



*A Daily
Devotional
Study -
Week 1*

Day 1

Study: Luke 1:26-38

Reading: Jeremiah 32:16-22, Matthew 19:16-26

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

Several years ago there was a TV show called “That’s Impossible.” On the show, they had guests perform things that were impossible for most people. More recently, a new show that was very similar came onto the scene, “Guinness World Book of Records.” The people that were on these shows could do amazing things. Though there are some amazing things that people can do, they all have their limitations.

Today, we are going to see how God doesn’t have any limitations. He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants, and however He wants. This same amazing God is also our loving Heavenly Father.

What Does the Bible Say?

What a privilege Mary had to be chosen by God to bring His Son into the world. That is why Gabriel told her that God had blessed her. Mary wasn’t only stunned at the sight of the angels, but she was also stunned at what he said. She wanted to know why Gabriel called her blessed. Gabriel told her not to be afraid because she had found favor in God’s eyes (vs 26-30). He then went on to tell her that she would become pregnant and have a child. He told her that she was to name the child Jesus (vs 31).

She would become the mother of the promised Messiah whom she would name *Jesus* (“Jehovah is salvation”). Note that Gabriel affirmed both the deity and the humanity of Jesus. As Mary’s son, He would be human; as Son of the Highest, He would be the Son of God. “For unto us a Child is born [His humanity], unto us a Son is given [His deity]” (Isa. 9:6). The emphasis is on the greatness of the Son, not the greatness of the mother (vs 32-33).

Mary wondered how she could be pregnant. It was physically impossible for her to have a child because she never had any sexual relations; she was a virgin (vs 34). Gabriel told her that the seed would not come from a human, but that the Holy Spirit would place Jesus inside of her womb. Jesus was referred to as the “Holy One” which was a sign

to show that He was placed there by God (vs 35).

He then told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth became pregnant, even though it was physically impossible for her and Zacharias to have children. Gabriel used that as an illustration to prove that nothing was impossible with God (vs 36-37).

Mary humbly submitted to the plan that God had for her life. Though she must have been frightened at the prospect of being the mother of God, she humbly and willfully accepted the task that God had given her to do.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you think that it is impossible for God to use you to do great things? Gabriel told Mary that nothing was impossible with God. You need to follow the example of Mary and humbly submit yourself to obey God and His Word. When you do that, God will make it possible for you to accomplish great things for his kingdom. Many times, Christians don't do anything for God because they don't think that they can. You don't have to be popular, talented, or wealthy for God to use you. You just have to be a humble servant who is willing to let God use you to accomplish the tasks He has called you to do.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Praise God because nothing is impossible for Him.*
- * *Ask God to use you in whatever way He desires.*

Thought for the day

Why was the "sixth month" mentioned (vs 26)? - See vs 1-25

What is known about Nazareth (vs 26)?

Who did Gabriel appear to (vs 27)? Why is it important that she was a virgin?

How did Gabriel greet Mary (vs 28)? Why do you think he described her this way?

What was the response of Mary (vs 29)?

What does this response reveal about Mary?

What did Gabriel tell her (vs 30)?

What was going to happen to Mary (vs 31)?

Why was the baby to be called Jesus (vs 31)?

How is Jesus described (vs 32)? Why do you think he is described this way?

How long would Jesus reign (vs 33)?

What do you think that meant?

Why did Mary question Gabriel (vs 34)?

How did Gabriel described that the miraculous event would take place (vs 35)?

What do these verses emphasize (vs 35)?

What did Gabriel tell Mary to help prove what he said was going to come true (vs 36)?

Day 2

Study: Matthew 1:1-25

Reading: Colossians 2:1-12

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

Today, we are going to begin a short study on the events surrounding Christ's birth. Christmas isn't just about getting and giving presents, but it is about Christ. It is a time every year when we can remember how Christ became a man so that He could die for our sins.

What Does the Bible Say?

One of the greatest disputes about Jesus that has gone on throughout many ages is about the deity of Christ. Many people believe that He was just a good man who did miracles, but the Bible tells us that He was the Son of God. Matthew makes this very clear in his opening statement in verse 1. He calls Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. The name Jesus is the Hebrew *Jeshua* which means "the Lord is Salvation." *Christos* means "anointed one" and is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for "Messiah" (Dan. 9:25). "Son of David" is a messianic title used to show His royal heritage. "Son of Abraham" shows that Jesus takes His royal lineage all the way back to the nation's beginning in the Abrahamic Covenant. Jesus met all the qualifications for being the Messiah ("promised one") that the Old Testament spoke about. Jesus was the Son of God.

