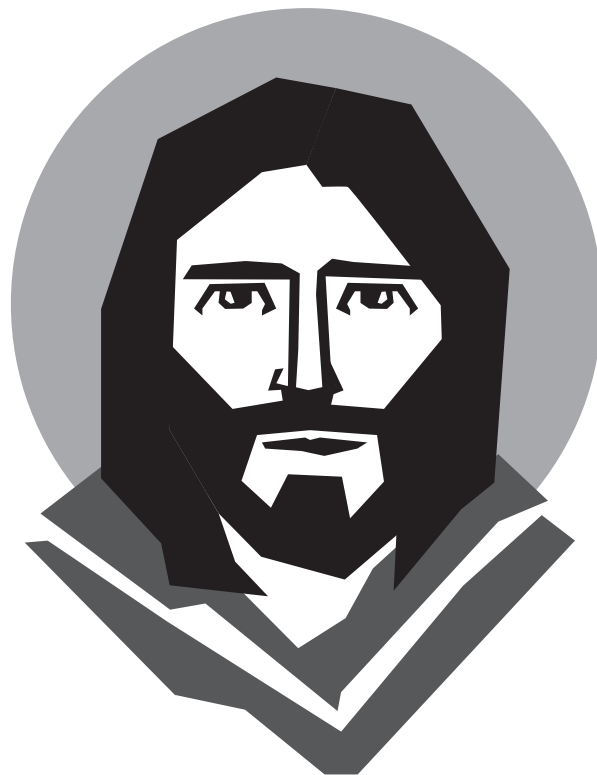
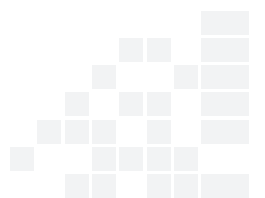
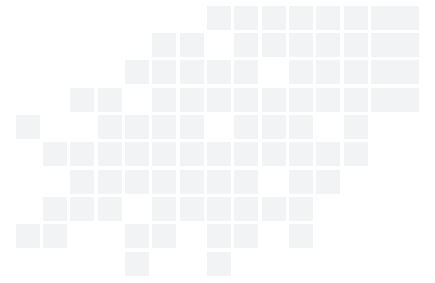


