

A Christmas Biography

Mary: Faithful and Available

2021.12.12



TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide



A publication of **THE DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 Read Luke 1:26-55. Mary, an engaged woman (v. 27), was told that she would—at some indeterminate time in the future—conceive and bear a special son (v. 31). Yet somehow Mary knew that it was to occur soon, before her marriage was consummated (v. 34). What do you think explains this?
- 3 The angel answered her "how" question (v. 35-37), and Mary's only response is: "OK, I'm God's slave." This was **not** going to be an easy path. What do you think explains her readiness to serve in this way?
- 4 Mary's response certainly deserves to be placed toward the right end of the following continuum:

-		+
Reluctant Reserved Resistance		Immediate Unconditional Submission
- 4 Where would you place the following individuals on that same scale?
 - Moses (Exodus 3:10—4:14): Mark the scale with an "**M**" where you think Moses' response belongs.
 - Gideon (Judges 6:11-40): Mark the scale with a "**G**" where you think Gideon's response belongs.
 - Abraham (Genesis 22:1-10): Mark an "**A**" where you think Abraham's response belongs.
 - Mark an "**X**" where you think **your own** typical response to God falls on that scale.
- 5 How would an impartial observer describe your typical degree of submissiveness to God? How do you feel about that evaluation?
- 6 Complete this sentence: "For me personally, what keeps me back from greater responsiveness is..."
- 7 What is some action or area in which **you already know** God wants you to be more responsive?
- 8 If we as a group could do **one** thing to help you grow in responsiveness to God, what would it be?

Application-Challenge

- Like Mary, determine to be a person of great availability. Find a place to serve here at TCC.
- Trust God to be true to his Word. Let the Bible, not culture, shape your values and view of reality.
- Enlarge your view of God by meditating upon his Word. Start with Isaiah 40 (see "Digging Deeper").
- Make God's glory a higher goal than your own reputation.

- 1 Standard soft-ball discussion-starter—don't spend too much time on it. Also, make sure that you're familiar with questions 2 - 8 so you can defer discussion that relates to them.
- 2 FYI—Pastor Dan has no answer to this question. It intrigues him, so he asked it. Use this question to get folks engaged with the text, hypothesizing possible explanations.
- 3 Group members *really* need to grapple with this. We grumble at the slightest inconveniences! Really dig into this—what process do you think Mary went through in order to become so faithful?
- 4 As a group, read each text and come to a consensus regarding where Moses, Gideon, and Abraham lie on this continuum. Then, ask each group member to (individually, privately) to mark where they belong on that same scale. Then, go around the group sharing your answers.
- 5 Now, ask for a few brave souls to answer this question about where they placed their “X”. Bear in mind that you may need to “prime the pump” with your answer first.
- 6 Time for real honesty and transparency! You may need to “prime the pump” on this one too. At the very least, make sure you model honesty and vulnerability.
- 7 Make sure you model honesty and vulnerability, and lead others to honest responsiveness too.
- 8 Time to “bear one another’s burdens” and to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds”.
(Galatians 6:2) (Hebrews 10:24)

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Luke 1:26-55)

As we continue our study of the Christmas story, we're focusing not on the story itself, but rather on the people who give life to the story. What kind of person does God use? What qualities is God looking for when he wants a task accomplished? Two thousand years ago God found such a person: Mary. We read about her in Luke 1:26-55. From Mary's life we discern **the kind of person that God delights to use**.

I. God greatly uses people who are available and who choose to trust him. Because Mary made herself **available** to God, the course of human history was irrevocably changed! Mary was the Lord's servant (v. 38)—whose servant are you? God does not need us. His purposes are not hindered by our refusal to cooperate with him. But he desires to use us. Will we let him? We don't need to be people of great ability or status. God is not looking for people with great ability; he is looking for people with great availability! Consider Jesus' original disciples: common laboring men with no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation. None of them were wealthy. By any standard of sophisticated culture, they did not measure up. They were impulsive, temperamental, easily offended, and had all the prejudices of their environment. When viewed from a human perspective, they all seem like a poor choice with which to start a religious movement. Yet they were available and teachable—just the kind of people God delights to use! Consider David: so insignificant that his father left him out of the line-up when Samuel was looking for Israel's future king (1 Samuel 16:7, 11-12). Mary, like David, was available and wanted to be used by God. How about you? Are you ready, willing and available? Have you put yourself at God's disposal? God wants to use you to impact your world, and he will, if you'll let him.

