

# Learning More with Stories of the Master

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## ~ The Young Virgin of Galilee ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 1:26-79.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

### 1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 1:26-79 NASB	Luke 1:26-79 NLT
<p><sup>26</sup> Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was very perplexed at <i>this</i> statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; <sup>33</sup> and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.</p> <p><b>Mary Visits Elizabeth</b></p> <p><sup>39</sup> Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup> and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed <i>are</i> you among women, and blessed <i>is</i> the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And how has it <i>happened</i> to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed <i>is</i> she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."</p> <p><b>The Magnificat</b></p> <p><sup>46</sup> And Mary said:</p> <p>"My soul exalts the Lord, <sup>47</sup> And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.</p>	<p><sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"</p> <p><sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"</p> <p><sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."</p> <p><sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For the word of God will never fail."</p> <p><sup>38</sup> Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.</p> <p><sup>39</sup> A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town<sup>40</sup> where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><sup>42</sup> Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. <sup>43</sup> Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? <sup>44</sup> When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup> You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."</p> <p><sup>46</sup> Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. <sup>47</sup> How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! <sup>48</sup> For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. <sup>50</sup> He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. <sup>51</sup> His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down princes from their thrones</p>

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<sup>48</sup> “For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant;  
For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

<sup>49</sup> “For the Mighty One has done great things for me;  
And holy is His name.

<sup>50</sup> “AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION  
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

<sup>51</sup> “He has done mighty deeds with His arm;  
He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart.

<sup>52</sup> “He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones,  
And has exalted those who were humble.

<sup>53</sup> “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;  
And sent away the rich empty-handed.

<sup>54</sup> “He has given help to Israel His servant,  
In remembrance of His mercy,

<sup>55</sup> As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

<sup>56</sup> And Mary stayed with her about three months, and *then* returned to her home.

## John Is Born

<sup>57</sup> Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. <sup>58</sup> Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

<sup>59</sup> And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. <sup>60</sup> But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.” <sup>61</sup> And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.” <sup>62</sup> And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. <sup>63</sup> And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished. <sup>64</sup> And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he *began* to speak in praise of God. <sup>65</sup> Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup> All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, “What then will this child *turn out to be*?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

## Zacharias’s Prophecy

<sup>67</sup> And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

<sup>68</sup> “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel,  
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,  
<sup>69</sup> And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of David His servant—

<sup>70</sup> As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

<sup>71</sup> Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,  
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

<sup>72</sup> To show mercy toward our fathers,

And to remember His holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

<sup>74</sup> To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,  
Might serve Him without fear,

<sup>75</sup> In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

<sup>76</sup> “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;

and exalted the humble.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel  
and remembered to be merciful.

<sup>55</sup> For he made this promise to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children forever.”

<sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

<sup>57</sup> When it was time for Elizabeth’s baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. <sup>58</sup> And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her.

<sup>59</sup> When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. <sup>60</sup> But Elizabeth said, “No! His name is John!”

<sup>61</sup> “What?” they exclaimed. “There is no one in all your family by that name.” <sup>62</sup> So they used gestures to ask the baby’s father what he

wanted to name him. <sup>63</sup> He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s surprise he wrote, “His name is John.” <sup>64</sup> Instantly

Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

<sup>65</sup> Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. <sup>66</sup> Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, “What will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

<sup>67</sup> Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

<sup>68</sup> “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has visited and redeemed his people.

<sup>69</sup> He has sent us a mighty Savior  
from the royal line of his servant David,

<sup>70</sup> just as he promised  
through his holy prophets long ago.

<sup>71</sup> Now we will be saved from our enemies  
and from all who hate us.

<sup>72</sup> He has been merciful to our ancestors  
by remembering his sacred covenant—

<sup>73</sup> the covenant he swore with an oath  
to our ancestor Abraham.

<sup>74</sup> We have been rescued from our enemies  
so we can serve God without fear,

<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness  
for as long as we live.

<sup>76</sup> “And you, my little son,  
will be called the prophet of the Most High,  
because you will prepare the way for the Lord.

<sup>77</sup> You will tell his people how to find salvation  
through forgiveness of their sins.

<sup>78</sup> Because of God’s tender mercy,  
the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,

<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

and to guide us to the path of peace.”

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<p><sup>77</sup>To give to His people <i>the</i> knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, <sup>78</sup>Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, <sup>79</sup>TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”</p>	
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## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- People travelling from Nazareth to Judea could take a shorter route through Samaria, but because of the hostility between Jews and Samaritans they would probably go around Samaria to the east of the Jordan and then reenter Judea from the east.
- Mary quotes verbatim from two biblical passages and alludes to many others showing herself to be a young woman who knew Israel’s scriptures. The two she quotes verbatim were Psalm 103:17 and 107:9 and we find numerous references to Isaiah, Exodus, Genesis, and especially the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2.
- Circumcising young baby boys on the eight day was based on the original story of Abraham’s circumcision in Genesis 17:12 and from the Mosaic command in Leviticus 12:3.

### Answer these reflective questions.

Reread Luke 1:31-33, 35. Note the different descriptions for Mary’s child. Which of these is most important to you and why?

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Reread Luke 1:39-45. What do you think is the most amazing truth about this part of the story?

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Read Luke 1:46-55. What strikes you about Mary’s praise to God? What is most important?

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**Read Zacharias' praise to God in 1:67-79. What strikes you about his praise to God and what do you think is most important about it?**

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