
Lesson Overview

Biblical Passage Luke 1:39-56

Supporting Passages Luke 1:26-38

Memory Verse Luke 1:49

Biblical Truth Mary reacted with praise to God because she knew His character.

Context This study continues to introduce learners to the miraculous preparation for the coming of Christ. Mary reacted in obedient faith as she was told she would give birth to Jesus. She expressed a hymn of praise to God and stressed her confidence in what He would do through the Son she would bear. Mary's reaction will help students understand how miraculous the birth of Jesus is to humanity.

Learning Goals

- Students will examine why Mary glorified God.
- Students will identify personal reasons to praise God.

Prayer Suggestions

As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.

- Pray that students will comprehend how real, personal praise comes from knowledge of God.
- Pray that students will remember God's faithfulness and respond with thankfulness on a daily basis.
- Pray that students will desire to continuously praise God out of an overflow of love in their hearts.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

God's purpose from the beginning was for Jesus to be **Savior** of the world (Acts 2:22-24). Prophets had foretold Messiah's coming hundreds of years earlier. One of the most important prophecies was Isaiah 7:14, in which God promised that a virgin would give birth to a son, who was to be called Immanuel. Because God spoke through many prophets, the Israelites' expectations about the Messiah varied greatly.

In the fullness of time, God sent an angel to **Mary** to tell her she would be the mother of His Son, the Messiah (Lk.1:26-38). At the time, Mary was a virgin pledged to marry Joseph; therefore, such news normally brought public disgrace and divorce (Mt. 1:19). When Mary was told about God's plan, however, she trusted His character. She praised Him for what He would do for humanity. Her song of praise expressed love for God, faith in His promises, and joy in His redemptive plan for humanity.

Mary humbly accepted her responsibility. She trusted God to accomplish it even though she was a virgin. She then went to visit her relative, Elizabeth, who was also miraculously with child.

Importance

This passage is important because it helps students understand God's nature. It teaches that **God Is** both Father and Son. In this passage students will read about God's faithfulness to ordinary people—like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary—and how history reveals His faithfulness. Mary praised God based on the ways He revealed His character.

In verse 47, Mary rejoiced in "God my Savior." She recognized that only God could be her Savior. In verse 49 she remembered the great things He had done for her. In verse 51, she praised Him for the mighty deeds He had performed. She understood how He disciplined the proud and rich but gave grace to those in humble circumstances. Mary praised God for choosing to use her. Based on the wonder of His character, believers should praise God as Mary did for choosing to love them and use them to share His love with others.

This passage also touches on other key truths: **People are God's Treasure** and **Jesus is God and Savior**.

Interpretation

Luke 1:39-45 Mary was in Galilee when the angel told her the incredible news that her aging relative **Elizabeth** was six months pregnant. She left her home in **Nazareth** and traveled to the "hill country, to a city of Judea," possibly near Jerusalem. Mary's journey from Galilee to Judea would have taken almost a week.

Elizabeth had already experienced God's incredible work. She had remained childless long past childbearing years, and had given up all hope of ever giving birth. Yet, God intervened, and miraculously caused her to conceive. And God continued to do things that would amaze her. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth's unborn child "leaped in her womb" in response (v. 41). Most mothers experience an unborn baby's kicking and movement; Elizabeth had probably experienced the same. But this time the movement was different. It was special. Elizabeth later explained to Mary that the baby "leaped . . . for joy," perhaps at the Spirit's prompting (v. 44).

Elizabeth was then "filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 41), long before the Spirit came on all believers at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), who revealed to her that Mary would give birth to God's Son—even before Mary shared the good news herself. In a "loud voice" (v. 42), Elizabeth praised God for what He was doing and pronounced a blessing on Mary for her faith in God's incredible words.

Luke 1:46-49 In response to Elizabeth's praises and blessing, Mary gave her own expression of praise to God. Mary's words did not speak of what God would do, but on what "He has" done in the past.

Mary's song is often referred to as the *Magnificat* (from the Latin word for *magnify* or *glorify*). Her praise has some similarities to the prayer of **Hannah** recorded in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Hannah had been barren, unable to have children, and had prayed to God for a son. In return, she promised to dedicate this son completely to the Lord. God graciously answered her prayer. When she went to the temple to fulfill her vow, she spoke words of praise to God because of what He had done.

