

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

Read Luke 1:26-38 aloud.

1. How did Mary respond to Gabriel's greeting?

Troubled.

Angels in the Bible often said "don't be afraid." Why were people so frightened by these cute little cherubs?

2. What did Gabriel say about Mary's child (31-33)?

3. Mary had one problem with God's plan. What was it (34)?

How did God promise to deal with this problem?

4. What was Mary's final reply to Gabriel?

How do you think this reply related to Gabriel calling her favored by God (28, 30)?

What characteristics can you see in Mary that might have pleased God?

5. The last time we met, we talked about Zechariah. What were some things that Zechariah and Mary had in common? How were they different?

Both were unknown Jewish worshippers, oppressed by the Romans. Zechariah was an educated male, an official in the Jewish faith. Mary was a teen-aged girl with no title and possibly no education.

What was different about Mary and Zechariah's response to Gabriel?

If you line the two stories up side by side, you see significant verbal parallels. The major difference is that Mary believed.

Who would you expect to believe the word of God – the priest or the teen girl?

6. Kevin's sermon drew a distinction between the spirit of Christ and the Christmas spirit. How would you describe the difference?

How can the Christmas spirit distract us from pursuing the spirit of Christ?

What elements of the Christmas spirit get packed up with the decorations but maybe should be sustained?

7. What does it mean to have the Spirit of Christ living in you? *You could discuss Galatians 4:19, where Paul anguishes over the baby church forgetting the gospel: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!"*

In what ways was Christ formed in Mary?

Both physically and spiritually, Christ grew within Mary.

What behaviors are present when Christ lives in a person? What attitudes?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What aspect of the Christmas spirit would you like to extend into the new year? In what ways does this reflect the spirit of Christ?

Resources

Bible notes

- 38 – “servant” means slave-girl, so Mary was expressing complete submission to God’s will. Sometimes people offer to serve but their motives are skewed. Mary simply made herself available to God, not knowing what it would cost or what she might gain.

Prayer ideas –

Thank God for the incredible gifts he gives.

Thank God for the people who model the spirit of Christ for you.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide each person, and pray for each person to cooperate with his work.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Invite three kids to read Luke 1:26-38 as actors – Gabriel, Mary, and a narrator. You might print off the script below to help them.

For younger kids, you might read this story from a children’s book.

What did God ask Mary to do?

How did Mary respond?

When are some times it is difficult to obey?

What should you do when it is difficult to obey?

What can we learn from Mary?



December 28, 2008

LIFE Group Guide

Luke 1 – The Spirit of Christ

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **Allowing the Spirit of Christ to live in us all year long.**

This week’s guide comes from Luke 1, Mary’s call to carry the Son of God. Her humble, obedient spirit is a model for the spirit we should develop, not just during the holidays but throughout the year.

This week’s guide includes a letter describing our plans for 2009. Remind your group of dates that affect them:

Jan. 4 LIFE groups meet (1,3, and 5th Sundays in 2009)

Jan. 7 Leadership training – who could attend from your group?

Feb. 15 Three-week campaign begins

Mar. 5 Beans & Steak night celebration for LG leaders

Leadership tip: Everyone in your group is gifted in some way. Have you found ways to utilize each person’s gifts? Which person in the group has the most untapped gifts? Invite those under-used but gifted people to join us for leadership training on Jan. 7, 14, and 21 at 7 pm.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

❖ When did/will you take down your Christmas tree?

❖ What is your favorite holiday movie?

❖ What was the highlight of your week?

Luke 1:26-38 – as a dialogue (from the Children’s Bible)

Narrator: During Elizabeth’s sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said,

Gabriel: Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you.

Narrator: But Mary was very confused by what the angel said. Mary wondered,

Mary: What does this mean?

Gabriel: Don’t be afraid, Mary, because God is pleased with you. ³¹Listen! You will become pregnant. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and people will call him the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of King David, his ancestor. ³³He will rule over the people of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end.

Mary: How will this happen? I am a virgin!

Gabriel: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. The baby will be holy. He will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Now listen! Elizabeth, your relative, is very old. But she is also pregnant with a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. ³⁷God can do everything!

Mary: I am the servant girl of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!

Narrator: Then the angel went away.

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