



SENDTHEFIRE.CA

theme: Let it Be (Luke 1:26-38)

materials: Bibles, news story

welcome

If you can, have some Beatles music playing as people are coming in, and play "Let it Be" to start off your time together. What is the most difficult thing you have ever been asked to do? Did you do it? Why or why not?

Bring in a news item about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that you can discuss with the cell. Where do you see God in this story? Ask other members of cell to bring in stories to discuss in subsequent weeks.

worship

Read *Zephaniah 3:14-20*. This is what Israel wanted and expected for when God acted in power, when he delivered his people, when Messiah came. If you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that he is returning, what do you want and expect to happen when the Messiah returns?

Pray *Zeph 3:14-20* together, and add your prayers and hopes for the return of the Messiah.

word

Read Luke 1:26-38.

Why is Mary described as "blessed"?

Why does God choose Mary to give birth to Jesus?

Why are Joseph and his lineage mentioned, if he is not to be the father?

What did it cost Mary to accept this role?

Why does Mary accept this responsibility?

What do you think your honest response would be if the Lord asked you to do something this seemingly impossible, or this costly?

What does the name "Jesus" (*yeshua*) mean?

What does it mean for God to "save"? What does that mean to you? What do you think that meant for Mary, or for others at the time who were waiting for a Messiah?

What do the titles given to Jesus mean?

How is Luke showing this birth to be the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy? (see Isaiah 7:14)

Mary was a servant of the Lord. What does it mean for you to be a servant of the Lord?

witness

Continue reading through the entire books of Luke and Acts with one other person. If the other person is a fellow believer, read them through in a public place, like a café (not yelling it out or anything, just reading it to one another). Make a regular time to come in and read together, and more likely than not someone will eventually ask you what you are reading and why.



If the other person is not a fellow-believer, perhaps choose a less public place to read, but again set regular times, daily if possible, to get together and read the Gospel. You don't have to read it all at once. Read two to three chapters at a time, and then meet another day to read some more.

action points

Read *Luke 11:27-28* together. Mary certainly was blessed to be the mother of Jesus, but even more blessed are those who are related to Jesus by his Spirit. This relation is shown by hearing and keeping the word of the Lord, which includes the message and commands of Jesus. Talk with one another about what you are reading in the Bible on your own, how you are studying the word of God. Do you take Scripture seriously? What does that look like in your life? Keep each other accountable this week for how you are hearing and keeping the word of God.

The Salvation Army sponsors children around the world who are living in circumstances of poverty and oppression. Any offerings given at cell meetings go towards covering the costs of these sponsorships. Please challenge your cell to bring loose offerings each week, and bring a container to collect any such offerings that are given.

leader's guide

This is as familiar a story as there is in Scripture. Even people who have never attended a Church service in their lives will probably have heard something about Mary and the angelic visitation. But let us be careful not to let familiarity breed contempt, or carelessness. The story speaks most powerfully of the son-ship of Jesus. We see in this story that he shares the divine nature of Yahweh as the Son of God, but also that he shares the human nature of his mother. We don't know Mary's age in this story, but betrothals (a legal engagement, not yet a full marriage) could happen as young as 12 or 13 for a girl. The word used to describe Mary means "young, unmarried girl" which is why it is translated as "virgin", as that is very much the implication given. Joseph is mentioned as being of the house of David not because he is the actual father of Jesus, but because he is the legal father of Jesus, putting Jesus in the line of David.

Mary was put at risk of being shunned and shamed for this conception, but clearly she was also someone who was expectantly waiting for the God of Israel to rescue his people. As such she readily obeyed the word of the LORD as it was given to her, and made herself completely available for the working of the LORD through her. This willingness seems to be an important part of why God chose Mary, but ultimately the reason the Lord chose Mary to perform this role is because that is who He wanted to choose. He did not choose her because she was perfect, or because she had the ability to divinely extend grace. She is blessed because God chose her; God did not choose her because she was blessed. Mary is extremely important to this story, because she participated in what the Lord wanted to do in and through her (literally), but even she pales in comparison to the child she was to bear. The point of this story is not how amazing Mary is, but how the Lord is working through his people to bring about his salvation.

This is the fulfillment of prophecy and the longing of the people of God, that *Yeshua* (Jesus' Hebrew name) which means "Yahweh Saves" would come. Salvation in our days has sometimes been reduced in our thinking to little more than accepting Jesus as a friend and behaving slightly better. This is not the salvation that Mary and others were longing for. Read *Zephaniah 3:14-20* to see the kind of salvation they had in mind, the way they longed for Yahweh to act. The expected Messiah was not just going to be a friend, he was going to be a King, a redeemer, a liberator, a forgiver. He would release them from sin and exile. Jesus, according to Luke, is the culmination of God's plan for salvation, which he had been working through in the life of Israel for generations before.



The angel describes the coming baby first as the Son of the Most High, then as a descendant of David and heir to his throne. His identity as the Son of God is primary, and it is from this identity that he has the position of Messiah, heir to the throne of David. (For Old Testament indications that the coming king of Israel would also in some way be God's son, see 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2:7, and Psalm 89:27).