

STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

Luke 1:26-38 ²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

In this Gospel, as in the Christmas story, God's glory is hidden to the naked eye. Gabriel didn't appear to the high, mighty, and glorious, but to Mary, an ordinary young girl. And he didn't appear in a holy place, either, like the Temple, but in one of the most despised and pagan towns in Israel-Nazareth. The Gospel for this last Sunday in Advent, we hear a word of glory that comes in the midst of humiliation and weakness. That's the way God works. Luke does not tell us about Gabriel's announcement of the virgin birth in order to give us a peek into the heavens. Rather, Luke is teaching us to look at the most common, ordinary, and everyday things. That is where God works. Luther said much the same thing. Commenting on the Magnificat, he wrote: "This we experience every day. Everyone strives after that which is above him, after honor, power, wealth, knowledge, a life of ease, and whatever is lofty and great. On the other hand, no one is willing to look into the depths, with their poverty, disgrace, squalor, misery, and anguish. From these all turn away their eyes... Therefore to God alone belongs that sort of being that looks into the depth with their needs and misery, and is near to all that are in the depths." Luke tells us about the signs of glory to show us the direction God takes. He goes from glory into

the depths, for us. So Gabriel, the glorious angel, was sent to Mary, the lowly maid. The Son of David came as one who had no place to lay his head. And the Son of the Most High was conceived in the emptiness of a virgin's womb. The purpose of this Gospel is to indicate the change of direction that takes place in the gospel--not from us upward towards God but from God to us--thus giving us hope. To begin with, God sent his messenger into some humiliating circumstances. Surprisingly little is known of Mary, given her importance as the mother of Jesus. The authors of the New Testament were much more interested in who was born than they were in who gave birth. So she appears in only a few incidents after the Christmas story is told. The Gospels tell us enough, though, to let us know that there wasn't anything about Mary--before Jesus' birth--to draw public attention. In the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Mary herself speaks of how "low estate" (v48). Since she was betrothed, or engaged, it is likely she was very young--13 or 14 was the age of betrothal and marriage. She was probably a maid, as Luther said, working with her own family or for another. The town of Nazareth had a "low estate" of its own. Well removed from Jerusalem, it was too far from the center of worship at the Temple and too close to the pagans of other countries. Mary didn't have much going for her. She was a young unmarried girl in a small town that had a bad reputation. And yet she "found favor" with God (Luke 1:30), who sent Gabriel into Mary's circumstances with some glorious words. The glory in Gabriel's message is in the name and titles he used to tell Mary about the child she was to bear. The name of the child would be "Jesus," he said (1:31). Pronounced "Joshua" in Hebrew, it was a very common name at the time and wouldn't have taken Mary by surprise. But the fact that it was the name assigned to her son by an angel, and so by God himself, would give the name its deepest meaning: "he saves" or "he will save." Calling him "Jesus," the angel announced what Mary could expect from the child. Gabriel announced that the promise God had made to David was being fulfilled. God had not forgotten Israel, but was sending one who would be called "the Son of the Most High" to establish David's throne. Thus the child whom Gabriel announced would be the Son of David--the new king out of David's "house." This child would not only be a distant grandson of David--he would be God's own son, conceived by God's creative act (v35). The purpose of v. 35 is not to describe some kind of sexual relations between the Holy Spirit and Mary. Rather, it is to identify Jesus' conception and birth as taking place by God's will and power. In Christ's conception and birth, as in his death and resurrection, God himself was at work. That is the good news of this last Sunday in Advent: that in her humiliation, God came to Mary to make her the mother of his Son; that in Israel's humiliation, God came to them to restore them as his people; that in our humiliation, God comes to us with the promise of his kingdom coming. The one who comes in weakness to each of us is the ruler of all that is and will be.

STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ? It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *God's Savior was not revealed to the religious, but to the lowly. God's glory is hidden from those who trust in themselves.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God? It may be helpful to circle those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *God finds us. God comes to us. God rescues us. God promises us.*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "Jesus" "Son of the Most High"