

“HOW TO FIND SIGNIFICANCE THIS SEASON”

December 10 & 11, 2016 | Gospel in the Carols #2

INTRODUCTION

Many of the images displayed at Christmas include Mary, watching over her newborn child. In the song “Mary Did You Know?” Mary is asked if she knew the significance of her child. The song refers both to the miracles he would perform and titles that confirmed his deity. Mary would have been challenged to foresee the incredible truth of Jesus’ identity, short of the revelation given her by God. But as the one chosen to give birth to the Messiah, Mary had a special significance as well. In Mary’s life we find a model of humility and faithfulness that we can learn from and apply in our own lives.

Ice Breaker (Optional): Who would you trust with your greatest secret?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Mary TRUSTED God’s promises

Q1. Read Luke 1:28-38, 45; Romans 4:20-21

When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he told her not to fear and that she was “accepted, favored and highly honored”¹ He then proceeded to detail what was about to occur. How did knowing she was highly favored help Mary to process what she was being told? Why was Elizabeth’s pregnancy significant to Mary’s trusting God? In Romans 4:20-21, how did Abraham’s trust in God’s promise affect him? What does Mary’s response in Luke 1:38 reveal about Mary?

¹ *charitoō*

Mary ENDURED rejection

Q2. Read Matthew 1:19; Matthew 2:13-15

Even though she was “blessed” by God, Mary still faced hardships as the mother of Jesus. What was the first form of rejection she encountered in Matthew 1:19? Have you ever taken a stand for something you knew to be true, but that others rejected? What helps you to endure such rejection?

Mary and Joseph fled Egypt to escape Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus, the Messiah. (Matthew 2:13-15) Christians in many countries are still fleeing persecution. In Syria, for example, Christian villages have been overrun, churches destroyed and believers abused or driven out. More than 4 million refugees have fled the country, and many more remain displaced². This Christmas, remember to thank God for your freedom and pray for those who, like Mary, endure extreme rejection for their faith.

²“The Voice of the Martyrs.” The Voice of the Martyrs. Accessed December 08, 2016. <https://www.persecution.com>

Mary CONSIDERED God’s work

Q3. Read Luke 2:19; Luke 2:51; Romans 12:2

Mary was unique in her understanding of what God was doing. But even after speaking directly with an angel, she continued to work through it internally. How is this described in Luke 2:19 and 2:51? What did Paul suggest to the Romans as a way to discern God’s will? What steps would you take to follow his advice?

Mary RELIED on God’s help

Q4 Read John 2:1-5; John 19:25-27; Psalm 46:1b

One final testament to Mary’s faithfulness was her reliance on God. Mary relied on Jesus to solve what problem that she could not? (John 2:1-5) How did Jesus provide for his mother’s needs, even from the cross? (John 19:25-27) When you wrestle with “unsolvable” problems in your life, how long do you struggle before relying on God? Can you share a time when God became your “ever-present help?” (Psalm 46:1b.)

Wrap-Up

Mary was a simple, humble girl who found her significance and purpose as she followed closely after God. She trusted God’s promises, even though she had to endure hardship and rejection. When faced with the challenges of God’s unique call in her life, Mary thoughtfully reflected upon what was happening, patiently seeking discernment. And when she needed help, Mary relied on God’s provision. He was her source of help, as He also is ours.

Memory Verse

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"
Luke 1:45 NIV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge: Read Luke 1:46-55, referred to as “Mary’s Song”. Reflect on her response to what had to be a terrifying experience, and how this reflects on her faith.

Q1

Luke 1:28-38, 45 ESV - 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. ... 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Romans 4:20-21 ESV - 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Q2

Matthew 1:19 ESV - 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Matthew 2:13-15 ESV - 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Q3

Luke 2:19 ESV - 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Luke 2:51 ESV - 51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

Romans 12:2 ESV - 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Q4

John 2:1-5 NIV - 1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

John 19:25-27 NIV - 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Psalm 46:1b NIV - 1 ... God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Prayer cont.
