Luke 1:26-49: Recapture the Wonder

# Opening:

* Christmas is the very best time of the year. Technically, we are in the Advent season, but it is still the best time of the year. Share one of your favorite Christmas memories.
* What do you do to keep Christmas from being a major exercise in “retail therapy”?

## Reviewing the Teaching

* Read the passage aloud as a group.
* God has been silent for almost 800 years. The angel Gabriel has spoken to Zechariah and is now speaking to Mary. Why do you think Gabriel introduces himself by name?
* There are three movements as Gabriel speaks to Mary.
  + Thoughtful Response (26-33)
  + Gradual Acceptance (34-38)
  + Struck with Awe (39-49).
* THOUGHTFUL RESPONSE: What key words are repeated in verses 26 to 30? Why does it matter that Mary was a virgin? How is she being favored? What are Mary’s responses to the angel?
* Gabriel’s words echo 2 Samuel 7:8-17. What is the significance of 2 Samuel 7? What is the significance of Gabriel alluding to these words? Mary is pondering what these words mean. How important is the event that Gabriel is telling her she will play a key role in? Whose birth is being announced?
  + Compare:
    - 2 Samuel 7:9 to Luke 1:32
    - 7:12 to 1:32, 33
    - 7:14 to 1:32
* Stop for a moment to take in the wonder of this announcement. We look back on a familiar event. For Mary, God had been silent when Gabriel came to her.
* GRADUAL ACCEPTANCE (34-38): This is a lot of information to take in all at once. Have you ever been overwhelmed with a surprise that will change your life? How did you respond?
* Luke 1:18 begins Zechariah’s response to Gabriel’s announcement. How are his words different than Mary’s? What was the result?
* How will God accomplish His will with Mary? How is Jesus conceived?
* Mary’s response shows how we should respond to a clear direction from God. Do you think she fully understood Gabriel’s words? Mary would be an unmarried pregnant woman who had done nothing wrong. What does this tell you about this young woman?
* STRUCK WITH AWE (39-49): Mary immediately goes to see Elizabeth. How are God’s words are confirmed as Mary arrives at her house?
* Verse 46 begins a beautiful poem. How does Mary move from acceptance to awe?

## Engaging the Message

* In his sermon, Pastor Dave compared sharing the Gospel to marketing. When we think of the church as a “business model”, this is usually where evangelism fits in.
* Here is the comparison:

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| Marketing | The Gospel |
| Awe and Wonder | Present the Truth |
| Decision to Purchase | Gradual Acceptance |
| Hype, not Hope | Awe and Wonder |

* What is your experience with buying things? Do you agree with Pastor Dave? Are you going to buy a new vacuum?
* How about the Gospel? Is the movement that Pastor Dave suggests part of your experience? Have you gotten to a sense of Awe and Wonder?
* In the next month, we will see retailers market their products with renewed vigor. The presentation of the Gospel seems to move in the opposite direction of marketing. Why would that be true?
* In your personal faith journey, what has changed in your faith? Do you see more now than before? How does that affect your faith? What can we learn from Mary’s brief journey in our passage today about how to grow in our faith?
* Mary’s journey in this passage is one of wonder. What can you do this Christmas to bring the wonder back into your life? How can you help other people enjoy that awe and wonder?

# Living it out – Application

Mary’s awe and wonder

* v. 38: Compare Mary’s response to God’s message to Jonah’s. Mary was likely a teenager. What does her response tell you about her character?
* Think down the road a few years. How did the mission God gave her affect her life?
  + Within 2 years her world would be upside down as her family became refugees in Egypt.
  + Speculate on her life as she literally walked with God every day for the next 30 years.
  + Mary was a witness to the crucifixion. But she was also a witness to the resurrection.
  + Mary’s mission brought incredible highs and lows into her life. She lived with awe and wonder and stark terror.
* What can we expect when we respond to the Gospel? Gabriel’s message announces a new chapter in God’s dealing with men, the coming of David’s son, the Messiah. Mary’s response shows that she was understanding Gabriel’s message. She responded in faith as God’s humble servant. Do you think she understood everything that was coming? Do we understand everything that is coming in our lives?
* Read verse 37 again. Mary witnessed the impossible! How can we witness the impossible? Where can we find a record of God working in history to do impossible things? If you could choose your response to God’s message, would it be more like Jonah’s or Mary’s? What steps could you take this week to shape your response one way or another?
* In his sermon, Pastor Dave quoted this, “The more I learn about the God of the Scriptures, the more I fall in love with the God of the Scriptures.” Is this true in your experience? Are there other things that help you fall in love with God.

# PRAYER

(Consider breaking up into small groups of 3 or 4, either as couples, or as just men and just women)

* Christmas is a time of awe and wonder. Praise God for that.
* Pray for your friends to know Jesus
* Are there…
  + Specific things to pray about
  + Specific needs to focus on
  + A prayer focus that comes out of the message