

LifeGroup Study
THE MAGNIFICAT: The Reversal
2021-12-12
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. In the middle part of the Magnificat, Mary brings up the theme of reversal between the rich and poor, powerful and humble. This is a foreshadowing of what Jesus will do and what God's kingdom will look like. An important part of this reversal is called "Anawim". In our LifeGroup study, we'll look together at this ancient theme in Scripture and discover how we can live it out today.

ICEBREAKER: I'll Always Remember that Christmas.

Think back through your years of experiencing Christmas. Is there a unique story or memory that causes you to remember a particular Christmas? Share with the group why you will always remember that Christmas.

STUDY:

READ: Luke 1:46-55. The Magnificat (Mary's Song)

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour! For he took notice of this lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he has made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." NLT

1. On Sunday, Pete talked about Mary's Magnificat, particularly the theme of the reversal between the rich and the poor, powerful and humble.

What was a highlight for you from Pete's teaching?

There's a word little known in Western Christianity that was a foundation of Hebrew spirituality, appearing throughout both Old and New Testaments. *Anawim*, plural for *anawv* in Hebrew, literally means to "bow down" but by extension means lowly, poor, oppressed, or marginalized. But more than that, it refers to people who have accepted this position in life, see themselves as vulnerable and dependent, and are grateful for all provision—realizing that ultimately they must rely on God rather than themselves for sustenance. The humility, submission, and grateful vulnerability of the *anawim* were understood as the ideal attitude toward life and God, and that it was primarily an interior attitude of heart that was easier to attain if physically poor as well, but available to even the wealthiest. The *anawim* are held up as the inheritors of God's kingdom from the Psalms to the Beatitudes, and all the great figures of faith in scripture are *anawim* at heart regardless of their station in life.

Let's explore this virtue of *anawim* in Elizabeth, Zechariah and the Shepherds. As we read of their vulnerability and dependence, we can learn more of how to cultivate *anawim* in our lives.

I. ELIZABETH

READ: Luke 1:5-7, 24

2. Think about what Luke shares here about Elizabeth. **How might God have used her situation to cultivate *anawim* in her life?**

LEADER NOTES: Elizabeth was from a priestly lineage. She was raised to believe in and follow God. But overshadowing this was her inability to conceive a child. Childbearing was viewed as the highest calling for a woman, and infertility brought social stigma and shame. By the time Elizabeth was old, she would have experienced years of disappointment and disgrace (1:24). She knew what it was like to feel lowly, poor and marginalized. Elizabeth's situation was an ideal opportunity for God to cultivate *anawim* in her life.

READ: Luke 1:39-42

3. In this passage, Elizabeth responds to Mary's arrival and the news of Mary's pregnancy. **What do you notice about Elizabeth's response that shows *anawim*?**

LEADER NOTE: When Mary arrived, Elizabeth's baby leaped within her and she was filled with the Holy Spirit (vs. 41). God was confirming to Elizabeth His divine intention in her pregnancy and His ultimate plan in Mary's. Elizabeth responds with gladness and joy. "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed." (vs. 42). We see *anawim* in this response as Elizabeth humbly accepts her role in God's plan. "Why am I so honoured, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" (vs. 43)

II. ZECHARIAH

READ Luke 1:8-23

4. Think about Zechariah's response to Gabriel's announcement. **Why do you think he doubted?**

LEADER NOTE: In verse 18, Zechariah expresses doubt that what Gabriel has said will come to pass. Like Elizabeth, Zechariah had endured years of disappointment at not being able to have a child. Even seeing an angel was not enough to break through this doubt. Disappointment can dampen our faith. Your LifeGroup members may relate well to this.

READ Luke 1:57-66

5. In verse 63, when asked what the baby's name should be, Zechariah writes, "His name is John." This confirmed his belief in Gabriel's message (1:13). **How does this show *anawim* in Zechariah?**

LEADER NOTE: The experience of being mute cultivated *anawim* in Zechariah. This discipline for his lack of faith was also a sign that confirmed Gabriel's prophesy. When Zechariah wrote, "His name is John" he showed humble faith in God's sovereign plan.

III. THE SHEPHERDS

READ Luke 2:8-20

6. In Judaism, shepherds were often seen as lowly peasants. **Why might God have chosen to bring His angelic message to them?**

LEADER NOTE: Throughout Scripture we see God's heart for the poor, the marginalized, the outcast. Jesus came for these poor and humble peasants. The lowly shepherds received the greatest announcement of all time.

7. After hearing the news, the shepherds hurry to see baby Jesus, then they share this good news with everyone they can (vs. 16-17). **What does this teach us about *anawim*?**

LEADER NOTE: God cultivates *anawim* in our lives as we choose to do what the shepherds did. The shepherds hurried to see Jesus. They were with Him and they worshiped Him. Then they shared the Good News of Jesus with everyone they could. They invited others to worship the Christ. *Anawim* leads to doing what God has created us to do, to worship Him and invite others to join us.

8. Think back to our three examples of *anawim* in today's study. **What is a key takeaway that can help cultivate *anawim* in your life?**

EXPERIENCE GOD

In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth, the shepherds give us a powerful example of "anawim". Watch this clip and allow it to speak to your heart about your response to the birth of the King. <https://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-chosen-christmas-pilot/shepherds-in-awe>

PRAYER

This week let's pray for our Kid's Ministry impact in the upcoming Christmas season.

- Pray for "Christmas for Kids" celebration on Dec 19. During Sunday services, we will share the real meaning of Christmas with all the age groups. We'd love to see kids grasp the truth that we all need a Saviour.
- We give thanks for the fantastic team we already have. We'd love to serve more families, but our capacity to do this depends on having volunteers available. Pray for God to send more passionate people to minister to kids on Sundays.
- Pray that families make Jesus a priority in their homes whether they attend in-person services on Sundays or not.