lord,** and one another, that is inspired by the incarnate Christ.

1. God’s Grace

Although there are many similarities between Mary’s encounter and Zachariah’s encounter, it is God’s grace that we find most in the differences between them. Here’s two truths about God’s grace that we find between Zachariah and Mary.

a. God doesn't bless people according to their age, sex, or position in life, but He blesses all of us according to his own good purposes— why? He pours out his grace freely to all. And he sets into motion grace for the entire world; through two very similar but very different human beings.

b. Faith is the proper and pleasing response to God's grace and it isn't reserved for the spiritual elite. Like Mary, we have been highly graced by God through the coming of Christ, and like Mary we are called to trust the Lord in the face of all life’s uncertainty.

2. **A Miraculous Delight;** that joy has come from beyond the walls of this world — for nothing is impossible for God. As familiar, and intellectually sound, the Christmas story is, it still carries a component of miraculous delight that will forever challenge us to have faith and believe.

3. **A Moving Desire To Trust and Serve the Lord,** and one another, that is inspired by the incarnate Christ. Mary surrendered to the call upon her life by committing too trusting and serving the Lord even when she couldn’t see the whole picture. From our vantage point today, we can easily see the incarnate Christ and all he accomplished.

Community Group Questions Guide

Fixing our gaze upon all Christ accomplished should lead us toward a moving desire in action. For Mary, her moving desire was to trust and serve the Lord with all her heart.

Is there one of these three points that stuck out to you the most? If so, share which one.

Read aloud for the group: Work through these discussion questions together (30min):

Here's some questions to consider and respond to among yourselves as you feel comfortable:

- The Angel told Mary "you are highly favored". The Greek word translated "highly favored" means "to grace," "to endow with special honor," or "to be accepted." Can you recognize God's grace upon your life? In what ways has God endowed you with special honor, or graced you with his acceptance?
- When faced with difficulties, uncertainties, or surprising news, how do you typically respond? Can you identify a difficult season in life when you were able to identify and accept the grace of God upon you?
- Consider the miraculous events surrounding the birth of Christ (an Angel speaking to Mary, etc.). In what ways do these miracles evoke a sense of joy within you?
- Why do you think God uses elements from beyond the walls of this world like Angels, Virgin Birth, etc. to challenge our faith?
- When you consider the truths below about the incarnate Christ, do you feel moved? Mary responded to the coming incarnated Christ in servanthood and faith. How might the Holy Spirit be moving you to respond?
 - Christ experienced human brokenness to heal us
 - Christ Experienced human sorrow to bring us joy
 - Christ experienced human bareness to bring us fruit
 - Christ experienced human death to bring us life.

Group Prayer (10min): Share personal prayer requests and spend some time praying for one another as a group. Ask someone to write down prayer requests and send them out to the group to pray for one another during the week. The hope is to get your group comfortable with sharing personal prayer needs and praying for one another regularly.