Mary did not quote directly from Hannah's prayer, but the parallels are striking. For example, Hannah began her prayer with the words, "My heart exalts in the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:1), while Mary's prayer began with, "My soul exalts the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my **Savior**" (vv. 46-47). Hannah prayed, "Those who were full hire themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry cease to hunger" (1 Sam. 2:5), while Mary prayed, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed" (Lk. 1:53). The parallels between Hannah's and Mary's words suggest that Mary was so familiar with Scripture that she naturally echoed its themes and images. This is also clear from other Old Testament parallels found within her prayer.

Mary's song began with details of God's faithfulness to her personally. She referred to God as her Savior, showing that she recognized her own need for deliverance from sin, which could only come from God. Mary then expressed how God had taken notice of her "humble state." She was in awe that God would use her, an ordinary woman of no standing in most peoples' eyes, to give birth to the Savior of all humanity. Because of this, Mary knew she was "blessed." She also believed people of "all generations" would think the same. Mary praised God, the "Mighty One," because of what He had done for her.

Luke 1:50-56 Mary also alluded to events from the Old Testament. She emphasized God's mercy "to those who **fear** him." She recalled His "mighty deeds," perhaps remembering the times in Israel's history when God had routed an enemy and delivered His people. He had scattered Israel's enemies, including arrogant "rulers" and other "proud" people who set themselves against God. Mary's words about the proud and the "humble" were echoed years later. James, one of Mary's sons by Joseph, quoted Proverbs 3:34 when he stated, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6).

Mary also remembered how God had reversed many people's situations. He had given physical and spiritual food to those who were poor and "hungry." He had taken away the good things enjoyed by the "rich," who seemed to have everything. Mary may have thought of the people of Israel, who for centuries had suffered oppression from rich, powerful nations. Yet God chose Israel as the people from which His Son would come.

Mary may have recalled God's words to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 17:19, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14), possibly remembering God's promise that through Abraham's offspring all the nations on earth would be blessed. Mary prophesied that this blessing would come through her child, Jesus, who would "save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). In coming to earth as Savior and Lord, Jesus would fulfill the covenant promises God made to "Abraham and his descendants" (v. 55).

Mary stayed in the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah "about three months," perhaps until their son John was born. Afterward she went back to her home in Nazareth.

Implications

Believers constantly experience God in their lives, although they may not acknowledge or respond appropriately. Teenagers who are young in their faith may not realize the importance of their response to God, and they may not fully realize the lifestyle His holiness requires. More spiritually mature teenagers, however, are learning to be evermore aware of God's work in their lives. They can grasp and live out the necessity of appropriately responding to God. Considering God's perfect character and His good works, challenge students to respond to Him in a humble yet passionate way.

As believers, we want to honor, worship, and serve God, even without fully grasping the "whys" of circumstances. When faced with the truth of God and the holiness of His character, any response but humility discounts God's true worth. Seek ways to help students understand that God's involvement in their lives is nothing less than a miraculous love. As such, you must respond in humility.

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Print one copy of the "Review Questions" activity sheet for your use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide the context for today's lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Name That Tune

(10 minutes, moderate set-up)

Students will identify Christmas songs after hearing only short excerpts.

Bring a CD/digital media player and enough traditional or contemporary Christmas music to play small parts of at least five different songs.

Explain that you will play five-second excerpts from different Christmas songs for students to identify. Instruct students to yell out the name of the song as soon as they know it. After all songs have been named conclude that today students will look at the very first Christmas song.

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: Mary's Reaction of Praise

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Luke 1:39-56 to examine why Mary glorified God.

Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.

Learning Goal: Students will examine why Mary glorified God.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then, use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Luke 1:39-56.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss what inspires them to praise God.

Learning Goal: Students will identify personal reasons to praise God.

Lead students to discuss reasons why God is worthy of our worship and praise regardless of the specific circumstances in which we find ourselves. Invite students to discuss these questions as a class or within smaller groups of three to four people:

- **What are some reasons that you praise God?**
- **How do you praise God? Why do you choose those particular expressions?**
- **What does praising God reveal about your faith in Him?**
- **Why is God still worthy of our praise even when we are in challenging circumstances?**
- **How does praising God during difficult times help you face those difficulties?**

As students share their responses, encourage them to discuss what inspires them to praise God. Then, encourage students to discuss how their praises glorify God. Encourage students to close by praying that they would be able to honor God with their praises for the many blessings in their lives.

Master Teacher Option: My Response

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will evaluate their personal responses to God.

Provide a copy of the "My Response" activity sheet and a pen for each learner.