# **THE REAL** **JESUS**



*A study through the Gospel of Luke*

## **BOOK 6: HIS PREPARATION**





# BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

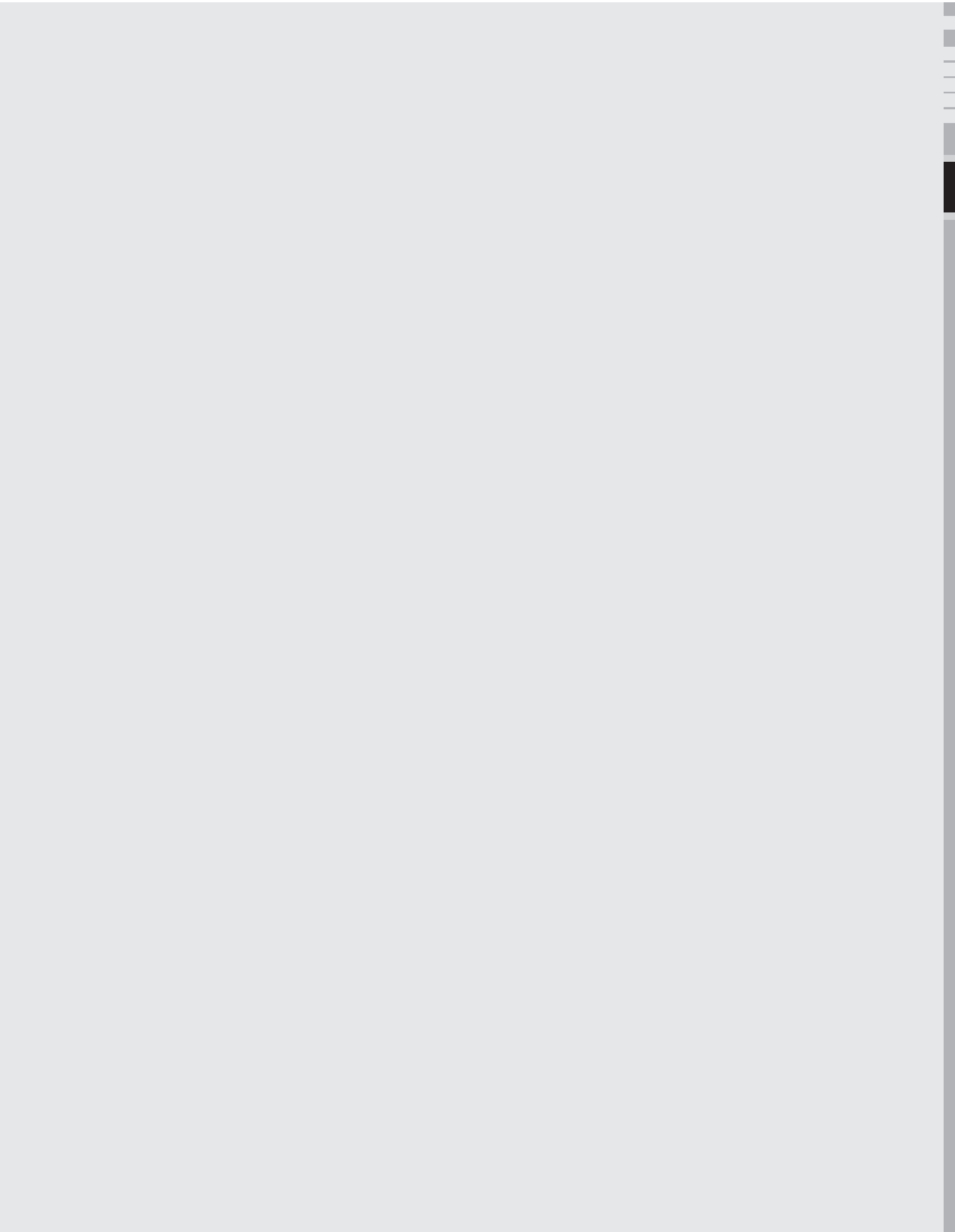
In the Bible, God reveals His truth about how to have eternal life by becoming a believer in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The believer is a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a true child of God, and one who has been saved by God according to God's grace (undeserved favor). *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## *How does one become a Christian?*

- The Bible, God's word, says that eternal life (salvation) is a free gift of God which cannot be earned or deserved (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- However, we also find in God's word that all people are born sinners and cannot save themselves from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death and separation from God. God's requirement is perfection and no one is perfect (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:3-23; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- God tells us in His word that He is holy, meaning that He is perfect and that He is also just, meaning that He gives to sinners what is deserved, and because of His holiness and justice He must punish sinners. But thankfully, the Bible also says that God is loving and merciful and does not take pleasure in punishing sinners (Exodus 34:6-7; Ephesians 2:4-5).
- God has mercy on sinners by not giving them what they deserve. This is only possible because He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the God-man, to be the substitute for sinners bearing the penalty for their sin and satisfying God's justice (John 1:1,14; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:8).
- Jesus said that in order for anyone to have eternal life there must be repentance of sins and faith placed in His substitutionary death on the cross to pay for the penalty of one's sins. This faith must be in Jesus Christ alone not depending on anything else including "good works" (Mark 1:15b; Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9).

## *What then is the response to these things if one desires to have eternal life and become a Christian?*

1. Pray and ask God to forgive you. The Bible says that you must repent of your sins, being ashamed of them, genuinely regretting and grieving over them, and firmly deciding to make an about-face and turn away from sin and your old lifestyle (Acts 3:19-20).
2. Pray and tell God that you place your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you. The Bible says that for you to become a Christian, you must place your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died on the cross to become your substitute and who took the penalty for your sin upon Himself once and for all (John 3:36).



