

"Gabriel Goes to Hicksville"

Luke 1:26-38

Small Group Discussion Guide

OPENING QUESTION (get everyone involved in discussion): Have you ever had “15 minutes of fame?” Sometime when you or something you did was featured on the news, in a publication, or otherwise put you in the spotlight? If so, share about it. If not, how do you imagine that it might happen?

TRANSITION: We’re in the third week of our Advent **series**, called “Here I am.” We’re looking at several key characters in the Christmas stories in the Bible, to see how we can find our place in what God is doing in the world. Today we’re looking at the life of another person born in the hills, far outside any major city, so insignificant in the eyes of her world that no one outside her immediate family should have ever known her name – Mary.

READ Luke 1:26-28

- Try to get a grasp for all the details that make this scene what it is, by discussing the following:
 - Why does the narrator begin this section with a reference to Elizabeth’s pregnancy? How might that detail be important in the current scene?
 - What do you know about the angel Gabriel? Is there any significance to who he is and that God had sent *him*?
 - What do you know about human encounters with angels in the Scriptures? What effect do angels normally have on humans?
 - What do you know about Nazareth and Galilee? Geography, cultural importance, etc. Is there any town or region in your own experience to which you might compare these locations?
 - Why do you think that Luke mentioned Mary’s virginity and that she was betrothed?
 - Why was Joseph’s lineage (as a descendant of David) referenced?
 - In Gabriel’s greeting (v. 28), he uses words that can be translated, “Rejoice, you who are highly favored!” Why might he be telling Mary to rejoice?
 - What’s unique about the angel’s statement in v. 28, “The Lord is with you?” What might be implied?
 - In light of all the details you’ve discussed, what’s so significant about the fact that God sends Gabriel to this girl in this place?

READ Luke 1:29-34

- Mary was probably about 12-13 years old and was not from a prominent family. Direct words from God usually came to important people like Moses and Joshua. Stop and discuss how Mary might have felt after each point in the following event:
 - An angel of the Lord appeared to her?
 - When the angel stated “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you”?
 - When the angel told her that she would be the mother of the Son of God?
- ***God invites people to partner with him without regard for our definition of importance.***
 - How do you feel about this fact—that your résumé doesn’t affect your ability to be of valuable use to God? Does it encourage you or discourage you?

- When in your life have you sensed God inviting you to partner with him, either in restoring people to a relationship with him, or some other endeavor? How did you respond?
- Review all the qualities that we learn about Jesus in vv. 31-33.
 - What might Mary, at age 12-13, have been thinking after hearing this?
 - How might you have responded?
- In v. 34, Mary asks one question that reveals what she sees as a hurdle to God's plan coming to pass.
 - What limits might you be putting on God in the partnership role he has for you in his kingdom? Are there any doubts you have about yourself that you think he can't overcome?
 - In general, do you question whether God can do anything good with your life? Why?

Read Luke 1:35-38

- Mary probably knew that her older relative Elizabeth was barren. How might hearing from the angel that Elizabeth was pregnant help Mary's faith?
- How would knowing that the Holy Spirit is involved in Mary's upcoming pregnancy help Mary to believe?
- Mary doesn't seem to be afraid, because of how the angel reassured her in verse 30: "You have found **favor** with God." This is the Greek word *karis* which literally means "grace."
 - Are you afraid that God will ask too much of you if you seek his will for your life? Too costly, too risky, or just too uncomfortable?
 - How would you react if God communicated through an angel to you that God is FOR you, that you have found **favor** with him? Would it help you with this fear?
- How might God's design of the miraculous virgin birth of His Son help Mary trust God when her son was on the cross? How might it help us increase our faith?
- Why do you think that Gabriel stuck around to hear Mary's response?
- Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant..." "May your word to me be fulfilled." What does this response indicate about Mary's disposition toward what God has told her?
- If you haven't heard from God already, we believe, that this week God is inviting you to either a) be in relationship with him or b) partner with him in his plan to restore people to relationship with him.
 - Do you currently sense God inviting you to anything new?
 - If so, what barriers stand in the way of you saying, "Here I am?" (In other words, responding willingly, as Mary did).
- If you have time, read vv. 46-55, "Mary's Song." What indications do you see here of how God reverses people's status when they say "Yes" to him?
- What is so shocking about the claim at the end of v. 48?

PRAYER: Share with one another some of your current needs, and pray for one another. If anyone senses God inviting them to something, please share and we will pray with you.