

## Christmas and You: Mary

If your youth group is like mine, they do not like it when I do all of the talking. They like to be a part of the conversation as well. This is important because it is often the things that they say on their own that end up being the things that they and their friends remember the most. So for this two part series I like to start off with some open-ended discussion questions that lead us into the topic for the evening.

1. What is something unexpected that happened to you that turned out to be very good?
2. What is something unexpected that happened to you that was scary or difficult to get through?

Both of these questions have the potential to go deep very quickly. In fact, you might even find the Holy Spirit providing an opening for you to be surprised yourself and take the conversation in a completely different, and powerful direction. Go with it!

Have one of your students read Luke 1:26-38 out loud (I like the NLT version here personally). This is a good way to involve a student that maybe doesn't answer a lot of questions out loud but still needs to participate.

Then you can provide some explanation of the passage:

I would imagine the day that Gabriel appeared to Mary was a pretty typical day for her. I am certain she did not wake up expecting an angel to appear to her. Yet, the angel did appear and Mary's life was suddenly, unexpectedly, and irreversibly changed forever. To anyone on the outside I bet that Mary appeared to be an average and ordinary 13 to 15 year old girl (did you know she was probably that young !?), nothing particularly outstanding about her, but God had incredible plans for her. He had a calling for her life that was unique to her, for which she was created.

God still does this in our lives today. Remember that He created you, and He intentionally designed you to do things for Him that He thinks are incredible. They may seem small sometimes, they may seem incredibly huge other times- but I am a big believer that each and every day God calls us to things that bring glory to Him.

It could be an unexpected conversation where you have an opportunity to share what God has done in your life, it could be a moment when you are able to help someone in need, it could be something as big as God calling you into a specific job or career for Him.

Have any of you ever experienced a moment when you realized God was calling you to do something for Him right in the middle of a "normal day"?

After a few of the students share, or maybe you or another leader provides an example from your life move your conversation toward the handout called "truth".

Make sure to stress that these "5 truths about God's Calling in your life" are true, not because you say so, but because they are consistent with many things the Bible has to say about the way God uses us.

I know some of your students may groan about a handout, I always just laugh it off and remind them that we need tangible things that we can hold on to that remind us of God's truth when we need it the most. I usually encourage them to put it in their Bible or pockets for later.

Each of these five items can easily lead to discussion. Do not just read these from a page while they fill in blanks, talk about them and use examples from your own life as you go through them.

If you have time, make sure to discuss how Mary's unexpected pregnancy caused a lot of social problems for her, Joseph, and Jesus throughout their lives. This was not a painless calling. Just like Jesus our callings always come with a cross. When we encounter pain in our calling there is a temptation to throw our hands up and walk away assuming God wouldn't ever call us to suffer. This is a little nugget that is very relevant for Christian teens, and needs to be repeated often so it sticks with them as they grow older.

Also, I think it is very important to highlight that God's calling is not about making ourselves well known or bringing us attention. It is about bringing God glory!

Use this as a guide, make it your own, and let the Holy Spirit lead!