# THE REAL JESUS: HIS RESURRECTION

Week Two | November 18, 2018 | Mothers Who Magnify the Lord

## PREPARATION

### GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's texts, Luke 1:39–56. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God will accomplish all His plans.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

We should praise God for His plans even as we wait for them to be accomplished, because the Real Jesus always does what He says He will do.

### MEDITATE

*“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Mary has just received the news that she has been chosen to be the mother of the Savior of the world. Can you imagine what she's going through? Put yourself in her shoes. She must figure out how she will explain to Joseph that she is faithful and yet expecting. Surely, she considered the possible danger to her life as others thought her guilty of adultery. Not to mention the pressure of parenting her Lord! Mary desperately needed someone to share this with. She chose to go to the home of her cousins, Zechariah and Elizabeth. If anyone could understand her predicament of being impossibly pregnant, it was her cousin whose own womb was experiencing God's supernatural activity.

You might think that when these two expecting mothers got together, especially since they were not expecting to be pregnant at this stage in their lives, they would get a little chatty about their status. You can easily imagine them sharing how their bodies were changing and how people's reactions to them were also changing. Elizabeth would have been experiencing a reversal in her neighbors' ideas of her being disgraced by the Lord. Mary would be trading her reputation as a respectable young fiancée for that of an adulteress. There was much for them to discuss and all of it valid. But when these two cousins get together, their bodies and reputations are the last thing on their minds. All they want to do is magnify the Lord!

Something significant happens in this joyous reunion. Remember that, while Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant, Elizabeth was given no news of Mary's pregnancy. She found out through the Holy Spirit the moment she heard Mary's voice in her home (v. 41). What's significant about this scene is that Elizabeth is the very first person in the Bible to confess that Jesus is Lord, and before He was even born (v. 43). They were waiting on the Christ. And now, He's been identified as the child growing in Mary's womb and their wait has an expiration date.

In the Old Testament, God promised His people a Savior (Isaiah 7:14). He made many promises to them, and the time has finally arrived for all of them to be fulfilled through the coming of His Son. Mary and Elizabeth believed and proclaimed Jesus' lordship before they ever saw Him. This is what faith looks like. These mothers understood that God was preparing to fulfill His promises. In the final stages of this holy waiting, these women gathered, praised, and worshiped. They didn't need to see the fulfillment of God's plan in order to praise Him for it. When God says something, it's not wishful thinking or merely a suggestion. The Real Jesus always accomplishes His plans. What God says, He will do. We can praise Him for His plans because we know they will become reality.

**Q:** *God has revealed His will for us in Scripture. What about God's big purpose for you has already been fulfilled? What part is not yet fulfilled?*

**Q:** *How can we praise God for what we know He's going to do before He accomplishes it? What Scriptures help us with this?*

## ▣ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In today's lesson we will study two mothers' reactions to God's plan for their lives and how we should respond to God's revealed plan for our lives as we wait for Him to accomplish it.

1. BLESS THOSE WHOM GOD USES FOR HIS PURPOSES
2. BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS WORKS
3. BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS MERCY

## GOING DEEPER


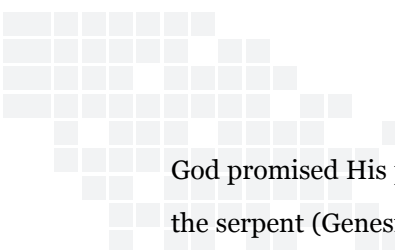
+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

## BLESS THOSE WHOM GOD USES FOR HIS PURPOSES

### ▣ LUKE 1:39-45 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-29

**Q:** *What did the baby inside Elizabeth's womb do when Mary's voice was heard?*

**Q:** *What was Elizabeth's emotional state as she greeted Mary?*



God promised His people in the Old Testament that an offspring born of a woman would rise to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). The prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming Savior. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). God told His people His plans for their redemption. One day, a child would be born. Approximately 4,000 years elapsed between the announcement of the coming serpent-crusher and Jesus’ arrival. Do you think people began to doubt that God would do what He promised?

