

There were still many circumstances in Mary's life that God did not change. Mary would remain in poverty and be the mother of a child conceived prior to her marriage. But those circumstances didn't prevent God from meeting Mary in her point of need. And she did not allow her circumstances to overshadow the blessing of God's presence in her life.

Do you feel there are any circumstances in your life with the potential to overshadow God's presence such as Sin, Sorrow, Sickness, Anxiety, or Hurt? Pray that God would make His presence known in your life despite any circumstances and that you would be able to rejoice in the blessing of who God is to you.

WRAP-UP

When God moved mightily in Mary's life she was filled with awe, and she also rejoiced. Circumstances in Mary's life did not define her joy. Her poverty did not define her joy, neither did her pregnancy before she was wed, despite the public shame and ridicule it subjected her to. Mary's joy and her blessing were based on the presence of God in her life and who God had become to her – her mighty, holy, merciful Lord and Savior. Our circumstance should not be allowed to overshadow the blessing of God in our lives. He is also our mighty, holy, merciful Lord and Savior.

Memory Verse

46 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" - Luke 1:46-47 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Reflect on Mary's response to God's presence as you listen to this song.



“What Does It Mean to Be Blessed?”

Once and Future #3

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of Luke we find a beautiful passage in which Mary responds to the announcement that she will be the mother of God's son. In her response we see Mary both rejoicing and introspective as she receives the incredible news that God's promise to send a savior would become a reality through her. During a visit with her cousin, Elizabeth called Mary blessed. But what was it that made her blessed? It wasn't her external circumstances; she was poor and pregnant out of wedlock. But because of God's presence she was blessed despite her circumstance. We can also consider ourselves blessed beyond circumstances when God is present with us.

Luke 1:45-55 NLT - 45 You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." 46 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. 50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. 51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. 52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. 54 He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. 55 For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Who would you say is the most blessed person you know and why?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. The Word God Spoke Became Reality

Long before Mary was born God had promised to send a savior, born of a virgin who would be “God with us”. But this promise was no longer just a promise for her ancestors or for the spiritually elite. This promise had become a reality through Mary.

Isaiah 7:14 NIV - 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Imagine that a promise of such magnitude made thousands of years earlier was coming true through you. What thoughts and emotions do you think you would have?

2 Peter 1:4 NLT - 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

Sometimes we forget that God has given us great and precious promises. God is mindful of each one of us.

What are some of those promises that God has given you and you know are yours right now? What are some promises that you are still waiting to see fulfilled?

2. Embrace the details of God, not your circumstances

As Mary fixes her gaze upon God, she focuses on who He is rather than her own circumstances. She expresses her awe, or fear, of God.

Luke 1:49-55 - 49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. 50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. 51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. 52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. 54 He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. 55 For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

When have you experienced something that created awe in you?

In this passage Mary lists several of God's attributes and how she has seen them demonstrated.

How has God demonstrated each of these in your life?

- *God is Mighty and Holy and has done great things for me.*
- *God is merciful.*
- *God has brought down the powerful (circumstances in your life) but lifted me up though I didn't deserve it.*
- *God provided when I was in need.*

3. God's presence is the blessing

Mary was blessed when God became present in her life. Elizabeth explained that this happened because Mary believed that God would do what He said. (see Lk 1:45)

When God showed up mightily, Mary did fear God, but she also rejoiced. Contrast her response with Eve's response to God's presence in the Garden (Gen 3:8-10) Why was Eve unable to rejoice in God's presence.

Genesis 3:8-10 NIV - 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

If you look closely at what Mary was rejoicing over, it was not what had been done (not "I rejoice because great things have happened to me."). Rather she rejoiced in the One who had done those great things.

How many things did Mary recognize that God had done in verses 49-55?