Share that this lesson included the responses two women made to God's activity in their lives. Point out that Elizabeth's response to God was based on her gratitude that a long-desired prayer had finally been answered, while Mary's response was based on an unexpected blessing that would bring personal hardship to her life even as it brought God's blessing. Ask: **How was their response to God similar despite their differing circumstances? What encouragement can we take from their responses as we consider how to respond to God in our circumstances?**

Distribute copies of the "My Response" activity sheet and pens. Encourage students to evaluate their personal response to encounters with God. After students mark their responses, lead them to discuss: **How can you personally be more responsive to God?** Encourage students to share with a partner one way that they can respond appropriately to God this week. Conclude by leading students to pray that God would give them the desire to seek a deeper relationship with Him.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 2: "His Arrival Foretold"
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.

1. Isaiah spoke God's words of warning to this wicked king of Judah.
 - a. **Ahaz**
 - b. Solomon
 - c. Xerxes
 - d. Saul
2. In Isaiah, what did God promise to His people who remained faithful to Him?
 - a. death without pain
 - b. **eventual redemption**
 - c. peace with their enemies
 - d. economic prosperity
3. The word "nation" in Isaiah 9:3 refers to _____.
 - a. a specific geographical region
 - b. **those who had been shown mercy by God**
 - c. Heaven
 - d. the Ancient Middle East
4. In Isaiah, the following farming tool was used to describe oppression:
 - a. **yoke**
 - b. bar
 - c. rod
 - d. all of the above
5. When Isaiah spoke of a "child" who would be "born" to God's people, a "son" who would be "given" for a special purpose, he was speaking of Jesus' _____.
 - a. Innocence
 - b. **humanity and divinity**
 - c. gender
 - d. ancestors

MARY'S REACTION OF PRAISE

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: Mary's cousin Elizabeth was barren and advanced in age. Her husband Zechariah served as a priest in the Temple at Jerusalem. While performing His duty in the temple of the Lord, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Gabriel explained that Elizabeth would bear a son who would be "filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb" (Lk. 1:15). Six months later Gabriel was sent to Nazareth to Mary to announce she would give birth to the Messiah. After this proclamation Mary went to visit Elizabeth. Mary and Elizabeth responded to the news with worship to God because of His worth. In response to His presence and to His character, they both praised Him.

1. God deserves our honor because of His presence in our lives (Luke 1:39–45).

Biblical Background: God was present with Elizabeth through the Holy Spirit and with Mary through His Son. The Holy Spirit gave Elizabeth the ability to supernaturally know that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah (vv. 39-42, 45). In response to God's presence, Elizabeth spoke an honorable blessing over Mary and her child and expressed humility for God's presence in her life (vv. 43-44).

Illustration: As a culture, we love to honor people. Maybe that's why we award Heisman trophies to impressive college athletes, Oscars to best actors and directors, and Medals of Honor to distinguished military service members. Each recipient has done something worthy of the respect of people in their field. Mary and Elizabeth chose to honor God's presence in their lives by praising Him for the great and mighty things He had done in their lives.

Application: If we are Christ-followers, God does not make Himself distant from us. His presence is so near to us through the Holy Spirit that He actually lives within us. He has given us Himself and thus deserves our honor and humility. We can honor Him with our humility and gratitude.

2. God deserves our worship because of His perfect character (Luke 1:46–49).

Biblical Background: Because Mary understood that **God Is** perfect in character and deed, she broke into a worship song for God (vv. 46-47). She began by praising Him because of His character as He had revealed Himself to her through Scripture and through His personal relationship with her (vv. 48-49).

Illustration: A movie was made from the first book in the *Twilight* series, and its release created quite a stir among fans. At the premier of the movie in California, fans drove in from other states, wore *Twilight* t-shirts, camped outside the venue, and slept on the sidewalk hoping for a chance to see the stars. Some cried as they watched the movie stars arrive while others screamed so loud that one of the stars claimed he was almost deafened. These fans were worshipping fictional characters that exist in a fictional reality. How much more does a real God deserve our real worship?

Application: When we study Scripture, we can know much about God. As we deepen our relationship with Him, we can also experience His character as revealed in Scripture. When we are faced with the amazing character of God, we must worship His perfect character.

3. God deserves our service and obedience because of His relationship with us (Luke 1:50–56).

Biblical Background: As part of her worship song, Mary continued to praise God for the way that He has continually involved Himself with the lives of His people (v. 50). Because God was involved with His people, they were blessed through Christ. (vv. 51-56). Therefore, Mary was eager to be of service to God.