Perhaps they thought God was more like man, saying one thing but doing another. Unlike us, when God says He will do something, He always comes through. The Real Jesus always accomplishes His plans. And this plan, God’s only Son coming to dwell among us, was the grandest of them all. Surely, God would rightly choose a woman of importance to give birth to His only Son. She would be tasked with caring for Him in the critical and formative early years. But God chose a simple, virgin girl for this special task. He doesn’t always think and act like we think He should (Isaiah 55:8).

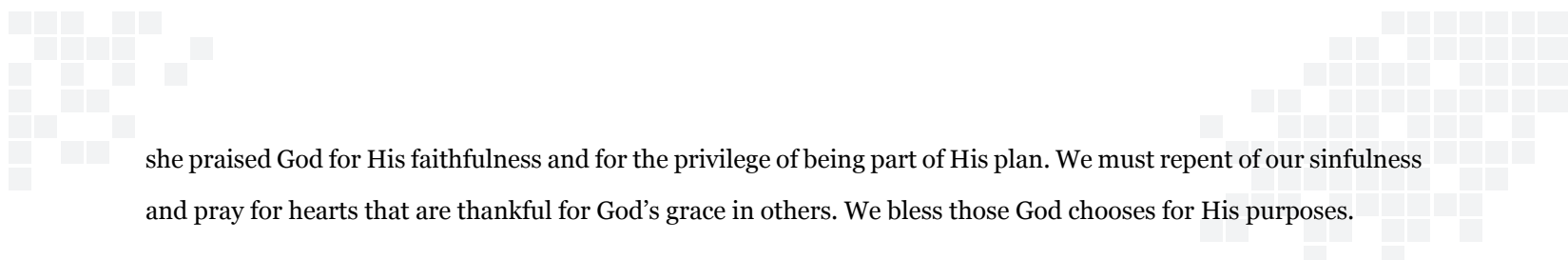
God chooses to accomplish His extraordinary plans through ordinary people. He often uses people who have no claim to wisdom, power, or impressive pedigrees according to worldly standards. He chooses what is foolish in the eyes of the world to shame the wise, and what is weak in the eyes of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27). Remember, He turned a shepherd into a king. He made an evangelist out of a persecutor of the church. He transformed fishermen into church planters. The Real Jesus sees what the world overlooks. He values what the world does not.

As His image bearers (Genesis 1:27), we will value, and therefore bless, what He values. Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, blessed Mary and the fruit of her womb (v. 42). Elizabeth realized the great honor shown to Mary for being chosen to be the mother of Jesus. She counted herself honored to be visited by the mother of her Lord (v. 43). She also blessed Mary for believing God would fulfill the words He spoke to her (v. 45). Both women believed God would do what He told them. The Real Jesus always does what He says He will do.

Throughout history, God has used ordinary and even unlikely people to do His will. This should give us great hope that we too can participate in the privilege of being used by our Creator. And when we see God using our brothers and sisters in Christ, we should celebrate that grace! We should champion them in their service to our King. Often, our flesh tempts us to compete with one another instead. Envy easily reigns in our hearts when someone else gets honored by Christ. We’re all for God building His kingdom, but we want Him to do through us.

Elizabeth’s response to Mary’s pregnancy was not one of envy. She didn’t feel slighted because Mary was carrying the Messiah and she wasn’t. She didn’t compare the child she was carrying to the one Mary was carrying. Instead,





she praised God for His faithfulness and for the privilege of being part of His plan. We must repent of our sinfulness and pray for hearts that are thankful for God's grace in others. We bless those God chooses for His purposes.


