

(un)EXPECTED

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and the Biblical Commentary to prepare to share the truths of this passage with learners.

Encourage learners to take notes on their copies of the Learner Worksheet as you teach.

The underlined words in the Master Teacher Outline correspond to the blanks on the worksheet.

Introduction: Mary, a young girl likely around the age of fourteen, was going about her normal life when she was unexpectedly greeted by Gabriel, an angel of God, who delivered a message that she could have never imagined: that she, a virgin, would be part of a seemingly impossible plan to bring the Savior of the world to earth.

1. God chose Mary to be part of a humanly impossible plan (Luke 1:26-37).

- God told Mary that she would conceive and give birth to a son, Jesus the Messiah (vv. 26-33).
- Mary was engaged to Joseph but remained a virgin during her engagement time, as was customary, which made a pregnancy humanly impossible (v. 34).
- However, because God Is, nothing was impossible, and the Holy Spirit caused Mary to become pregnant with Jesus (v. 35).
- God cited Elizabeth's late-in-life pregnancy as proof that He could do what was humanly impossible to do (vv. 36-37).

Illustration: Do you remember being picked for kickball teams in elementary school? For children whose talents lay outside athletic feats, it's a painful memory; for others, whose athletic talent was strong, these memories are joyful ones. For all intents and purposes, Mary was insignificant and did not display any special qualities that would have made her a likely choice for God's plan. God chose a team composed of people who were unequipped to win the game. But, with Him, they would be part of changing the world.

2. Mary chose to plant her identity and future in God (Luke 1:38a).

- Being engaged carried the same permanency as marriage; becoming pregnant threatened Mary's future security with a husband—and even her life, as adultery was punishable by death.
- Nevertheless, Mary declared herself a servant to the Lord, over family and uncertainty (v. 38a).

Illustration: Labels. They are a strong force of identity in the world today. Although many people proclaim that they don't want to be "labeled," everyone uses labels like hipster, grandmother, unwed mother, privileged, liberal, and conservative. Mary's situation was one in which her community would label her in a way that would be disgraceful. Nevertheless, she pressed forward in obedience, choosing only the labels that God had planned for her.

3. Mary obeyed God without hesitation because His word was trustworthy (Luke 1:38b).

- After Gabriel's explanation of God's plan, Mary believed God's plan would accomplish His word.
- Mary told Gabriel that, as a servant to the Lord, she was ready for His plan (v. 38b).

Illustration: The difference in the definitions of "hope" and "trust" give a picture of Mary's understanding of God's character. "Hope" is the desire or longing of a particular outcome. "Trust," however, is an assurance based on what we believe about a person or thing's character or ability. Mary didn't hope that God could do what He said; she trusted Him. Her trust was based on who she believed God to be and what she knew He could do. As a result, she obeyed immediately.

Conclusion: Mary's life took an unexpected turn the day that Gabriel announced that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. Scared at first, Mary's confidence in who God is allowed her to identify as His servant above everything else in her life. She trusted that the Lord was true and faithful and embraced her role in His plan.