

THIS IS JESUS

UNIT ONE: THE MESSIAH NAMED JESUS PART 1: JESUS THE MESSIAH

Lesson 3: A Mother's Song

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That Mary's song of praise (The Magnificat) identifies some key traits of God.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: Praise God for choosing to love them and use them to share His love with others.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Luke 1:26-56.

KEY TAKEAWAY: The arrival of Jesus is a testament to God's mightiness, faithfulness, and mercy

OVERVIEW:

In the fullness of time, God spoke to Mary to tell her she would be the mother of His Son, the Messiah. When Mary was told about God's plan, she believed it. She praised Him for what He would do for humanity. Her "song" of praise expressed love for God, faith in His promises, and joy in His redemptive plan for humanity. Students will aim to understand Mary's reasons for praising God, and reflect on their own view of God.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, at the very least helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the *Bible Background* to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Luke

- *Author:* Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

THE SETTING

This lesson continues to introduce students to the miraculous preparation for the coming of the Messiah. They will see the reaction of Mary as she is told she will give birth to Jesus. In obedient faith, she expressed a hymn of praise to God and confidence in what He would do through the Son she would bear. With this reaction, we can deepen our understanding of how miraculous the birth of Jesus is to humankind.

THE MAIN POINT

The angel Gabriel told Mary God had chosen her to give birth to the Messiah (Luke 1:26–38). Mary humbly accepted her responsibility. She trusted God to accomplish it even though she was a virgin. Mary's song is often referred to as the Magnificat (from the Latin word for *magnify* or *glorify*). The point of this lesson is to encourage students to magnify God in the same way that Mary did. Help students identify the excitement of Jesus' arrival, and how Mary's song was a response to God's fulfillment of a promise.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In*; the Bible Study section called *The Main Event*; and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word*.

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To help students start thinking of how Mary's life changed when the angel told her of Jesus' arrival.
- *Set-Up:* It might be best to find a spot with room for a small performance (three students will be doing a dramatic reading of Luke 1:26-38)

FIRST, ask students:

- **Have you ever been given such great news that you burst into a song?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

THEN, explain to students that you need three volunteers to perform a dramatic reading of Luke 1:26-38. You will need to assign a narrator, the angel, and Mary. Explain to students that this is one of the most famous scenes in the Bible, the Annunciation to Mary, and that artists throughout history have portrayed this scene. (If you have a computer or tablet available, display some of the ways artists throughout Christian history and from different cultures have pictured this scene, showing students a few examples of the public domain (older) art.) **Say something like:**

- **This moment has been depicted countless ways through the centuries. And now, we are going to perform our own rendition!**

Instruct the three students to read and perform Luke 1:26-38.

NEXT, ask students:

- **Mary was likely the same age as some of you. How would you react if this happened to you when you went home?**
 - *Answers will vary.*

Explain to students that the news that she would have a baby was, of course, a shock to Mary. But there was something more exciting in play... she would be fulfilling a centuries-old prophecy of the coming Messiah! Explain that she had some major questions to ask the angel who announced this wonderful news: she wondered how she could become a mother, since she was a virgin; she probably wondered how her fiancé would receive the news that she would be having a baby, but that she had not been unfaithful to him.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **Despite her questions, Mary accepted God's perfect plan for her life, trusting that God was going to accomplish great things through her child. Mary went to see her relative Elizabeth, who was expecting a very special child herself, the baby who would become John the Baptist. In our lesson today, we are going to examine how all of this led to Mary's beautiful song of praise in Luke 1:46-56. Let's get started!**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To help students read the Magnificat as a song of praise for God's mightiness, faithfulness, and mercy.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, introduce students to the term Magnificat. Explain that the name comes from the first word of the Latin translation of the passage, which was essentially titled “My soul magnifies the Lord.” Magnificat means to magnify. This passage is written in a poetic style. **Say something like:**

- **In the Old Testament, there is an entire book of songs similar to what we will read today, called the book of Psalms. When Mary responds in song, she models this song after the Hebrew poetry found in the Psalms. This style of poetry often uses parallelism, which means that an idea can be expressed more than once by using different words. Sometimes, parallelism pairs opposite ideas. Mary’s song uses both kinds of poetic parallelism.**

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 1:46-49. Once it has been read, point out the poetic parallelism in verse 46. “My soul magnifies the Lord” would be the first line. She then ‘repeats’ this in the next line by saying, “My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Challenge students to be on the lookout for my synonymous parallelisms as they read. (The next passage will bring about some contrasting parallelisms.)

