

# CONFUSED AND DISTURBED

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*Luke 1:26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"*

*<sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, "for God has decided to bless you! <sup>31</sup> You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"*

*<sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin."*

*<sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's already in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For nothing is impossible with God."*

*<sup>38</sup> Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left.*

*Ephesians 3:20 Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.*

Once again, we revisit the story of Christmas—so packed with surprises, so full of mystery, so full of God!

Though long promised and often rehearsed, the coming of Messiah to fulfill God's promises and rescue a people for God's purpose, still seemed but a dream to nearly everyone. Its prophecies had become part of the tapestry of religious life and lore. Quoted by schoolchildren, discussed by adults—their real power and purpose nearly forgotten.

Not unlike our Christmas experience, is it? The old story venerated over the years and padded with traditions and tinsel and bows, yet its real power and purpose scarcely recognized.

When E.F. Hutton speaks, men listen. But when God speaks, men yawn. Yet God was, before E.F. Hutton was conceived, and when E.F. Hutton is no longer even remembered, God will still be.

And God accomplishes His purpose through prophetic promises. He does nothing in the earth without first revealing His intentions to someone by a prophetic promise. Still, they may be hard to receive.

What God has already created has taken us thousands of years to even begin to understand, so ignorant of His ways are we. His thoughts are not like our thoughts and His ways are higher than ours.

God promises things we cannot imagine. His promises are not bound by what we have observed in nature and may appear to completely sidestep natural laws, as we know them.

When He speaks of what He intends to do in and through our lives, we may be dumbfounded. We may think, “Who, me?” “Not me!” Abraham did. Moses did. Gideon did. David did. These were men to whom God promised great and amazing things, and their initial reaction was unbelief. Yet God pulled it off! What is impossible for men *is possible* with God.

Let’s consider the exchange between Gabriel and Mary in detail, for it offers timeless help for those who seek to hear God’s voice and promise for their own lives today.

***“Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”***

Mary was young, poor, and female—culturally, a most unlikely combination to be chosen for greatness. Yet, there she was, in the presence of one of God’s shining angels!

His words to her seemed like a dream. Can you relate? Have you ever heard something in your heart that you almost *could not dare* to believe because it was so good or so great?

God’s promises can be hard to hear. And harder to receive. Why do you think that some of God’s promises shake us so? Why do some people tremble in His presence? Why are we afraid of the One who said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love”? He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” yet when we sense His presence we are shaken.

***“Don’t be frightened, Mary, for God has decided to bless you!”***

It’s what we pray for, yet often *do not dare* to believe, only vaguely hoping He *might* hear and turn to us. Yet, He has said, “Call to Me and I will show you great and mighty things that you have not known.” Still, we hesitate.

Can you believe that God “has *decided* to bless you”?

On what basis would He make such a decision? Why would He choose me? Moses gives us a glimpse of His motivation:

*Deuteronomy 7:6* ***For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.***

<sup>7</sup> ***“The Lord did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations!”***<sup>8</sup> ***It was simply because the Lord loves you, and because he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the Lord rescued you with such amazing power from your slavery.***

What if His promise doesn’t sound like such a blessing? What if pain and difficulty precede the joy and blessing?

Freedom from slavery sounds wonderful, but does it have to include wandering in the desert for forty years?!

***“You will become pregnant and have a son.”***

Pregnant. Full of potential. You will deliver/produce a gift from God.

But pregnancy also implies a process—delay, difficulty, change, pain—before the anticipated blessing.

And you can never be just “a little pregnant” or “sort of pregnant.” It takes over your life, alters your routine, affects your relationships.

When God speaks, He impregnates. His Word has the power and intent of making each of us pregnant with hope, with possibilities, with purpose. Beyond your dreams for your life, but according to His dreams. Who can say how He will change us? Who can know where He will lead us? We know only this: where He leads us, He will be with us. He works for those who serve His purpose.

***“But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin.”***

I am inexperienced. Unprepared. I have never done anything special before. Haven’t we all felt inadequate, at some point, for the task? But that has never stopped Him from calling us.

He doesn’t seek the strong or the swift, but He gives strength to the weak and grace to the humble.

When you are desperate for a job, it is good to read the words: “Experience not necessary.”

God chooses us. Then, when we respond, He qualifies us for the task. He calls us, not only with plans, but with authority and gifts to achieve them.

Spiritual barrenness is not a good thing. God wants us to produce “much fruit.” Do not become content with fruitlessness, even in your old age. Do not spend your days withering away. God can change your barrenness! He is the Giver of life! How can this be?

***“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.”***

It is the Spirit that gives life. This does not come from within, but from outside of yourself. That’s why God’s plan for your life is not limited to what you have or where you’ve been. Nothing is impossible with Him!

Despite your wicked past or your present weaknesses, what the Holy Spirit produces in you will be holy, will be of God, will be a miracle!

It hinges not on your capacity, but on your response. *Will you believe?* Many will not.

Jesus once encountered a father, whose son was in desperate condition, who struggled with this very thing.

Mark 9:22 *“Have mercy on us and help us, if you can,” the man cried.*

<sup>23</sup> *“What do you mean, ‘If I can’?” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.”*

<sup>24</sup> *The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”*

Recognize, as this father instantly did, the unbelief that stands in your way and prevents you from receiving God's promise, and with what faith in Christ you *do* have, cry out to Him for help.

In the end, Mary's questions led her to a fresh resolution.

***"I am the Lord's servant."***

"I live to serve Him," she said. Is that *your* purpose? Is that what your life is about. Do you give Him your attention each day, like a servant would? Wait for Him to call for you? Watch for Him to nod in your direction? Spring to your feet when He asks for you? Do you seek to do what pleases Him?

***"I am willing to accept whatever he wants."***

"I am open to accept His plans for my life," she declared. Will you accept God's design? Or, will you complain about what you think is lacking? Will you accept the course He has chosen for you to travel? Or, will you argue and try to adjust it to suit yourself?

***"May everything you have said come true."***

Not what I have imagined or what I have boasted, but what *You* have declared for me.

Here is a powerful way to sidestep your own tendency to modify God's plan: elevate *His* words above your own thoughts or words.

God has magnified His Word above all things. It is "alive and powerful." He remembers what he has promised and watches over His Word to perform it. It does not return to him without fruit or without accomplishing its intended purpose. Let it be to you according to His word.

Mary was shocked to hear the angel's words of promise; they bore all kinds of seeming threats—change and difficulty. But her faith in God rose above her concerns for herself. Her confidence in His goodness and wisdom outweighed her fears and uncertainties about the future. She chose to trust God. She chose to accept His promise. She chose to follow His way. We should do the same.