

**Growing Deeper**  
*In the Waiting*

**Week One: Take It Personally**  
*Luke 1:26-38*

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. Are you by nature a patient person? Do you enjoy the anticipation more than the realization? Are you okay with your nature, or would you change it if you could?
2. Do you live for the next vacation, adventure, weekend, or do you prefer routine activities? Why do you prefer your approach?
3. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Patience is considered a *fruit of the spirit*, meaning it is routinely found in Christians that demonstrate Christian maturity. It is not like a *gift of the spirit* that varies from Christian to Christian. What does that truth suggest regarding the development of greater maturity?
4. Read 2 Peter 3:9. What is the reason for God's patience as it is explained in this passage?
5. Is there something that you are impatiently waiting for God to accomplish in your life? What reason might He have for not responding immediately?
6. How are immature Christians similar to young children when it comes to waiting? What lesson can we learn from the comparison?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for God to be patient with your impatience.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

8. Read Luke 1:26-38. Name each person mentioned in the reading. What was their status in life when this moment occurred?
9. Gabriel is described as an angel sent by God. Only Gabriel, Michael and Satan are among the angels known to us by name. Read Hebrews 1:14. According to that passage, what purpose do angels serve in God's kingdom?
10. Are angels superior or inferior to human beings in the kingdom of God? In what way? See Hebrews 2:5-8. Which is more powerful? Which is considered the crowning glory of God's creation?

11. Do you think the angels were waiting for this announcement in heaven? Read Galatians 4:4-6. What circumstance(s) made the time right for the birth of Christ?
  
12. Read Luke 2:8-15. What insight does that description give us into the attitude of the heavenly host?
  
13. Why do you suppose Christmas, more than any other holiday- religious or secular, is the most popular of all annual celebrations?
  
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that you will always retain a childlike awe of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus our Savior.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

15. Look again at Luke 1:26-38. Where was Nazareth compared to Jerusalem and Bethlehem? Why would God choose someone so far removed from the religious and faith center of the Jewish people?
  
16. Do you think Mary shared this story with anyone other than Joseph? Explain your thinking.
  
17. She immediately travels to Galilee to be with Elizabeth, her kinswoman. After six months, she returns and tells Joseph the news of her pregnancy according to Matthew 1:18-21. How might those six months with Elizabeth been a blessing to Mary before returning to her home?
  
18. There is no indication that Joseph and Mary told anyone about her pregnancy. Why? How hard is it for you to keep an important secret?
  
19. Mary's robes could have easily hidden her pregnancy until the birth in Bethlehem. Is it easier or harder for you to wait without others knowing your cause?
  
20. God seems to have kept much of the detail of Jesus' birth from even Joseph and Mary. They had to scramble for shelter and make plans as things went along. Would you prefer to know or not know how things are going to turn out in your life?
  
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater trust in the Lord, who has and will provide for all your needs.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

22. Read Luke 1:26-38. Mary asked Gabriel how this would all work out since she was still a virgin. After she was told that God would conceive her child, how did she respond? What does that tell us about Mary?

23. There is nothing in the Bible that says Mary was any less human than the rest of us. No doubt, she was chosen by God for her great faith and simple trust, but otherwise she would have had all the emotions of anyone in her situation. Look at Luke 1:46-55. What do these words tell us about Mary's thoughts during her pregnancy?
24. What did Mary call God in Luke 1:47? What insight does this give us into Mary's understanding of her life before God?
25. Why is it always fitting for us to confess our sins, faults and failures before seeking God's favor about anything in our life?
26. Have you experienced a pregnancy in your life or the life of your immediate family? How would you describe the unique experience of waiting for a child to be born?
27. How much do you think Mary and Joseph knew about the purpose of Jesus' birth? Do you think they understood the implications? See Simeon's words in Luke 2:34-35.
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for someone you know who has been waiting for some form of rescue from the Lord. Pray for their patience and for God's intercession.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

29. Think about the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were already pregnant after God performed a miracle for them. What do you suppose the time Mary spent with them was like, and why was it important?
30. When the angel Gabriel mentioned Elizabeth, it is doubtful that Mary knew anything about her pregnancy. Then Gabriel said it proves nothing is impossible for God. Have you experienced God doing impossible things in your life?
31. What do you believe about God that gives you confidence to face the uncertainty of the future?
32. If you could, would you prefer to know the future, or prefer to know the ONE who knows the future and trust yourself to Him? Explain your answer.
33. Read Psalm 31:15. What routines help you to stay positive and hopeful about the future? Is this a constant struggle for you? How can you help others or how can they help you deal with uncertainty?
34. Why do you suppose God provided the "back story" on the birth of Jesus? Mark and John tell us nothing about the people and the story of Jesus' birth. Why do you suppose God chose to explain the circumstance of His nativity?

35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more open to God's direction of your life and for a more attentive heart to hear and understand His purpose in granting or withholding the desires of your heart.