

LifeGroup Study
THE MAGNIFICAT: Overcoming What's Overwhelming
2021-12-05
Leader Notes

OVERVIEW: Welcome to our LifeGroup Christmas study, The Magnificat. The Magnificat is Mary's prayer/poem/hymn of praise found in Luke 1:46-55. It is her praise to God for the angel's announcement of the upcoming birth of Jesus, the Messiah. For this week we'll focus in on the first part of Mary's words – "My soul glorifies/magnifies the Lord."

The announcement from Gabriel that Mary was chosen to give birth to the Son of God and Mary's willingness to be used of God in this way gave birth to a number of challenges in her life. The elation of being chosen by God, the consequent doubts about her story from others, the accusations that would have been thrown at her and Simeon's later prophecy after the birth of Jesus that a sword would pierce her heart, meant that she experienced some overwhelming struggles as a result of being the mother of Jesus.

The opening section of The Magnificat shows us how Mary responded to those overwhelming experiences and how we too need to respond when life gets overwhelming for us.

ICEBREAKER: I Always Do *This* at Christmas. What tradition or experience or practice is something you always do at Christmas? Maybe for you it's a certain cookie you make or buy, or the way you decorate your tree, or a spiritual habit like reading about the birth of Jesus on your own or with others. Share a favourite Christmas tradition with your group.

STUDY:

1. On Sunday, Ken talked about how worship is a way for us to respond to the tough circumstances in our lives. **What was a highlight for you from Ken's teaching?**

2. READ: Luke 1:26-38

In this passage, the angel, Gabriel, brings Mary the news that she would be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah.

- **What do you notice about Mary's response in vs. 38?**

LEADER NOTES: In Luke 1:38 we begin to see Mary's heart in putting God first in her life. She says, "I am the LORD's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." NLT. Mary responds to this extraordinary message in simple faith, humbly submitting herself to God's will. Mary's response is instructive for us in how we see God in both the highs and lows of life. Like Mary, we can cultivate a simple faith in God. This faith is expressed in our heart's attitude – "I am the LORD's servant." This Christmas season provides a wonderful opportunity for us to respond to God as Mary did, in simple faith and with a humble heart.

3. READ: Luke 1:39-45

In this section we read Elizabeth's joyful response to Mary's visit. A big part of her response is her praise to Mary – ***"God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honoured that the mother of my Lord should visit me?"*** vs. 43. NLT

- **What does Elizabeth's response to Mary suggest might be an approach we might take with helping believers who are overwhelmed with their circumstances?**

LEADER NOTES: Pointing people to God is so critical for us in every situation we face. This is clearly what Elizabeth does and what Mary will respond to in The Magnificat.

4. READ: Luke 1:46-49

Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

- Mary's praises to God can help us cultivate a heart of praise to Him. **What are some key words or phrases Mary uses in these verses to magnify God?**

LEADER NOTES: In verse 46 Mary says – “My soul magnifies the Lord ...”. Other translations read – “My soul exalts the Lord ...” NASB, “My soul glorifies the Lord ...” NIV, “My soul praises the Lord.” NLT. Mary goes on to say – “ ... for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.” Mary acknowledges God’s care for her and His work in her life. “ ... for he who is mighty has done great things for me.” This section ends with “ ... and holy is his name.” Recognizing the holiness of God is a key way we magnify Him. (see Matthew 6:9)

5. How does the Magnificat help you see what worship might look like for you?

LEADER NOTES: The Magnificat shows us that worship is about being fully engaged in magnifying (praising and exalting) God. Mary worships God from her heart. It’s easy for us to be disengaged in our worship. We can say or sign the words without engaging our heart. Some of your LifeGroup members may have a challenge with worshipping God from their heart. Invite your group members to share their worship experiences. What challenges have they experienced? What habits or practices have they engaged in to worship God from their heart?

6. Ken gave a definition of worship in his teaching that went like this . . . TRUE WORSHIP HAPPENS WHEN GOD EXPERIENCES US GLORIFYING HIM.

- TRUE WORSHIP . . . If there is true worship then there is also false worship.
- **Can you name some ways we engage in false worship? Define false worship?**
- **Why is worship such a normal part of the life of a human?**

LEADER NOTES: False worship would be worship that elevates anything above God . . . pleasure, money, self, family etc. We are wired to worship. It is in our DNA. We all know intrinsically that we are weak and there is a need for something bigger and better than us. We all seek something to provide security, meaning, worth and so on.

- HAPPENS . . . worship is a verb. Worship is more than gathering on Sundays and actively singing to God.
- **Where else does worship show up?**
- **Why is it important for us to think of it as a verb?**

LEADER NOTES: Worship shows up in our every day actions. **Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.** When we think of worship as a verb it means that we are choosing to worship and offering our actions to God . . . our hands, feet, mind, words and so on . . . in a deliberate way to honour and glorify Him.

- WHEN GOD EXPERIENCES US . . . It is easy for worship to be about us. But God is the audience. Ken mentioned that there is an “echo” that happens in worship whereby we the worshipper experiences strength and alignment and joy in the act of worship. But this must not be our primary motivation in worship. **Why not?**

LEADER NOTES: If my primary motive in worship is my own experience then I am worshipping my experience and not God Himself.

- GLORIFYING HIM. . . . This is the point. When we glorify God we are proclaiming accurately who he is and what he has done. He is the ultimate one. We were made to glorify God. All creation was made for that purpose.

EXPERIENCE GOD

Watch or Listen to “Magnificat: A Virgin Mary Hymn
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvRcGnMX3jU>

Allow this song/video to speak to your heart as you magnify God this Christmas.

PRAYER

This week, let’s pray for the upcoming Christmas season at Creekside.

- Pray for the Christmas Eve services, that God would use these services to draw many people to Him, to point people to Jesus.
- Ask for God’s blessing and provision for all those involved in the services (tech, worship, teaching, etc). Ask that God would be glorified through our teams this Christmas.
- Pray that God would draw seekers to check out our services this Christmas. Ask for boldness for Creekside people to invite friends and family who are seekers.