



Study Guide for NO FEAR

Do Not Be Afraid to Believe
December 13, 2009

Open Up

Mary the mother of Jesus is one of the most well-known and well-loved people in the Bible. She was both ordinary - a young peasant girl, and extraordinary - believing God's hard-to-believe miracle. Some branches of Christianity emphasize different things about Mary. For those in your group who come from a church background, what did that church teach about Mary? **TRANSITION:** Similarly to many other Bible people, the more we learn about Mary's story, the more connections we can see to our own lives.

Dig In

- 1) Read Luke 1:26-38. What are Mary's initial reactions to the first part of the angel's message (verses 29, 34)? From her concluding words in verse 38, what does Mary feel after being reminded that nothing is impossible with God? Ask group members to share examples of being surprised by a hard-to-believe God truth or event.
- 2) **BACKGROUND:** These verses use figurative language to make the contrast between our temporary earthly existence and our eternal life with God. Read 2 Corinthians 5:4-9. What is God's long-term purpose for us? What should our purpose be while we are still on earth?

Work On

The key concepts we learn from Mary are *purpose* and *trust*. Mary had a special purpose, and yet she was an ordinary person. God always chooses to do His work through ordinary people.

- 1) Mary's main qualification was she was available for God's purpose. God has a purpose for us, too. Ask your group members to discuss their answers to the question "Are you available for God's purpose"? What might be some factors that hold us back?
- 2) God has a purpose for every life. God's purpose for your life may not be the one you planned on. Sometimes, God calls us to dramatic, amazing things. Most of what God wants us to do is not flashy, but faithful. We are not always called to be visible, but always available. Mary's response was, "Whatever you want, Lord, I am ready. I will do it." She trusted God's purpose, even though it meant some intimidating short-term challenges. Ask your group to share current examples of people who trust God's purpose, even when it means hardship.

Lift Up

"Amen" means "so be it" or "Let it be." In our prayers, we tend to ask God to do a list of things according to our will, and then tack on "Amen" at the end as a way of saying, "God, may it be according to my will." For this group prayer time, pray like Mary did, simply focusing on "Okay, Lord, I submit, I agree, I am down with your plan."

Another Step – Advanced Study

Angels played supporting roles throughout Jesus' life from announcements before and shortly after his birth, all the way through to the resurrection. Read Matthew 4:8-11 and Luke 22:39-46. From these stories from the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry, should we expect God's help (whether angelic or fellow Christians) to avoid difficulty or to deal with it?