Verses 2-16 give the genealogy of Christ, the Messiah. This is not an exhaustive genealogy. Several additional generations must have elapsed between Rahab (in Joshua's time) and David (v. 6)—nearly 4 centuries later. Matthew's genealogy (like most of the biblical ones) sometimes skips over several generations between well known characters in order to abbreviate the listing. The genealogies end with Joseph and Mary.

Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married. Engagements in Bible days were more binding than our engagements and weren't easily broken. Before Mary and Joseph had any sexual relations, Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant (vs 18). The legal punishment for adultery was public death by stoning. Joseph didn't want that to happen to her, so he decided

that he would divorce her privately. That was the only legal way to break their engagement (vs 19).

While Joseph was trying to decide exactly what to do with Mary, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Him in a dream. The angel told Joseph that the child that Mary had inside of her was not because of another man, but that the Holy Spirit miraculously placed it inside of her (vs 20). He told Joseph that they should name the boy Jesus, because He was going to be the Savior of the whole world (vs 21). He told Joseph that this was the Messiah that the Jews had been looking for. The birth of Jesus would be the fulfilment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14 which described how a virgin will bear a Son. Jesus wasn't going to be a regular child, but He was Immanuel. He was God in a human body (vs 21-23).

When Joseph awoke, He knew that he shouldn't divorce Mary, so he married her. He also kept her a virgin until after Jesus was born (vs 24-25).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you believe that Jesus was the Son of God? Have you ever accepted Him as your Savior? Do you try to be like Him everyday? Many cults believe that Jesus wasn't the Son of God. Others believe that God had many sons. They deceive several young and unlearned Christians into believing their lies. One of the main tricks that Satan uses is getting people to doubt the deity of Christ. He knows that if people believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then they will believe what He said. If people believe what Christ said, they will trust Him as their Savior. When people trust Christ as their Savior, they will try to live like Him and lead others to Christ. Satan doesn't want any part of that, so he tries to deceive people into doubting the deity of Christ.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Ask God to help you to live like Christ today.
- * Thank God for sending His Son to die for your sins.

Thought for the day

Verses 1-17 trace the genealogy of Jesus through the line of Joseph though Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus. Read through these verses and note any particular names or characters who stand out.

How is Mary's relationship with Joseph described (vs 18)?

What do you think this description means?

What does verse 18 emphasize about when she became pregnant (vs 18)?

What can you learn about Joseph from his response (vs 19)?

What happened to Joseph while he was thinking about the news that Mary had given him (vs 20)?

What did God tell Joseph to do (vs 20)?

Why would this have been hard for Joseph to understand?

What did God say about the baby that would be born (vs 21)?

How did this confirm what Mary had told Joseph (vs 21)?

Why did this take place (vs 22)?

Why is it important that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah?

What prophecy was quoted in verse 23? Where is that prophecy found in Scripture?

What does Immanuel mean (vs 23)? Why is that important?

What did Joseph choose to do (vs 25)?

What did he not do (vs 26)? Why is that important?

Day 3

Study: Luke 1:39-55

Reading: Psalms 119:9-16, 97-104

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

How can one put a cash value on the brain? Someone did it for Thomas Edison and came up with the highest value ever. At the time of his death, it was estimated by a New York Times analyst that the business interests, largely due to Edison's inventions, amounted to no less than twenty-five billion dollars.

Most people underestimate the power of the mind. In our media generation, we are trained to be entertained and not trained to think. Our minds have a greater capacity than we will ever use. Today, we are going to see how we as Christians should exercise our minds by memorizing God's Word. I understand that it takes some people longer to memorize verses, but everyone can and should be constantly memorizing God's Word.

What Does the Bible Say?

After Mary found out that she was pregnant, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. She was so excited that she was chosen to bring the Son of God into the world. Most likely, Mary knew how the angel appeared to Zacharias and had pronounced the birth of John. Since John was to be the forerunner of Christ, there would be a special bond between their mothers (vs 39).

