



STORIES AND RITUALS

LESSON 15

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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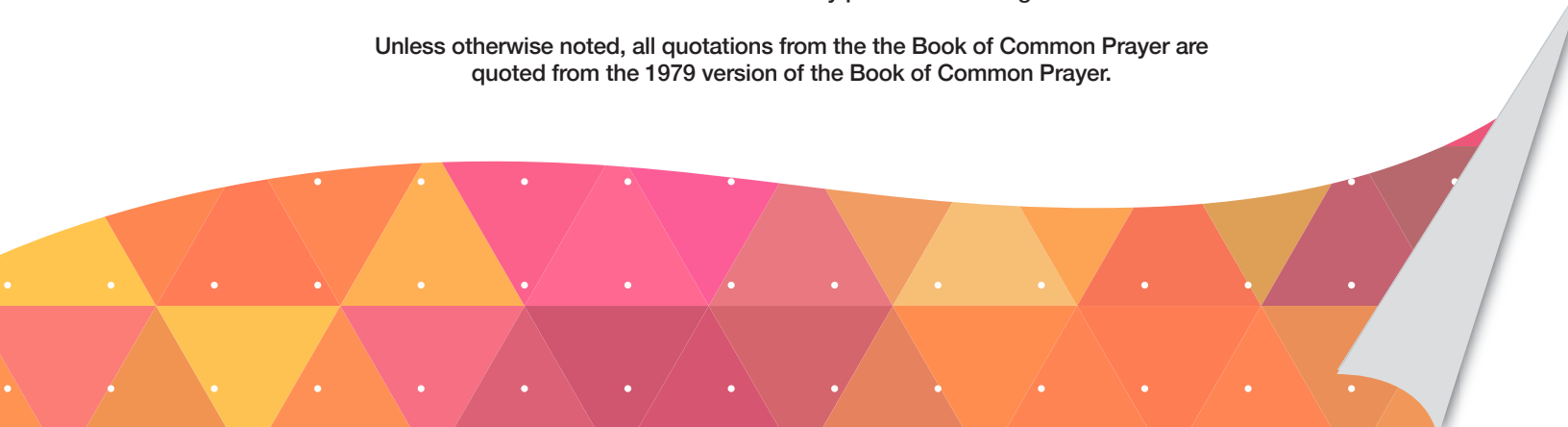
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An Angel Visits Mary

Texts: **Text: Luke 1:26-38; 46-55**

Big Idea: **God calls us to be bearers of Christ in the world.**

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Recognize their unique gifts by playing a game.
2. Understand that God calls us to bear Christ to others by engaging in a re-telling of Mary's story.
3. Show how they bear Christ in the world by creating a self-portrait.

ACTIVITY (TIME)

Dive In (10 minutes)
Group Check-In

Community Builder (15 minutes)
Signs

The Story (15 minutes)
An Angel Visits Mary

The Ritual (15 minutes)
Bearing Christ

Dig Deeper (10 minutes)
Magnificat

Wrap it Up (5 minutes)
Closing Prayer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Nothing

- Nothing

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 15.1

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Icons or images of Mary
- Cardstock or paper
- Scissors
- Magazines
- Glue
- Markers, crayons, or other drawing supplies

- Copy of the song "Magnificat" by Todd Agnew
- Method for playing music
- Copies of song lyrics (optional)
- Pens or pencils (optional)

- Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW



What's the Story?

Today's story is found in Luke 1:26-38 and 46-55. This story begins the narrative of Jesus' birth by telling the story of God calling Mary through the visit of the angel Gabriel. In this story, Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a child, who will be named Jesus. At first this task scares Mary, but with the promise of God being with her, she willingly accepts the call to bring God's son into the world.

Mary's story doesn't end after Gabriel leaves. Instead, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. While with Elizabeth, Mary recognizes God's love and blessing in her life and responds to this blessing by praising God with a song, which we today call the Magnificat.

