

Week Two: *Holiday Travel: The Case for a Bigger Journey*
Luke 1:26-38

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Are you traveling over the holidays this year, or will you have guests from out of town? Describe your current expectations for this travel.
2. It's human nature to have some type of expectation before any event—good or bad. How do your expectations about your holiday travels/guests impact the outcome of those events?
3. Read Luke 1:26-29. Describe what happened and what Mary's reaction was to that event.
4. Sometimes our prior experiences affect our reactions. If you were in Mary's shoes, how might this unexpected greeting have impacted your mindset even before the angel stated his purpose?
5. Do the angel's encouraging words from God soften the experience for Mary? Would it make a difference for you? Why or why not?
6. As we read throughout Scripture, Mary was a young woman with great faith, yet the reality of being face-to-face with a heavenly being still troubled her. No matter what we expect from God, often the reality of our situation can be hard to reconcile with our expectations. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, confess those times when you doubted God because of unmet expectations.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Have you ever been bumped from your seat on an airplane, whether voluntarily or involuntarily? Did that unexpected delay turn out to be a good thing or a bad thing? Explain your answer.
8. Tommy Allsup was a guitarist who was part of singer Buddy Holly's band. He is probably best known for losing a coin toss that kept him off the plane that later crashed and killed Buddy Holly, as well as Ritchie Valens and J.P. "Big Bopper" Richardson. Allsup lived to be 85. How do you think he felt at the time he lost the coin toss versus after realizing the fate he'd been spared?
9. Read Luke 1:30-38. How do you think Mary initially felt as the angels spoke these words versus later in life when this miracle had come to pass?
10. Think of a time in your life where the outcome of a single event seemed to be life-changing, but in the long run, it was merely a small obstacle. How can you tell in the moment whether or not an event will have life-altering effects?

11. Look again at verse 34. What did Mary ask? What does that suggest about her thought process?
12. For Mary, this event was life-changing. In fact, it was world-changing! Maybe she did not grasp that at first glance, or maybe she did and took it in stride? It's hard for us to know. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you see beyond the single events of your life to focus on the long journey God has in store for you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. Travel at the holidays can be extra challenging, but traveling at any time can be difficult. Describe one of the most difficult trips you have ever taken. What did you learn from that experience? How did those issues affect your trip?
14. Thinking back to your difficult trip, were you able to finally reach your destination or did you abandon your plans? How did your willingness to persevere past the obstacles play in your decision whether or not to continue that trip?
15. Read Luke 1:26-28. What was Mary's ultimate reaction to the angel's news in verse 38?
16. As we saw yesterday, Mary's only question was about how it would happen. If you were in Mary's shoes, what would you have asked? Why would you want to know that information?
17. It's interesting that Mary asks what seems like a facts question but ends with a statement of faith. What role, if any, do facts play in faith for you?
18. In Mary's case, the facts of what would happen to her supported her belief that God is able to do as he promises. Do you struggle with believing that God is able to keep his promises? Do you struggle to believe he is willing to do as he promises? Explain your answer.
19. Mary believed that God was willing and able to do what he said he would. She trusted him. As you end your FIFTEEN, ask that God increase your faith so that you will always trust that he is willing and able.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Yesterday you reflected on the worst experience you've ever had traveling. Did you continue traveling (or plan to) even though you had this bad experience? Explain your answer.
21. For most of us, one bad experience doesn't make us decide that all travel is awful and something to be avoided at all costs. Usually the desire to get to our destination overrides our need to avoid repeating bad experiences. How do past bad experiences color how you feel about traveling?

22. Look again at Luke 1:34-38. While it may feel much longer, being pregnant is a relatively short time compared to a woman's entire lifespan. Spend a few minutes reflecting on the ways her particular pregnancy may have been even more emotionally challenging than a typical one.
23. Mary is often entirely defined as the woman who gave birth to Jesus. As his mother, her role in his life was much greater than the nine months she carried him. Imagine what challenges she might have felt raising Jesus, especially knowing what the angel told her about him. Which one of those would you find most challenging?
24. Is it fair to characterize anyone by one moment? Why or why not?
25. Luke 1:38 states Mary's first leap of faith in her motherhood of Jesus, though it would certainly not be her last. It was just one part of her journey. We know that her faith was tested throughout Jesus' life. For most of us, our faith life contains a series of ups and downs—times when we feel close to God, other times when we feel distant. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you remain focused on him, strong in your faith, and not to define yourself by your moments of weakness or your moments of success.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. When you consider your faith life, is it a part of your life or does it impact every part of your life? Explain your answer.
27. Look again at Luke 1:26-38. Mary's life was about to be completely changed. She was going to need to rely on her faith every day of her life to deal with what was to come. How well do you keep your faith as an active part of your everyday life? How do you currently feel about your faith life?
28. Is it easier or harder for you to turn to faith in times of struggle? How about when times are good?
29. At Pathfinder Church, we use a mnemonic device called 1.1.15.6. to help us integrate faith into every aspect of our life. Read all four parts of the 1.1.15.6. printed on the front inside cover of this booklet and think about which one you would most benefit from incorporating into your life right now. Then brainstorm some practical steps that you can take to better integrate your faith life into your everyday life.

1.1.15.6: A Roadmap for your LIFEjourney

1: Give ONE DAY a week to God in worship and rest.

God has designed us for a rhythm of work and rest. He has called us to set aside one day each week to find rest in shared worship and a retreat from everyday life. We also worship God when we actively support the mission of the local church with our resources, including our time, energy, gifts, passions, abilities, and finances. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

1: Be someONE to another person in an intentional relationship.

Life transformation happens best when we are in relationship with others. Whether in one-on-one mentoring relationships, small groups, or any other form of intentional, committed community, we are intended to have deep connections with both Christians and non-Christians. (John 13:34-36)

15: Spend FIFTEEN MINUTES each day in a faith-building discipline.

Our relationship with God grows as we learn to daily connect with him. Bible reading, prayer, fasting, meditation, confession, and the Growing Deeper (or other Christian resources) are ways to connect with God all week long. (John 15:5)

6: Live the SIX other DAYS serving God by serving others.

Every minute of every day is an opportunity to live as God's representatives in the world. Whether in our neighborhoods, at school, on the job, with friends, on the field, or out in the community, we have been uniquely positioned to reflect God's love in the world as we serve others. (Matthew 5:14-16)

30. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, ask God to give you the faith to trust him in every area of your life so that you can act boldly when called upon to do so.