When Mary entered into Elizabeth's house and greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth's child leaped inside of her womb. God had told Zacharias that his child would be filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb. It is possible that the baby leaped because he was filled with the Holy Spirit and he knew that this was the mother of Jesus, or it could be that the babe leaped because the Holy Spirit had come into him at that time. Whichever one was the case, the Spirit caused Elizabeth to address Mary as, "The mother of my Lord." Mary didn't even have time to tell Elizabeth about her pregnancy, the Holy Spirit let Elizabeth know (vs 40-43). She explained to Mary how the babe leaped inside of her and how wise she

was to believe what Gabriel had told her (vs 44-45).

Mary began to praise God for the privilege He had given her. Mary's situation compelled her to lift her voice in a hymn of praise. Mary's song contains quotations from and references to the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Psalms and the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Since Mary hid God's Word in her heart, she was able to turn it into a song. This song is called "The Magnificat" because the Latin version of Luke 1:46 is *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. Her great desire was to magnify the Lord, not herself. She used the phrase "He hath" eight times as she recounted what God had done for three recipients of His blessing (vs 46-55).

How Does this Apply to Me?

When God does something for you, do you take time to praise Him? Would you have the ability to quote Scripture to God? Mary was able to quote Old Testament Scriptures which led to a wonderful song of praise to God. It is easy to forget to thank and praise God for the wonderful things that He does in your life. We get so caught up in our own little worlds that we forget about Him. One of the reasons that Mary was able to praise Him is because she had memorized His Word. When you memorize the Bible, it helps you keep a focus on God. Many times the Holy Spirit will bring verses to your mind to help you in your daily life. Every week there are verses to memorize in the devotional, but do you take the time to memorize them? Memorization is work, but the benefit for memorizing Scripture far outweighs the effort it takes.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Ask God to help you memorize His Word.
- * Thank God for the mind that He has given you.
- * Praise God for being a great God.

Thought for the day

What did Mary do after she was visited by Gabriel (vs 39)?

Where did she go (vs 40)?

What happened when Elizabeth heard Mary (vs 41)?

Why is this even significant?

What did she declare (vs 42)?

How could she declare this if she didn't know Mary was pregnant?

****This was through the working of the Holy Spirit.*

What question did she ask (vs 43)?

What does this emphasize?

Why did the baby inside Elizabeth leap for joy (vs 44)?

What did Elizabeth declare about Mary (vs 45)?

What did Mary do in response (vs 46)?

What did Mary recognize about the working of God (vs 47-48)?

What did Mary say about God in verse 49?

Why did Mary mention the mercy of God (vs 50)?

What Old Testament passages are quoted in verse 51-52?

What did God choose to do for Israel (vs 53)?

How were the events that were taking place a fulfillment of the Word of God (vs 54-55)?

Day 4

Study: Luke 1:55-66

Reading: Hebrews 13:1-6, Psalms 1:1-6

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

One of the saddest things in my life that I had to experience was watching my grandmother die of emphysema. My grandma smoked pretty much all of her life and she paid the price for her choice, especially at the end of her life. With what we know about the results of smoking, I often wonder why any young person would start smoking. Almost everyone I know who smokes and is over the age of twenty-five, wants to quit. It is one of the leading causes of lung cancer and leads to many other health problems. Smoking also has many other side effects to a person's outward appearance. So the question that rings in my head is, "WHY?" Most people start smoking when they are teenagers or even younger. Many of them do it because their friends do it or because a group of people think that it is cool.

As I look at smoking, I can begin to understand the power of peer pressure. Today, we are going to see how Zacharias and Elizabeth stood up to their friends and relatives and obeyed what God had told them to do.

What Does the Bible Say?

The Bible tells us that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Most likely, she stayed till after the birth of John. She came to visit Elizabeth while she was in the sixth month of her pregnancy and stayed through the ninth month (vs 56).

When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth, she had a baby boy. When all her friends and neighbors heard that she had the baby, they visited and celebrated with her (vs 57-58). In Leviticus 12:4, God had established the eighth day after the birth of a boy to be the day that the child was circumcised. Many of the friends and relatives assumed that they would name the baby after his father which was a custom of the day. Elizabeth told them that they planned on naming their baby John. That puzzled the relatives since there were no relatives named John (vs 59-61). They began to use gestures to ask Zacharias what the baby's name would

be. He took a tablet and wrote down that the boy's name should be John (vs 62-63). After he wrote that, the Lord restored his ability to speak. He began to speak praises to His God (vs 64).