After that brief explanation, divide the group in half. Direct one half of the group to find five names or descriptions for God in Luke 1:46-49. (Lord, God, Savior, Mighty One, holy). Direct the other half to find four descriptions Mary gave herself (humble, servant, rejoicing, blessed). **Ask students:**

- **When we think of mightiness, what people tend to come to mind?**
 - *Answers will vary:* Students will likely say people who are strong (professional athletes) or people who run big businesses (CEOs), etc.
- **When we hear mighty, we think powerful! What are some of the advantages of being mighty or powerful?**
 - *Answer:* Typically, it means that people respect you and that you have a lot of things (like money or fame) to be responsible for.

Explain to students that when Mary opens her song of praise, she begins by telling the world about a Mighty God who had chosen to use someone as inconsequential as herself to bear and raise the Messiah.

NEXT, read or have a student read Luke 1:50-52. Explain that in these verses, Mary moved from praising God for His personal help to praising Him for His help to all His children. **Ask:**

- **Is there something other than God’s power that Mary praised in these verses?**
 - *Answer:* She praised His mercy.

Explain that mercy also means “compassion.” Compassion often means receiving kindness rather than judgment. The greatest example of God’s compassion, or mercy, is His willingness to forgive sin and send Jesus to save us. Also, take a moment to point out a contrasting parallelism in this passage. Mary says, “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.” This is another great example of how the Magnificat stays true to Hebrew poetry. Briefly explain to students that contrasting parallelisms often point out that God knows how to keep things in perfect balance.

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 1:53-56. **Ask students:**

- **Name a few things that Mary praises God for in this last section of this passage.**
 - *Answers will vary:* Students should be able to identify that God has given in a just way (filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty) and that He has fulfilled His promise to His people (which goes back all the way to His promises to Abraham).

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- When we praise God, we focus on His characteristics. This kind of deep thinking about Him helps us trust and obey Him more. Praising God can take a variety of forms... like public prayer, public music, private prayer, poetry, and visual art. But one of the most important ways we can praise Him is by imitating His character.

Challenge each student to plan one way they can praise God this week with an action in response to His blessings.

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students compare the gods and goddesses of other religions (common to the time that Mary wrote the Magnificat) to what we read in Luke 1 about God.
- *Set-Up:* None needed.

FIRST, explain to students that you will be reading them a short excerpt about the gods and goddesses in the Greek Pantheon. Many people who grew up at the same time as Mary would have believed in these deities and held this as a type of religious text. Ask students to pay close attention as you read the following:

- In Greek mythology, the legend of the Trojan War begins with a wedding gone wrong. King Peleus planned to marry Thetis, a sea nymph. All of the gods were invited, with one notable exception: Zeus' daughter, Eris. She was known as the goddess of discord and was not exactly someone you would want at a wedding. Naturally, she got angry because she was not invited, so she decided to play a prank on the guests. Once all the guests had arrived, Eris tossed a golden apple among the guests. Eris said the apple belonged to "whomever was the fairest," or most beautiful. Upon seeing the golden apple, the goddesses Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera began to argue over to whom the apple was for. Each goddess thought she was the fairest! Finally, they went to Zeus to get him to settle it. But Zeus thought it best to stay out of this particular argument, so he sent the goddesses to a guy named Paris. In order to get the apple, the goddesses all tried to bribe Paris. Aphrodite promised him the most beautiful woman in the world, which sounded like a good deal; Aphrodite was given the apple, and Paris was given the girl. But there was one problem: the girl, Helen, was already married! But this did not stop Paris. He hopped on a ship, sailed to Sparta, and stole Helen, bringing her back to Troy. Her husband found out, became extremely angry, and called together a group of his friends to retrieve Helen, sparking the beginning of the Trojan War.

THEN, ask students:

- Ancient Greeks worshipped these gods and goddesses. What would be some of the problems of worshipping deities who have many of the same faults that humans have?
 - *Answers will vary.*

Say something like:

- The Greeks aren't the only ones in human history who made their own gods to worship. Many others, including us, have formed our own versions of gods that need our dedication to 'work' or survive. The problem with worshipping fickle gods who function like we do is that we can't rely on them. These gods are made by humans, packed with all the sinful nature that we have. Just like the Greeks, we may see them as divine, but truthfully, they are no different from us. They are idols. Take a moment to think back to the Magnificat that we read earlier.

FINALLY, ask students:

- What are some of the attributes or characteristics Mary uses when speaking about God?
 - *Answers will vary.*

- **How does that differ from the Greek gods and goddesses in our story?**

- o *Answers will vary.*

Challenge students to reflect on their own perspective of God. Do they view Him as fickle and unpredictable, the way that the Greeks viewed their deities? Or, do they praise His mightiness, faithfulness, and mercy as Mary does in Luke 1?

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.