

► **Read Luke 1:26–56.**

1. Elizabeth is in the sixth month of her pregnancy when God sends the angel Gabriel on a second mission, this time to Mary of Nazareth, another unlikely candidate for motherhood. What does Luke tell us...
...about Mary? (vv. 26–27, 48)

...about Joseph? (v. 27)

2. What more does Gabriel reveal about Mary? (v. 28)

3. “Zechariah had been ‘gripped with fear’ (v. 12) at the very appearance of the angel, but it was the angel’s words...that ‘greatly troubled’ Mary (v. 29).”⁶ Why do you think she is so perplexed by his words?

4. Read verses 30–38.
a. After reassuring Mary, what surprising news does Gabriel deliver about her? (vv. 31, 35)

Nazareth

- A small, obscure Galilean farming village located in a valley roughly 70 miles northeast of Jerusalem¹ and 12 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee²
- “[O]ff, though not totally inaccessible from, the main trade routes”³
- Generally thought of with disdain – “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (Jn. 1:46)

“Pledged to Be Married”

- Luke tells us that Mary is betrothed, or “pledged to be married,” to Joseph. “Since betrothal often took place soon after puberty, Mary may have just entered her teens. This relationship was legally binding, but intercourse was not permitted until marriage. Only divorce or death could sever betrothal; and in the latter event the girl, though unmarried, would be considered a widow.”⁴
- “[T]he [betrothed] man and ... woman were called ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ even before the marriage took place.”⁵

b. What does Gabriel say about the child Mary will bear?
v. 32a

v. 32b

v. 33

v. 35

Overshadowed

“[T]he Spirit of God...‘overshadowed’ Mary. That word is applied to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35). Mary’s womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God!”⁷

House of Jacob

David was Israel’s most prominent king, and it was through his line that the Messiah was promised to come. “House of Jacob” (v. 33) is one of the many ways the nation of Israel is referred to in Scripture.

5. Gabriel’s words echo Old Testament prophecies with which Mary would have been familiar. What had the Lord promised...

a. ...to David? (2 Sam. 7:12, 16)

b. ...through Isaiah? (Is. 7:14; 9:6-7)

6. Like Zechariah, Mary is promised something that was humanly impossible.

a. How does her response contrast with Zechariah’s? (vv. 18a, 34)

b. Consider Zechariah’s and Mary’s views of themselves and of God. How might these views have resulted in different responses? (vv. 18b, 38, 45)

Servant

Mary refers to herself as “the Lord’s servant” (v. 38) or “handmaid,” “the lowest kind of female servant, which shows how much Mary trusted God. She belonged totally to the Lord, body (Luke 1:38), soul (Luke 1:46), and spirit (Luke 1:47). What an example for us to follow! (Rom. 12:1-2)”⁸

7. Why do you think Gabriel gives Mary the good news about Elizabeth? (vv. 36–37)

8. Look at how Elizabeth refers to Mary in verse 43. What does that tell you about Mary's baby?

9. What happens when Mary gets to Elizabeth's house? (vv. 39–45)

Why are Elizabeth and her unborn baby so filled with joy?

10. Read verses 46–55. Here Luke records Mary's humble-yet-joyful song of praise commonly known to us as "The Magnificat." This song breaks down into three parts. Give a title to each one.

a. verses 46–49:

b. verses 50–53:

c. verses 54–55:

"The Magnificat"

- In the Jewish synagogue of Mary's time, instruction about God, the Law, and Israel's history and traditions were passed along not only in writing, but also through oral poetry and song. The people sang together to mourn, to praise God, and to remember how he faithfully fulfilled his promises throughout their history. Both men and women, both those who had received formal academic training and those who had not, participated in this tradition of responding to God through verse. Thus Mary would have been influenced by this practice.
- There are striking parallels between the song of praise Mary sings here and the song Hannah sang when she dedicated Samuel, the son God had given her after years of barrenness, to his service (1 Samuel 2:1–10).
- Mary is "so steeped in Scripture that when she breaks out in praise, the words that come naturally to her lips are the words of Scripture. ... What an admonition to us all...: to steep our minds and hearts in the Scriptures day and night so that the words and thoughts of Scripture fill our mouths as naturally as they did Mary's."⁹

11. Reread Luke 1:5–56. Luke carefully records the lead-up to the birth of Jesus, “Son of the Most High” (v. 32). What impressions does this passage give you of God?

12. Mary and Elizabeth encourage one another by recounting what God has done and is doing. Like them, we need to remind ourselves and each other of who God is and what he has done. Take time to do this this week. Jot down the thoughts that come to mind. Feel free to express them in a poem or song of praise.

¹ Norvel Geldenhuys. *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 74.

² http://www.jesus-story.net/nazareth_about.htm

³ Frank E. Gaebelin, Gen. Ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 830.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe. *An Exposition on the New Testament Comprising the Entire "BE" Series: The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton: SP Publications, Inc., 1989), 172.

⁶ Expositor's, 830-831.

⁷ Wiersbe, 172.

⁸ Wiersbe, 173.

⁹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/meditation-on-the-magnificat>