The people around him were astonished at what they saw and heard. They realized that this wasn't going to be an ordinary child that Zacharias and Elizabeth had. The events that happened surrounding John's birth were so amazing that the word of his birth spread through the towns and countryside in the surrounding areas. From that point on, all eyes were on John to see what he would turn out to be (vs 65-66).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you have a hard time standing up under peer pressure? Are you constantly worried about what others will think about you? Even though all their relatives wanted them to name the boy after Zacharias, they obeyed God and named him John. Zacharias could have become angry at God for causing him not to speak for over nine months, but he didn't. When he obeyed God, God allowed him to speak. You need to take a stand for Christ at all times. It is hardest to do what is right when others around you are pressuring you into doing wrong. Determine in your mind and heart that you are going to be obedient to God no matter what others say about you or what they do to you.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Ask God to give you the strength to stand for Him.*

Thought for the day

How long did Mary stay with Elizabeth? What does this time frame seem to indicate?

What did Elizabeth do (vs 57)?

How did her neighbors and relatives respond (vs 58)?

Why was this birth such a big deal?

What did they do on the eighth day after the child was born (vs 59)?
Why?

What did the family and friends expect the baby to be called (vs 59)?

What did Elizabeth say they would call him (vs 60)?

Why did this puzzle the people (vs 61)?

Why did they have to make signs to Zechariah (vs 62)?

What did Zechariah confirm (vs 63)?

What happened after Zechariah confirmed this (vs 64)?

What did Zechariah do once he could talk (vs 64)?

How did the neighbors respond to this (vs 65)? Why do you think they responded this way?

What spread through all the nearby towns (vs 65)?

What did the people wonder (vs 66)?

What did they realize about John (vs 66)?

Why is this a significant part of the “Christmas story”?

Day 5

Study: Luke 1:67-79

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-22

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

Every year our youth group took a missions trip. At the end of the trips, we always had a testimony service. One of the things that the teens were always thankful for was the home that God had given to them. Many times we think we have it so bad until we see how much worse many others have it. We take all that we have for granted because we don't realize where we could be if it wasn't for the grace of God.

Today, we are going to see how we need Jesus Christ. We are going to see how it is easy to take our salvation for granted and to forget about where we would be if it wasn't for Him.

What Does the Bible Say?

Most theologians believe that the Holy Spirit didn't indwell believers in the Old Testament like He does today. Jesus promised that He would send a Comforter and that Comforter came on the Day of Pentacost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Most of the time in the Old Testament, people were filled with the Holy Spirit to accomplish specific tasks and purposes. When Zacharias' speech returned to him, He was filled with the Holy Spirit which caused Him to give praises to God (vs 67).

The Holy Spirit caused Zacharias to realize that the time had come for God to deliver Israel from their sin. The prophets had spoke about the redemption and the coming Messiah for many years, but now the plan had been put into action (vs 68). The word “horn” in verse 69 was a symbol of power and strength. The power of salvation had come to earth.

Zacharias then began to quote some Old Testament portions of Scripture. God had not forgotten the promises that he had made to the Israelites through the years. He was also keeping the covenant that He had made with Abraham before the Israelite nation was born (vs 70-75).

Zacharias knew that His son would be called a prophet and would be the one who would prepare the way for Jesus Christ (vs 76). He would

help the people have a knowledge of God and would also help them see their need to repent of their sins. That is exactly what John the Baptist did. He didn't just preach baptism, but John's message was repentance because that is what is required for salvation (vs 77).

The portion of praise was closed out by the realization that salvation was a gift from God. Jesus Christ had come because of the love of God and his display of tender mercy towards mankind. It is Jesus Christ and Him only that will guide us in the way of perfect peace (vs 78-79).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you take your salvation for granted? Do you forget the price that Christ had to pay for your sin? Do realize what a great gift salvation is? There is no way that you could have earned your salvation. It was a gift from God. Many times, we forget that we were sinners on our way to hell. We take our Christian lives for granted and become complacent in our service for God. Take time out today to think of where you would be (not only in this life, but in the life to come) if Christ didn't give you the gift of salvation.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for the gift of salvation.*
- * *Ask God to help you not to take the Christian life for granted.*
- * *Praise God for being a God of great love.*

Thought for the day

What happened to Zechariah (vs 67)?

What did Zechariah call God (vs 68)?

What did he say God had done (vs 68)?

What do you think the beginning of verse 69 means?

****A "horn of salvation" (ESV) was a familiar expression from the Old Testament. It symbolized power and strength.*

Where did he say this power would come from (vs 69)?

What did God say would happen (vs 70)?

What was God's plan for the Messiah (vs 71)?

