



NOTES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Supplemental Texts

Gen. 28:15; Ex. 3:12; Judges 6:12; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Pss 2:7 Isa 7:14; 9:2, 6-7; 32:15-20; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 7:13-14; Pss 2:7; 89:19-37; 91:1-2; Matt. 1:23; 19:26; Rom. 1:1-4; Heb. 11:1; 12:1-2

Study Summary

This text comes on the heels of God's miraculous work in opening the womb of Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel now visits another woman (Mary) with the promise of a child, though this time not from a barren womb, but from the womb of a virgin. The promises of God here are the culmination of all the hopes and dreams of the Prophets: a future king who will claim the throne of David and rule over the people of Israel with an unending kingdom of peace and justice. Yet, this Child will be much more than the earthly kings Israel is familiar with. He will be the very Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

In this story we witness the power of God on behalf of his people. Through Mary, a lowly woman living on the outskirts of the Roman Empire, God brings the salvation of the world. Nothing is impossible for this God, the One who dismantles our small and short-sighted dreams to draw us into the bigger Story he is telling. Like Mary, the only proper response to his call is humble obedience.

Historical & Theological Background

During the time of Jesus (6/5 BC to 30 AD) the people of Israel were living under the rule of the Roman Empire, eagerly awaiting the day when God would fulfill his promises in the Prophets by punishing evildoers and rewarding his people. Some of these promises were fulfilled when Jews returned to the land of Israel during the reign of the Persian ruler Cyrus the Great (559-530 BC), but many were yet unfulfilled. Israel still struggled under the domination of a foreign power and continued to fall short of the standards of righteousness predicted by the prophets (e.g. Isa. 54; Ezek. 34:20-31). To fulfill these promises, many Israelites during looked forward to a royal, warrior Messiah (anointed one), who would follow in the footsteps and lineage of David, defeating the enemies of Israel and establishing an earthly kingdom. Others expected two Messiahs, one taking up a royal role and the other a priestly one. Some did not expect a Messiah at all, but believed God would intervene on behalf of his people to the same effect: destroying Israel's enemies and raising up the people of Israel to reestablish a kingdom in the Promise land

Teaching Tip

The Discussion Primer is best done before your MC meets. Contact your MC and encourage them to practice it on their own during the week.

DISCUSSION PRIMER

Take some time to read through the text thoughtfully and prayerfully. Allow yourself to be immersed in the text and let the Spirit guide you as you read and reflect upon it. Consider what word, phrase, or story detail stands out to you. Where do you find yourself in the passage? The angel? Mary? A fly on the wall observing it all? Give yourself some time to ponder these questions and then ask God how this connects with your life today. What must you know, be, or do in light of the passage?

TEXTUAL INVESTIGATION

LUKE 1:26-38

Big Idea: Nothing Is Impossible With God

Fallen Condition Focus: Short-Sighted Dreams

- Consider the angel's greeting (v. 28). Where else in the Bible does God give a similar message and what does this message mean for its recipients? (See Gen. 28:15; Ex. 3:12; Judg. 6:12)
- How is Mary's reaction to the angel's greeting both similar and different to Zechariah's reaction in the previous passage? (v. 12 & v. 29)
- In what ways does the child Jesus fulfill the past promises of God (v. 31-33)? (See 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Jer. 23:5-6)
- How is Mary's response both similar and different to Zechariah's? (v. 18 & v. 34)
- How is the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ different from the expectations of Israel? (See Dan. 7:13-14 & HTB)

Gospel Connection: Read Heb. 12:1-2 and consider Mary's response of faith (v. 38). How is Jesus "the source and perfecter of our faith"?

TEXTUAL INTERSECTION: How does the text intersect with our lives?

- Before the interruption of God's call, Mary was living a perfectly normal life. How might God be calling you out of your normal routines? How might you join him in the work of building his Kingdom?
- What dreams are you living for? What excites you? How do these pursuits fit into the mission of God?
- What things must you relinquish in order to pursue the things God is calling you to?
- Are you living a life that necessitates the power and guidance of the Spirit? Why or why not?
- What do you prioritize? Do these priorities match up with God's priorities? If not, what practices might help you follow the example of Mary's willingness in this text to obey God, whatever the outcome.

REPLICABLE QUESTIONS

Read **Luke 1:26-38** and explore together what the passage reveals about:

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| 1) The character and purposes of God? | 4) Our identity in Christ? |
| 2) The fallen human condition? | 5) Our obedience to Christ? |
| 3) The gospel of Jesus Christ? | 6) Our relationship to others |

TEXTUAL APPLICATION: "So, what now?"

Have each participant identify a personal take-away in light of this study. Is there . . .

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| • a command to obey? | • a beauty to behold? | • a mission to fulfill? |
| • a promise to claim? | • a truth to believe? | • an example to follow? |
| • a sin to repent of? | • a service to render? | • a person to tell? |