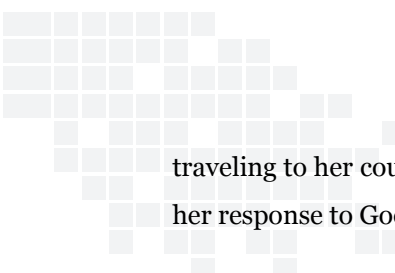
- ♀: *Elizabeth proclaimed that Jesus is Lord. 1 Peter 2:9 says we are to “proclaim the excellencies” of Christ. How are you obeying God’s command to be a proclaimer?*
- ♀: *Elizabeth blessed Mary for her faith. Think of the people you know. Does someone in your life stand out as a hero of faith? In what ways do you value their example to you?*
- ♀: *When God chooses to use your friends and family to build His kingdom, do you feel a desire to compete with them or champion them? How can you cultivate a heart that praises God’s kingdom work even when God uses others in ways He doesn’t use you?*

## BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS WORKS

☒ **LUKE 1:46–49**

- ♀: *What does Mary say her soul and her spirit do?*
- ♀: *What has God done for Mary?*

We’ve seen Elizabeth’s joy because of God’s plan to bless them with the birth of their Lord. Let’s transition to Mary’s reaction. Mary goes from a divine conversation with an angel who announced her role in the coming kingdom to

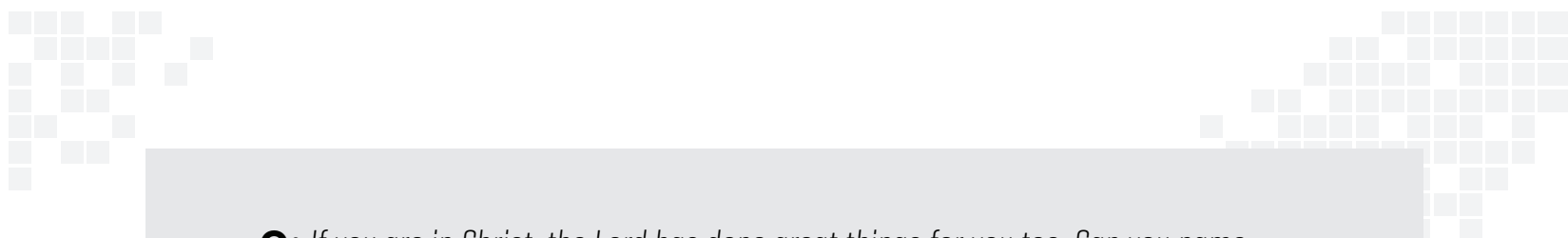


traveling to her cousins' home and being greeted with Elizabeth's Holy Spirit-inspired blessing. Now let's consider her response to God's plan.

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior’” (Luke 1:46–47). To magnify is to make something appear larger than it is. She essentially sets out to increase Him. Isn't this what we're here for, to make much of Christ? We make Christ bigger than He appears to the world. She says, “Whatever you think of the Lord, I'm here to tell you He's bigger.” Her praise of God extends to her own joy. Mary's joy is found in the Lord. When our satisfaction and joy are found in the Real Jesus, we will make much of Him on the earth. Think of how you might enthusiastically tell your friends about the new guacamole recipe you found, or how, when your child succeeds in something, you can't wait to brag about him to your family. We make much of the things we find our joy in. Evaluate your own praise of Him, or lack thereof. If you don't make much of Jesus' work in your life, could it be because you don't find your joy in Him?

