

Paul Harvey told a story about a man who sent his family to Christmas Eve services while he stayed home. Sometime later, the man heard a thumping noise. When he looked out, he saw birds trying to come in through his window because a snowstorm had begun. He wanted to help, so he ran outside and opened the barn doors, but the birds would not fly into the barn. After several vain attempts to lure them inside, the man realized the birds were frantic and exhausted from their struggle. The man thought, "If only I could become a bird like them, I could get them to follow me to safety." Stunned, he realized that was exactly what God did for us!

Read Luke 1:26-38. For more than 400 years, God's people had suffered oppression and God's silence. Wondering if God still cared about them, the people held on to God's promise of a Messiah, the Savior of His people. They expected Him to be a great and mighty king who would sit on David's throne to rule God's people once again. God, however, had another plan in mind. Gabriel's message to Mary, a poor teenage girl in a tiny village, broke God's silence. This common girl would give birth to a son who fulfilled God's promise (Is. 7:14). But no ordinary baby, He would be the Son of the Most High. How could this be since Mary and Joseph were not yet married? Gabriel reassured Mary that God was in control, and His Holy Spirit would do a mysterious work within her. Despite her fear of Joseph's response and public shame, Mary humbly accepted her role in His story without hesitation. God confirmed that He was the One at work through Mary's relative Elizabeth (Lk. 1:5-25) and through Joseph's dream (Mt. 1:18-25). Jesus' parentage - God and Mary - proved that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human: the perfect answer to man's prayers! Only God can save us, but only a human can help us truly understand God's saving message.

Intended for all humanity, this is a very personal message: God loves **you** so much that He sent His one and only Son to show **you** the way to safety.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. What situations in your life cause you to be afraid or to question whether or not God cares about you?
2. Sometimes you may wonder if God can use you because there is nothing that seems very special about you. There is something exceptional in all of us. Can you name one quality about you that you would allow God to use?
3. What is one part of your life that you want God to be actively involved in? Who or what can reassure you that God is working even though you can't see or hear Him?
4. Do you believe that God sent His Son to earth because He loves you and wants you to know Him? Do you have enough faith to take God at His word, even if it is incredible? If so, will you ask Him to show Himself to you and to speak to you?
5. If you are willing to answer yes to any of these questions, will you talk to a family member or another person of faith to help you seek the God who still works in unexpected ways to answer your prayers?