

TEXT Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 12:50; Romans 6:13

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Judges 13:2-21; Daniel 10:5-12; Matthew 7:21

OBJECTIVE Using the account of Mary’s submission as an example, the students will be able to relate several reasons why it is important to subject their lives to God’s bidding.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER For with God nothing shall be impossible. — Luke 1:37

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. — Psalm 143:10

ANSWER TITLE: **The Special Message**
SEARCH TITLE: **Gabriel Speaks Out**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in person, but an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:20). Mention of Gabriel also appears in Daniel 8:16; and Luke 1:19 tells us he appeared to Zacharias.

It was important, for all our sakes, that Mary submit to God’s will. Jesus told us that the only people to enter Heaven would be those who do “the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Peter’s words, when he was told not to teach in Jesus’ name, were, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). How important it is that we apply these words to our hearts and lives as we walk before God today. We need to be able to say, as Mary did, “be it unto me according to thy word.”

In a Jewish community of Jesus’ day, the prospective bridegroom took the initiative and traveled from his father’s house to the home of the prospective bride. The father of the woman then negotiated with the prospective bridegroom the price that must be paid to purchase his bride. When the bridegroom paid the purchase price, the marriage covenant was thereby established.

At that point the man and woman were regarded to be husband and wife, even though no physical union had taken place. The moment the covenant was established, the bride was declared to be set apart exclusively for the bridegroom. The groom and the bride then drank from a cup over which the betrothal benediction had been pronounced. This symbolized that the covenant relationship had been established. After the marriage covenant was in effect, the groom left the home of the bride and returned to his father’s house. He remained there for a period of twelve months, separated from his bride. During the period of separation the bride gathered her wardrobe and prepared for married life. The groom prepared living accommodations for his bride. After this period of separation the groom, best man, and other male escorts left the house of the groom’s father, usually at night, and conducted a torchlight procession to the home of the bride. The bride was expecting her groom to come for her; however, she did not know the exact time. Thus, the groom’s arrival was preceded by a shout. The groom then received the bride, along with her female attendants, and returned home.

YOUR OPENER

Gabriel Speaks Out

TEXT: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 12:50; Romans 6:13

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Judges 13:2-21; Daniel 10:5-12; Matthew 7:21

KEY VERSE: Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. — Psalm 143:10

Our lesson is part of the Christmas story which undoubtedly has been told and retold more than any other story ever written. So without dwelling long on the historical fact of Jesus' birth, let us consider why God singled out Mary for the highest honor ever bestowed on a woman. Her willingness to submit to God's plan was, no doubt, one of the reasons He chose her over all the young virgins of the house of David to be the mother of His Son, Jesus.

1. In Bible times, God often used angels to carry messages to people. Since this was so, why do you think Mary was troubled at the angel's greeting?

2. What did the angel say when he noticed Mary was troubled?

3. Do you think that Mary showed a lack of faith when she questioned the angel about how this could be? Explain.

5

RESPONSES

1. Allow time for the students' answers. Ask your class if they think she recognized Gabriel as an angel. Then call their attention to the salutation—not at all a normal greeting. No doubt she wondered, "Why should I be highly favored and blessed?" This would indicate her humility.

2. He told her to fear not. Your students should note that Mary had not yet received the message the angel had come to give her, so her fear was not in consideration of what lay ahead. But perhaps she realized that the message would be of great import, or sensed that God was placing a call upon her life. God offered comfort and reassurance even prior to the actual expression of what she was called to do. How does God offer this same support to us today?

3. Mary does not demonstrate a lack of faith. She simply wants to know how the plan God had for her could be carried out, knowing that this was contrary to nature. Many times the details of God's plan for our lives may seem difficult from the natural point of view. But if we are submissive and trust Him, taking each day one step at a time, we have an assurance that He will see us through.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. What was Mary's response to the message that her child would be called the Son of God? What characteristics did she demonstrate by that reply?

5. In what ways did Mary exhibit these character traits?

6. Why are the attributes which Mary exemplified necessary for one serving the Lord today?

7. In reference to our key verse, the first phrase implies that doing the will of God may need to be learned. What are some of the ways the Lord teaches us? What can we do in order to be apt learners?

8. What are some of the benefits that are promised us if we are submissive to God? In addition to our text, see John 7:17, Romans 8:14-17, and Romans 12:2.

4. "Be it unto me according to thy word." List the different characteristics your class mentions. Some may be faith, self-denial, humility. Ask your students to discuss how all of these relate to being submissive to God's will.

5. She showed her faith by believing what the angel said. She was already espoused to Joseph, so she faced the chance he would refuse to go through with the marriage when he found that she was with child. Also, it undoubtedly meant changing other plans even if Joseph didn't refuse to have her, showing a spirit of self-denial. She was submissive to the will of God in that she immediately said, "be it unto me according to thy word." Even though she had been given this great honor, she showed humility when she said, "behold the handmaid of the Lord."

6. Allow your students to respond. Some additional Scriptures: "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]" (Hebrews 11:6); "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross . . ." (Matthew 16:24); "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17); "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).

7. Your students' answers to the first question may be: through observation of how the Lord has worked for others, through the teaching of His Word and His ministry, etc. Discussion of how we can be apt learners should focus on our being obedient doers of the Word of God, always striving to draw nearer to Him and cultivating a spirit of submission.

8. Matthew 12:50 tells us that we will be Christ's brother, and sister, and mother. Discuss the benefits brought out in the other Scriptures given, and any others your students may mention. The conclusion should be reached that we will never go wrong when we wholly yield our lives into the control and direction of God.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What were some of the qualities God looked for in a mother for His Son?

Mary was chosen by God to bear in her body God's own Son. How can we compare that to the privilege we have as Christians?

Do you think Mary could have refused the privilege? Why or why not?

How would you feel if the angel Gabriel, or any other angel, appeared to you?

What are some of the qualities we should strive for in our lives that would make us able to be used by God?

What other Bible characters showed willingness to be used by God in spite of adverse reaction from those about them?

Think of some important occasions in life: graduation, engagement, marriage. How can we be submissive to the will of God regarding these?

In the ANSWER story, Susan stated the reason Mary was chosen of God. What was that reason?

THINGS TO DO

Have your students ask you questions about today's lesson, also last Sunday's lesson on prophecy. Can they stump the teacher?

Have students share some "impossibilities" (miracles) that have occurred in their lives. Or you may wish to invite a guest speaker to give part of his/her testimony.

On a pencil, tape the name of someone your students would know. Explain that the pencil belongs to that person but you rather like it, and think perhaps you will keep it for yourself. Debate with yourself on this; then decide to break it in two and give the owner part of it. Ask

why this would not be a satisfactory solution. The point should be made that we should not withhold anything from God. We should submit to Him whatever He asks from our lives since, as Christians, we belong to Him.

Make a big chart with the letters W I L L I N G written down the left side. Have the students help you fill in words beginning with each letter, focusing on things we should be willing to do for Jesus. Example: W — witness, welcome, win; I — invite, intercede; L — love, listen.

Answers for ANSWER

A Special Message

Mary was visited by the angel, Gabriel. The message she was given was that she was chosen above all women to be the mother of Jesus — our Lord and Savior. Mary was willing to do whatever God asked of her. Are you? The words in the wordfind are from the Bible text.

GOD	ANGEL	FAVOUR	GALILEE
SON	DAVID	JOSEPH	NAZARETH
HAIL	JACOB	VIRGIN	HOLY GHOST
MARY	JESUS	BLESSED	OVERSHADOW
WOMB	REIGN	GABRIEL	SALUTATION