This well-known story begins our journey to the manger and the coming of the Messiah whom God has promised would bring hope and freedom to all people. Jesus comes into the world through Mary, a young woman who willingly accepts the call to complete this very important task.



What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the idea that *God calls us to be bearers of Christ in the world*. God called Mary to physically bear Christ in the world. We may not bear Christ physically, but we too make Jesus' presence known to others through our words and actions. Through our Baptismal Covenant we promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons" and share the Good News of Jesus through our words and actions (BCP, p. 305). By doing these things, we too bear Christ in the world and invite others to find the presence of Jesus among us.



What's the Symbol?

Mary is an important saint for many people of faith. Her story has been portrayed in many different ways, including through paintings, icons, and other images. Find some icons and images that depict Mary's story. Icons work best for introducing the ritual activity.



What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about how they bear Christ in the world. Then, using magazines and other art supplies, each person will create their own icon or self-portrait depicting how they are bearers of Jesus. Finally, participants will offer these icons to your altar and end by reaffirming the call of others in your group.



Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Set up a table and cover it with fabric or linen. On the table, place a few candles and a large cross. Place icons or images of Mary for everyone to see. Have supplies for the ritual and the Dig Deeper activity nearby.

DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- **Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week? Go around the group and invite everyone to share.**

COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

Signs

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Instruct the group to stand in a circle.
- **We are all unique and have different gifts we bring into the world. What is something unique about you? Let's find out.**
- Ask each person to think of an action or movement that illustrates something unique about them. Invite participants to think big and be a little silly.
- Once everyone has thought of their action or movement, start by sharing your name and your movement. After you have shared your movement, everyone must repeat it.
- Then, invite the person to your right to repeat your name and action. Then, invite them to introduce themselves and share their action with the group. The whole group must repeat the action.
- Continue around the circle to the right. When it is their turn, each person must begin by repeating the name and action of each person who has gone before them, then introduce their name and action to the group.

COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- After everyone has shared their name and action, go around the circle as the group leader and repeat the names and actions of everyone in the group.
- After the group has untangled their knot, discuss the following questions:
 - What are some of the unique gifts that you bring to the world?**
 - How do you use these unique gifts to show the love of Christ to others?**



THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

An Angel Visits Mary

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 15.1

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 15.1
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 15.1.
- **After the story, ask: What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God comes to us in unexpected ways; God calls us to be bearers of Christ in the world; God promises to be faithful to us and guide us through these tasks.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We bear Christ to others through our words and actions; sometimes we step out of our comfort zones to follow God's call; we respond to God's love through worship and praise.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: Christ is made known in the world around us; the world notices when we ourselves bring Christ into the world.]*
- **Mary was given an incredible task: to bring God's son into the world. Although it was a huge task for a young woman, she said "yes" to God's call and became the mother of Jesus. We also are called to make Christ known to the world, though we may make Christ known differently than Mary.**



THE RITUAL

(15 MINUTES)

Bearing Christ

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (*optional*)
- Method for playing music (*optional*)
- Bowl of water
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers, crayons, or other drawing supplies
- Icons or images of Mary
- Cardstock or paper
- Magazines

Before the session:

- Create your own image to share with the group.

During the session:

- If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **Just like Mary, each of us is called to bear Christ in the world around us. In our Baptismal Covenant, we promise to seek Christ and make the Good News known to others.**
- Show the group your icon or image of Mary.
- **In some churches, icons or images portray different saints. Some explain icons and saints as ways for us to see the presence of Christ in the world around us. Mary is one person who is often portrayed in icons or other images.**
- Give participants cardstock or paper.
- **Just like Mary, we bear Christ in the world. We do this differently, though. Mary physically brought Christ into the world. Instead, we bear Christ through other ways. Think about some of the ways that you bear Christ to others. How do you answer God's call to bring Christ in the world?**
- Give everyone a moment to think.
- **In a moment, I am going to invite you to use the magazines and other art supplies provided to create your own icon or self-portrait. How do you bear Christ to the world? Maybe you love and serve others, or maybe you tell others about Jesus. Share your thoughts through your work.**
- Give participants an opportunity to create their images. If they need inspiration, share your pre-made icon with the group and explain how you created it. Once everyone is finished, continue.
- **In a moment, I will invite you to come forward to our altar and place your icon on the altar, if you are comfortable doing so. As you place your image, ask God to give you the courage to step out of our comfort zone and bear Christ to others.**
- Invite participants forward to place their icons on the altar, as they are comfortable doing so. It may help for you to offer your icon first. After everyone has placed their images, invite the group to sit in a circle. Place the bowl of water in the center of the circle.
- **We are going to end our time together today with a simple ritual that will remind us of what God calls us to do. One at a time, stick your finger in the bowl of water. Then, turn to the person to your right and use the water to make the sign of the cross on their forehead. As you make the cross, say, "May God guide you as you share Jesus with others."**
- Begin by completing the ritual yourself. Then, invite each person in the group to complete the ritual, too.

DIG DEEPER

(10 MINUTES)

Magnificat

Materials:

- Copy of the song “Magnificat” by Todd Agnew
- Method for playing music
- Copies of song lyrics (*optional*)
- Pencils or pens (*optional*)

Before the session:

- Find a copy of the song “Magnificat” by Todd Agnew. You can find this song by searching for it on YouTube, or on a music service like iTunes or Spotify.
- Listen through the song once so that you are familiar with its lyrics.
- If you are handing out copies of song lyrics, make a copy for each person in your group.

During the session:

- **After Gabriel leaves her, Mary travels to visit her cousin Elizabeth. While with Elizabeth, Mary responds to God’s love with a song of praise called the Magnificat. Many people have composed songs about the Magnificat. Let’s listen to one of these interpretations of Mary’s song.**
- If you are handing out song lyrics for the group, pass them out. If you wish for participants to take notes during the song, hand out pens and pencils.
- Play the song.
- After you have listened to the song, discuss the following questions:

How is this song like the Magnificat in the Bible? How is it different?

Were there any words or phrases that stuck out to you while you were listening to the song? Which ones?

Why do you think Mary sang this song?

How do you thank or praise God for the ways you have been blessed?

WRAP IT UP

(5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

Gracious God, you call us to bear your Son in the world. Grant us the courage and grace to, like Mary, share Christ to everyone through our words and actions. Grant us the strength and courage to answer your call. We ask this through your Son Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Lesson Sheet 15.1

An Angel Visits Mary

A story from the Gospel according to Luke:

God sent an angel named Gabriel to visit Nazareth, a town in Galilee. Gabriel was sent to visit a young woman named Mary, a virgin who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a member of the line of David.

The angel came to Mary and said, "Greetings, Mary! Rejoice because God has looked on you with favor and is with you." Mary was confused by this greeting and didn't know what it meant. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God has looked on you with favor. You are going to have a son who you will name Jesus. He will be great and sit on the throne of his ancestor, David. He will reign over Jacob's house forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked Gabriel, "How is this possible, because I am still a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and God's power, too. This child will be holy and will be known to everyone as God's Son. Look, even your cousin Elizabeth, is six months pregnant, even though no one thought that was possible. Nothing is impossible with God!"

Then Mary said, "I am God's servant; let me bring this child into the world, just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

And Mary said,

 "My soul tells the world how great you are, God,
 And my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior,
For you have looked on your servant with love and favor.
Forever will all people call me blessed,
 Because you have done wonderful things for me; holy is your name.
You show kindness and mercy to everyone who is faithful to you,
 From generation to generation.
You have shown your strength to the proud and arrogant,
 Humbling the thoughts in their hearts.
You have brought down the powerful and mighty from their thrones,
 And have uplifted the humble and lowly.
Those who are hungry, you have fed with wonderful things,
 And the rich and haughty have been sent away.
You have remembered the mercy you have on your servant Israel,
 And have come to deliver and help him, according to your promise.
You come into the world to fulfill the promise you made,
 To Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants forever."