

## Let's Go Group Studies

### Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. **Please do modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style.** For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who reads and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. **Be authentic.** If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. They give the participants a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page and to begin to discuss the relevance of the scripture to their needs.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Restate it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion and aren't intended to be read verbatim to the group. They may not be the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer. As part of your preparation, please add to and edit the notes to fit where you intend to lead the discussion.
7. A **Follow up question** helps participants open up a little more and look a little deeper and is meant to be asked after there has been some discussion of the prior question.
8. The last page is the participant handout.
9. Please remember that our focus, purpose and practice is to **Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.**

## Helping Others See God - Witness His Majesty

- 1) Scripture: Luke 1:26-55; Isaiah 7:14; Rom 8:17; Gal 4:4-7; Jer 29:11; Phil 1:6
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to identify one obstacle to believing God that they could surrender to Him this week and that would make them happy.
- 3) Resources: Gospel of Luke, John A. Martin. Bible Knowledge Commentary/ New Testament Copyright © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries. All rights reserved. (BKC)
- 4) Preparation:
  - A. Pray for guidance
  - B. Review Leader's Notes and read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
  - A. "Last time I asked you identify if there was any situation in your life where human authority conflicts with how you believe God would have you act or think? Would anyone be willing to share if you were able to do that and tell us how you feel about the results?"
    - i) *If you closed last time's study with a different question or application, substitute your closing for this one.*
  - B. "The virgin birth of Jesus is one of the most controversial subjects in Christianity. Many people use it as a non-starter in their rejection of faith in Christ and the credibility of the Bible itself. We are not going to solve that problem tonight. The God who created the world and everything in it put a baby into the womb of a virgin woman. We can't empirically prove either of those things and no one can empirically disprove them. It is by faith that we accept or reject the Biblical account of either event.
  - C. It was by faith that Mary accepted that something that had been long-ago prophesied but that had never happened before would happen to her. She embraced her calling and called it a blessing. She surrendered her pristine reputation and endangered her relationship with her future husband and her community and yet was so moved by how she was being blessed that she broke out in a song of praise to God. Her model of surrender to God and the joy she found in doing it is our lesson tonight.
  - D. When we are done, each of us should be able to identify one obstacle we each could surrender to God this week that would make us happy."

7) The study

A. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 1:26-38

i) *'In the sixth month' refers back to the immediately preceding passage announcing Elizabeth's pregnancy, not the sixth month of the year.*

B. Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Jesus' virgin birth had been prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 but that scripture may not have immediately come to mind for Mary. We can sympathize with her wanting to understand exactly how this would happen since virginity and pregnancy had been mutually exclusive up to that point. How would you describe how God feels about Mary and why do you think He feels that way?"

(1) *Favor in vv 28 & 30. Why is Mary is favored over any other woman? See v 38.*

(2) *Notice God's encouragement of Mary by telling her of her cousin's also unlikely pregnancy.*

C. Ask "Specifically, what value do you find in being blessed by God?"

i) *Looking for how your participants visualize or describe God's blessing. Please help them to reach an understanding of blessing that is personally meaningful. Could be material, a state of being, finding purpose, anything God-honoring.*

D. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 1:39-45

E. Ask "Why does Elizabeth call Mary blessed?"

i) *Compare v37, 'For nothing is impossible with God.' with v 45, 'she who has believed what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!' Mary's womb holds the blessing but she is blessed because she believed. See also Gen 15:6.*

F. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 1:46-55 (*The Magnificat*)

i) *"The Magnificat," as the song is called, consists almost entirely of Old Testament allusions and quotations. The same is true of the songs of Zechariah and Simeon (vv. 1:68-79; 2:29-32). Mary's song has similarities to Hannah's song (1 Sam 2:1-10). (BKC)*

G. Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "How does Mary describe herself in this passage? How does Mary describe God?"

- (1) *Mary-Glorifies the Lord, rejoices in God, humble state, servant, blessed*
- (2) *God-Savior, mindful of the humble, doer of great things, holy, merciful, sovereign, provider, faithful*

H. **Follow-up Question** “How does one arrive at the point where they believe they are a humble servant and blessed by God?”

- i) *Recognize what kind of person God is and who we are in relation to Him. See also Rom 8:17 & Gal 4:4-7*
- ii) *Serving a worthy God is a blessing in its own right.*

I. Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

- i) “What obstacles keep you from believing that God will do what He says He will? These could be attitudes, beliefs, circumstances, pain from your past or many other things.” *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants. If they struggle to answer...*

(1) *‘I don’t want to be anyone’s servant.’ Ask God to show you who He is.*

(2) *‘I am too busy: earning a living, raising my family, helping others.’ Those are all ways God already wants you to serve Him. Ask God to help you see those things from His perspective and offer to do them for Him.*

(3) *‘I am too messed up, broken, useless. I don’t know enough.’ Ask God to let you see yourself as He sees you.*

(4) *V.38, Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” The most important bit is that we have to not just submit but surrender our will to God’s. Embrace His perfect plan for our lives every day. See also Jer 29:11& Phil 1:6*

J. Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

- i) “What is one obstacle to your believing God will do what He says that you could surrender to God this week and that would make you happy?”

(1) *Christmas is less than three weeks away. Find some joy that is pure and give it to the Father.*

8) Summary:

A. Encourage your group members to apply the ideas or principles they developed from question 4. Plan on asking them next week about the results.

B. Close in prayer

## Helping Others See God - Witness His Majesty

Luke 1:26-55

1) Jesus' virgin birth had been prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 but that scripture may not have immediately come to mind for Mary. We can sympathize with her wanting to understand exactly how this would happen since virginity and pregnancy had been mutually exclusive up to that point. How would you describe how God feels about Mary and why do you think He feels that way?

2) How does Mary describe herself in this passage? How does Mary describe God?

3) What obstacles keep you from believing that God will do what He says He will? These could be attitudes, beliefs, circumstances, pain from your past or many other things.

4) What is one obstacle to your believing God will do what He says that you could surrender to Him this week and that would make you happy?"

For next time... Read Luke 2:1-7