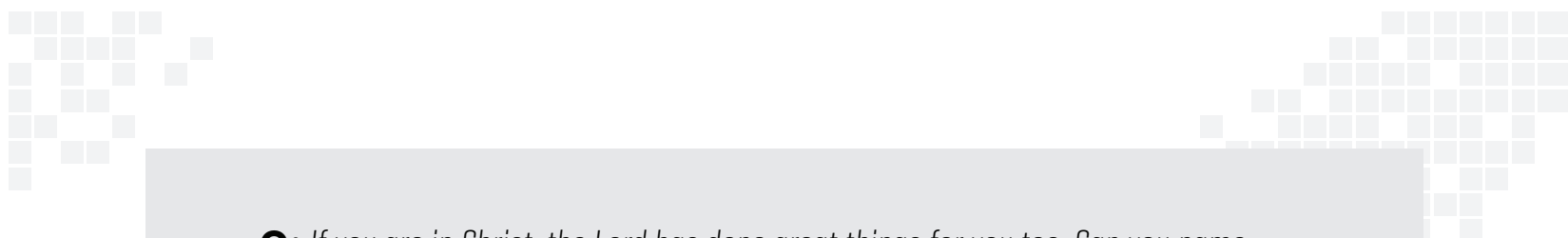
Mary rejoices in the Lord because she recognizes the spectacular grace of God looking on the humble estate of His servant (v. 48). Mary's humility is displayed, as it was before Gabriel, in her understanding of who she is in relation to God. She doesn't believe she is entitled to any favor from God. Twice she refers to herself as His servant (vv. 38, 48). Mary rejoices in the Lord and magnifies Him because she sees the wonder of the mighty God doing great things for His servant. Therefore, she blesses the Lord for what He's doing, even before He's done it. God's Word says He will exalt those who humble themselves before Him (James 4:10). And Mary knows she will be exalted in all generations, and they will call her “blessed” because of what the Lord has done for her. Even though Jesus hadn't been born yet, Mary can say with confidence that God has done great things for her.

The Lord has done great things for you too. He deserves to be magnified. We must make much of Christ to the people in our circles of influence. Some of what He has done for us hasn't been fulfilled yet. His Word is full of promises of our eternal life with Christ in heaven, and we can praise Him for it now because of our confidence in the Real Jesus who always does what He says. An example of this is found in Romans 8:30. God says that those whom He justified, He also glorified (past tense). The moment we trusted Christ for our salvation, we were justified, or declared righteous. This has already happened for all believers. But God says He also glorified us. Our glorification will not be complete until we get to heaven, yet God speaks as if it's already happened. Our understanding of what God hasn't brought to fruition in our lives yet cannot be divorced from the surety of God's Word being fulfilled. Even though it hasn't happened yet, we are so sure of it, we can speak of it in the past tense. God has done great things for us, and we should bless Him because of it.

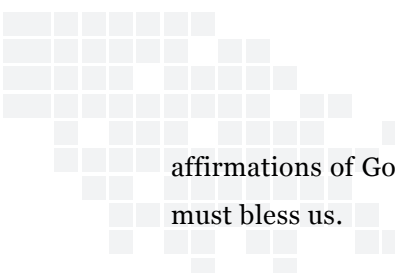
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- ♀: *If you are in Christ, the Lord has done great things for you too. Can you name some of those things? Does your response look like Mary's?*
  - ♀: *Do you respond in praise and worship like Mary? How can we help each other cultivate hearts of gratitude toward the Lord? Can you think of specific verses that inspire your heart toward praise?*
  - ♀: *Mary acknowledges her own lowly state and is awed that the mighty God would look on her and do great things for her. Are you awed by God's favor when you experience it, like it is something undeserved? Or are you mad when it feels like you aren't experiencing it? What help do you receive from God's Word to strengthen you in the fight against entitlement and to help you grow in wonder of His grace?*

## BLESS THE LORD FOR HIS MERCY

☒ LUKE 1:50–56 AND 1 SAMUEL 2:1–10

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- ♀: *Who is God's mercy for?*
  - ♀: *What does God do to the mighty and to the humble?*

Mercy is a word we hear frequently in church culture. Perhaps because of that, we can easily desensitize ourselves to its meaning. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. It's when someone has the power to punish and they use that power to pardon. In our culture, we understand transactional relationships. If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. We understand the if/then way of life. We typically help the people who can help us in return. It's easy to apply this flawed understanding to our relationship with God. Regardless of our verbal



affirmations of God’s mercy in our lives, our default logic convinces us that if we do the right thing, then God must bless us.

