



## SMALL GROUP GUIDE

### HOW DID IT GO? {10 MINUTES}

#### Did you...

- read Zechariah's Hymn this week and pause after each verse that contains a promise and insert ways you have seen this promise fulfilled in your own life and the lives of your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- identify an area in your life where God is either disciplining you (like Zechariah) or asking you to wait on him?
- use Zechariah's song of praise to direct your thoughts and worship as you sit before the Lord?
- read Zechariah's Hymn at the dinner table with your family, friends, or roommates?
- read it in a different translation (NLT, NIV, The Message, or ESV) and invite those with you to discuss how God has fulfilled these promises in His people's lives and in their own lives?
- identify someone in your life who needs to hear the good news that Jesus has come to be their merciful healer, rescuer, and restorer?

**DECEMBER 12**

#### SERMON TITLE

Song of Promise -  
Mary's Song

#### SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:46-55

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

#### Luke 1:46-55 (ESV)

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

## HEAD {15-20 MINUTES}

### Read aloud the Scripture passage for this week.

1. This passage is often called the Magnificat, from the first word of the Latin translation. In it, Mary “magnifies” (gives praise, honor, and glory to) her God for the goodness He has shown her and her people. Read Hannah’s Song (1 Samuel 2:1-10.) What similarities do you see in both the content and the context of these two songs?
2. Theologian Charles Ryrie wrote, “There are 15 discernible quotations from the Old Testament in this poem.” (Ryrie Study Bible, p. 1544.) What does this tell you about Mary’s upbringing, and about the home in which Jesus would be reared?
3. At the end of this song, Mary sings of God’s mercy “to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”
  - a. To what mercy is Mary referring?
  - b. What promises from God are fulfilled in that mercy?
  - c. Finally, what is the connection between God’s promises to Israel and the baby that is growing in Mary’s womb?

## HEART {15-20 MINUTES}

Both the Magnificat and Hannah’s Song are referred to as “Canticles,” a term that describes songs or chants that echo a biblical text. When Mary learns that she will give birth to her Savior, she literally breaks out in song - a song filled with praise, joy, and thanksgiving, most of whose words and themes are taken from Old Testament Scripture.

1. Have you ever been so filled with awe and wonder at God’s love for you that you broke out in song? Describe that feeling.
2. As a group, devote part of your prayer time this week to singing (literally) God’s praises. Start by singing the Doxology.

## HANDS {10 MINUTES}

### Reaching Upward: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- Mary is a young girl, perhaps 15 years of age - unmarried but pregnant, living in a time when women have no political or economic power. Yet here she sings of toppling rulers from their thrones and bringing down the wealthy. Imagine the risks she would be taking if she were to be overheard by the Roman authorities or their representatives. Compare that to the boldness of your own faith.
- Have you ever placed yourself at risk by proclaiming your religious beliefs? Would you willingly do so? Note: Risk can take many forms and might include, for example, the risk of adverse impact to your professional or social status. Pray this week that God will give you boldness in proclaiming your faith.
- As an offering to God, use a favorite psalm of praise and set it to a tune (such as the tunes of “Jesus Loves Me” or “Jesus Loves the Little Children”) as the Spirit leads you.

### Head

Observe the text and the author’s main points.

### Heart

Envision how the text—when applied—might transform your inner life in terms of your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

### Hands

Apply the text by moving from inward reflection to outward action looking for practical ways to live the text out in our lives to serve others.

## Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors

- ❑ Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the Magnificat “the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung.”<sup>1</sup> Commentator William Barclay agrees, and expands on this theme of revolution. Barclay sees three areas of revolutionary thought: (1) moral revolution: Christianity as the death of pride (2) social revolution: an end to labels and prestige, and (3) economic revolution: a society in which no one should dare have too much when there exist people who have too little.<sup>2</sup> During His earthly ministry, Jesus preached a kingdom that was just that revolutionary - a kingdom that was literally “upside down” in the eyes of the thought leaders of the time, where the mighty are brought low and the hungry are filled. This should be a message of great encouragement to those on the social and economic fringes. **Pray that God will expose you to opportunities to share that story with those who most need to hear it.**

## Reaching Beyond

- ❑ Any other way God is stirring you to put this passage into practice?

## Neighbor

Anyone in your life –whether a friend, colleague, family member, classmate, or literal neighbor—to whom you can show God’s love.

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<sup>1</sup>Quotation from transcript of an Advent sermon by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, December 17, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>William Barclay; The Gospel of Luke - The Daily Study Bible Series; London, Westminster John Knox Press, Rev. 2001, p. 18-20.