We also must learn to **trust** God, as Mary did. After all, it is difficult to serve a God that you do not trust. Mary questioned neither the angel's appearance, nor his message (1:45). God's greatest servants are ordinary people with extraordinary faith. Hebrews 11 profiles men and women who took God at his word and ordered their lives accordingly—often at great personal cost. Faith is focused on the eternal, rather than the temporal. Faith operates in the realm of the unseen, not the seen. Faith often compels us to make choices between what God has stated to be true, and what our culture or circumstances declare to be true. Those choices reveal the vitality of our faith. Will we trust God as Mary did?

II. Mary's spiritual life challenges us to expand our view of God and to pursue his purposes. Mary had an accurate, an exalted **view of God**. Mary's God was mighty, holy, merciful, sovereign, and faithful (v.49-55). Is your God too small?! Do you view God as a policeman, a managing director, a pale Galilean? Is he just a meek and mild old man? Such limiting perceptions are crippling to the Christian life. We are pygmy Christians because we have a pygmy God; the people who know God will display strength and take action (Daniel 11:32). Those who have great thoughts of God will attempt great things for God, so how can we enlarge our view of God? Remove from our thoughts of God limits that would make him small, and then compare God with powers and forces that we regard as great.

We need to **pursue God's purposes**, not our own reputation. In making herself available to God, Mary accepted the hushed whispers and suspicious looks. Obedience to God was more important than her own reputation. Some of us will never be greatly used by God because we value man's approval more than God's (John 12:42-43). If we like to be liked too much, we will never be used by God. Our culture will accept us—as long as we don't take our faith too seriously. You might be labeled a religious fanatic and get cancelled! Christianity is tolerated as long as we don't let it affect our life too much. If you are serious about walking with God, not everyone will understand. Some may even oppose you. But if you want God to use you in this generation—and he wants to—then you must seek God's approval above man's, making God's glory a higher goal than your own reputation.

Talking To Others About This Week's Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asks you, *"What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?"*, how would you summarize the most important elements of this week's sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five-Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to increase our view of God...*

Monday—Read Isaiah 40:1-8. What message does God give to those who's "iniquity has been removed"?

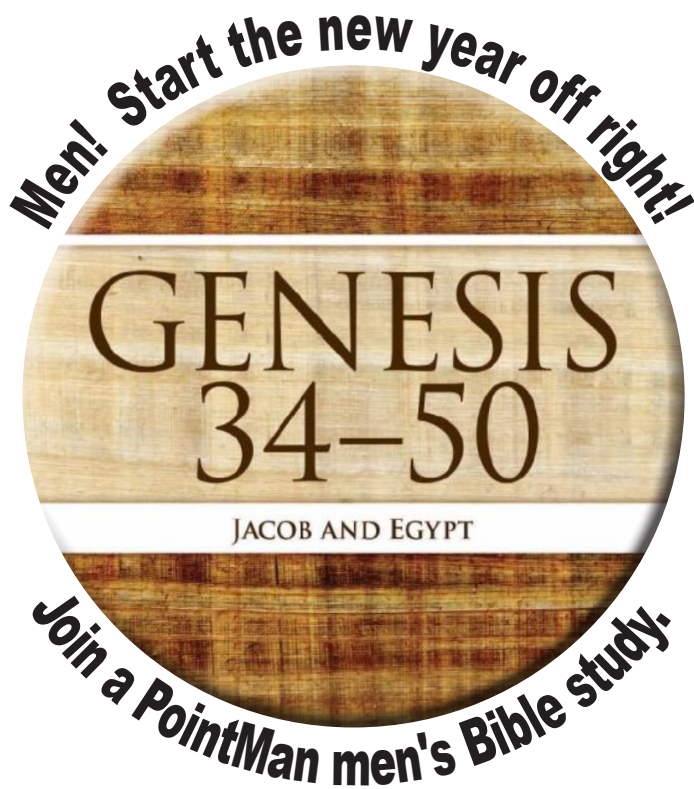
Tuesday— Read Isaiah 40:9-11. What do you learn about God, your "ruler" and "shepherd"?

Wednesday— Read Isaiah 40:12-17. Do you feel small yet? Yet your God takes note of you!

Thursday— Read Isaiah 40:18-26. How do rival gods and rulers compare to your God?

Friday— Read Isaiah 40:27-31. Is your God ever oblivious to you and your plight?

Saturday—*In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord together with your church family,*
read **Luke 2:10-14.**



- Beginning the week of January 17th
- Open to all men
- Just \$10 (for materials)
- Choose the time and place that fits you best.
- Go to: tcc.org Search: **PointMan**

PointMan

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would *this text* answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]