Why was Zechariah talking about the Messiah after the birth of John?

What was God going to do for His people (vs 72)?

Why was it important that God kept His covenant (vs 72)?

What oath had God sworn to Abraham (vs 73-74)?

Why did Zechariah refer to Abraham (vs 73-74)?

What was God's ultimate plan for His people (vs 74b)?

How did God want His people to follow Him (vs 75)?

What was John going to be called (vs 76)?

What would John do (vs 76-77)?

What had God shown to His people (vs 78-79)?

Day 6

Study: Luke 2:1-7

Reading: James 1:1-12, Micah 6:1-8

Memory: Isaiah 40:10

When my wife was pregnant with our first child, I thought that she would never have the baby. In the last couple of months, it became increasingly hard for her to go about her regular daily activities. All the changes that had and were taking place in her body, combined with the extra pounds, were extremely hard on her body. By the end of the pregnancy we couldn't wait for the baby to come.

Today, we are going to see how Mary had to travel more than 70 miles through mountainous country. When I think of the condition that my wife was in (and she had it a lot better than many women do), it is amazing that Mary made it all the way to Bethlehem. I can't imagine traveling all that way during the ninth month of a pregnancy. Though it was difficult, God took care of her. God had a master plan for the birth of His Son.

What Does the Bible Say?

At the time of the birth of Jesus, the Roman government ruled over the land of Israel. Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken. He ordered "all the world" (the world of the Roman Empire) to be "registered." This was not merely a one-time census; the decree actually established a cycle of enrollments that were to occur every 14 years. Israel had previously been excluded from the Roman census, because Jews were exempt from serving in the Roman army, and the census was designed primarily to register young men for military service (as well as account for all Roman citizens). This new, universal census was for the purpose of numbering each nation by family and tribe (vs 1-2).

Because of the census, Joseph had to return to the town of his ancestors. Because Joseph was a descendant of David, he was required to travel down to his tribal home in Bethlehem in Judea. He and Mary packed up and headed to Bethlehem. This was a difficult trek of more than 70 miles through mountainous terrain—a particularly grueling journey for Mary, on the verge of delivery. Perhaps she and Joseph were

conscious that a birth in Bethlehem would fulfill the prophecy in Micah 5:2 (vs 3-5).

While they were at Bethlehem, Mary went into labor. Mary gave birth to her first son and used a manger as a crib. A manger was used as a feeding trough for animals. This is the source of the idea that Christ was born in a stable, something that is nowhere stated in Scripture. Ancient tradition held that He was born in a cave, possibly one used as a shelter for animals. The idea that Jesus was born in a stable also comes from the fact that all the inns were full. Since they had no place to stay for the night, they found shelter in some type of stable.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Have you ever considered that some things happen in your life to fulfill God's plan? I'm sure that Joseph and Mary weren't thrilled to make the long trip to Bethlehem when Mary was so close to giving birth, but it had to be that way. Micah 5:2 states that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. What seemed like a great inconvenience and hard time for Joseph and Mary was part of God's plan. Don't allow yourself to become angry or bitter at God for what He brings into your life. When something difficult comes along your path, seek the positive side of the situation. God has a reason for everything.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you trust in His plan.*
- * *Thank the Lord that He is in control of everything.*

Thought for the day

What did Caesar command (vs 1)?

Who was the Caesar (vs 1)? What do you know about this man?

How does verse 2 describe when this command was given?

****There is some debate and question surrounding Quirinius, but most likely he was governor of Syria on two separate occasions. He was known as a military governor who was very good at carrying out the commands of the Roman government.*

Where did each person have to go (vs 3)?

Why did Joseph have to travel to Bethlehem (vs 4)?

What is stated about the lineage of Joseph (vs 4)?

How is Mary described (vs 5)?

What happened while they were in Bethlehem (vs 6)?

What does verse 7 describe about the birth of Jesus (vs 7)?

Where was Jesus put to sleep (vs 7)?

Why was Jesus put there (vs 7)?

****It is very interesting that so many songs, plays, and books have been written based on this one verse and the imaginations of many people. Though many of these may not be fully accurate, they are mostly written to remind us of the fact that God became man. When He did, He did not enter the earth full of pomp and circumstance, but instead entered into the earth in a very humble and unassuming way.*

Why is the birth of Christ such an important event?

Why is it important to celebrate the birth of Christ?

Memory Verses

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God? 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!" 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. 9 Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.