This logic attempts to put Jesus in a box we can understand and control. But the Real Jesus rejects our false logic and refuses to play our games. The Real Jesus confronts us with the truth—the only thing we deserve is God’s wrath. When we understand this uncomplicated truth, we will see God’s mercy like Mary does, and we will magnify the Lord and bless Him. We will be awed by His mercy and embody a holy fear, or reverence, for Him. His mercy is for those who fear Him.

Luke 1:50–56 frames God’s mercy in terms of divine reversals. God scatters the proud, brings down the mighty, exalts the humble, fills the hungry, and empties the wealthy. Mary’s proclamation of the God’s mercy is similar to Hannah’s praise in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. Hannah says the mighty will be weak, the weak will be strong, and the needy will sit in places of honor next to princes. What does mercy have to do with these reversals? Hannah answers, “He will guard the feet of His faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail” (v. 9). Mercy is extended to us for our good, so that we will not prevail by our might. In mercy, He doesn’t allow us to put our trust in ourselves. We are dependent on Him. The Lord causes us to prevail because He extends His mercy to those who fear Him. The prideful will feel entitled to what they think they deserve. But the humble will praise God for His mercy, because they know all they deserve is to suffer God’s wrath in hell forever. God’s mercy is intimately linked to our humility.

God is merciful to His people in all times and in all cultures because He remembers what He promised Abraham (Luke 1:55). God always does what He says. He told Abraham, “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him” (Genesis 17:19). The Real Jesus doesn’t have a transactional relationship with us. He cannot be manipulated into performing the way we think He should perform. He is a personal and relational God. He is a good Father to His beloved children. He extends His mercy to us because He promised to secure our adoption through His Son. He is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4). As recipients of His mercy, we should be lovers of mercy (Micah 6:8), show mercy to others (James 2:13), and bless the God of mercy.

🕯: *God’s mercy is for those who fear Him. How does Scripture inform your understanding of what it means to fear the Lord?*

🕯: *How can Mary speak in past tense of things that haven’t happened yet?*

**Q:** *Mary lists specific ways God's mercy reverses injustice. God's Word commands us to seek justice (Micah 6:8). How can you be a justice seeker for the oppressed?*

## NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

**Q:** *God values our belief. Mary is blessed by Elizabeth for her belief. Abraham believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). How can you value the belief of others?*

**Q:** *How can we help one another praise God for accomplishing His will, even as we wait for Him to do it?*

**Q:** *Mary and Elizabeth were prepared for Jesus' first coming. We know He's coming again. How are you preparing for His second coming? How does Scripture tell us to prepare ourselves?*

**Q:** *Are you encouraged by the reminder that God uses ordinary people to accomplish His plans? Take some time to discuss the ordinary people you know and how God is using them to build His kingdom in big and small ways.*



## PRAY

+ *Use this prayer point to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Father, Your Word is sure. You do everything You say You will do. The fact that You haven't yet accomplished everything Your Word says is not evidence of You not accomplishing all of it. While I wait for Your promises to be fulfilled, help me praise You for Your good plans revealed in Your Word. Thank you for using ordinary people like me to accomplish Your works. My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

## COMMENTARY

**LUKE 1:41** “The baby leaped” could be seen as the prophetic first instance of John preparing the way for Jesus (see Luke 1:17, 76). John's prophetic role is evidenced even as an unborn child in the womb.

**LUKE 1:55** “To Abraham and to his offspring” emphasizes the fulfillment of salvation history.

*\*All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke).*