Illustration: In formal written correspondence to the queen of England, the proper closing of a letter to her should consist of the following statement: “I have the honor to be, Madam, Your Majesty’s humble and obedient servant.” Because of her position and prominent role in her subjects’ lives, they are expected to freely express their willingness to be of humble service to her.

Application: God’s character and His personal involvement in our lives leave us desiring to serve Him. Because of our humble gratitude, we offer ourselves to whatever He calls us to do—and we do it with full obedience.

Conclusion: We encounter God’s presence and His character everyday through a relationship with Him. God is always at work in our lives, and His character is always perfect. We have a choice to respond to God in a way that is appropriate to His relationship with us or in a way that disregards His amazing and glorious character. Because of the way that God is involved in our lives, we must respond to Him in a way that glorifies Him.

LESSON 3

MARY'S REACTION OF PRAISE

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:39-56

Memory Verse: Luke 1:49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name."

1. God deserves our _____ because of His _____ in our lives (Luke 1:39–45).
2. God deserves our _____ because of His _____ (Luke 1:46–49).
3. God deserves our _____ and _____ because of His _____ with us (Luke 1:50–56).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some reasons that you praise God?
 - How do you praise God? Why do you choose those particular expressions?
 - What does praising God reveal about your faith in Him?
 - Why is God still worthy of our praise even when we are in challenging circumstances?
 - How does praising God during difficult times help you face those difficulties?
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MARY'S PRAISE

Read Luke 1:46–49 below. Then, circle the words that describe or name God. Also draw a square around the words that Mary used to describe herself.

1:46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

Read Luke 1:46–55. Then, according to the following categories, list the special things for which Mary praised God.

His mercy _____

His power _____

His justice _____

His help _____

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

"We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them."—*Abigail Adams*

LESSON 3

MARY'S REACTION OF PRAISE

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:39-56

MY RESPONSE

*Between each pair of extremes, draw an X on the line at the point that most correctly identifies your response to each situation.
For example, to mark at the middle of the line would indicate that you are just as close to feeling the response at one end as the other.*

I am humbled by God's care for me, and I honor Him for His involvement in my life.

I am unaware of God's presence and don't think about His plans for me.

I personally worship God because of His character.

When I worship, I do not usually think about whom I am worshipping.

I seek to know God better every day.

I give little effort to knowing God better.

As an instrument of His glory, I offer myself humbly to His service.

I don't really think about God's desire to use me in His plan.

I consider God's plan for me whenever I make life decisions.

God's call on my life has little influence on my decisions in life.

LESSON 3

MARY'S REACTION OF PRAISE

Biblical Passage: Luke 1:39-56

If your teenager attends church, it is safe to say that worship plays a large role in his or her spiritual life . . . as it should. Hang around teenagers long enough, however, and the question will inevitably come up: Do teenagers know whom they are worshipping?

The answer is yes and no. Many teenage Christians have a strong, rich faith. They lovingly worship God out of an overflow of joy for what He has done for them. But some teenagers do not know God that well. Is their worship less sincere? Probably not. God values their worship if it is heartfelt. But there is a kind of worship that is an emotional reaction to God's work in our lives.

Read the account of Mary's song in Luke 1:39–56. Through Mary's song we can tell she knew God intimately. She began by detailing God's faithfulness to her personally. She referred to events from the Old Testament. She sang of God's mercy to those who "fear him." She recalled His "mighty deeds." Mary may have recalled God's words to Abraham, promising that through Abraham's offspring all the nations on earth would be blessed. Mary now knew this promised blessing would come through her Son, Jesus Christ. Mary's praise to God showed two things. First, it showed that she knew God; she knew what He had done for her in the past. And second, it showed that her response to what God had done for her was heartfelt, loving worship.

Mary's song was spontaneous, powerful praise. Because of her relationship with God, because she felt God's work, her heart overflowed with praise. This is a pattern we should follow. As you talk as a family, consider these two things: How well do you know God? Do you show a praise-filled heart? Teach your teenager about God. Help him or her to learn who He is. Be a person whose praises to God are the spontaneous eruption of a grateful heart.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Think about one of the other members of the family. What is his or her favorite movie? What is his or her favorite food? If they could do anything in the world, what would it be?
- Is it safe to say that the quality of our relationships could be judged based on how well we know each other?
- What about our relationship with God? How well do we know Him?
- How is our praise and worship different when we have a deep, real knowledge of God?
- What can we do to get to know God better?