

BIG IDEA

Hope is established, developed, and sustained only on the foundation of faith.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

Read Luke 1:26-38. How would you tell this story in your own words? What are some of the key points found in this passage? What can we learn about hope from this story?

Have you ever interacted with someone who has lost all hope? What was that experience like? You might want to have some stories ready to share in case your group doesn't know of anyone who has gone through such a hard situation. Here are some examples

- **The child who was not talented:** From his early years he was passionate about music but his music teacher told him that he is hopeless. The teacher even went a step further and asked his parents not to let him put high hopes on that career. The little child decided not to give up or to believe his tutors and he became the Beethoven we know today!
- **The story of Andy North:** Life can sometimes be unfair, right? It was unfair to Andy by preventing him from ever playing football after it sent him a serious leg injury. Andy had to move using crutches but he didn't give up on sports. He decided to be a golf player but people told him that he can never become one while using crutches. Andy refused to listen to those people and he started practicing every day. As the days passed his legs became stronger until he managed to get rid of the crutches and to win the U.S open championship twice! (An achievement that most golfers who have no injuries didn't manage to do.)

Take a closer look at Luke 1:30-34. Compare the promise of the angel to Mary with the promise of God to Israel in **Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7**. What is similar and what is different? Have two different people in the group look up each passage. Read them back to back so everyone is clear on both promises.

What is the difference between *believing* in God and *trusting* God?

- Definition of believe: accept (something) as true; feel sure of the truth of.
- Definition of trust: showing or tending to have a belief in a person's honesty or sincerity; not suspicious.





LIFE GROUPS

LEADER GUIDE

WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

What are your initial feelings when you think about your future and the future of the world? Why is it difficult to live with hope in God's promises?

Read Luke 1:38. Put yourself in Mary's situation; would your response be similar to hers? What would your honest response be to Gabriel's news?

Remember that Mary was very young in this stage of her life and she lived in a culture that did NOT think too fondly of women who conceived out of wedlock.

Consider a time in your life where you felt that you *actually* put your hope in God instead of worldly things. What stands out to you about this time? What lessons can you apply from this season to your current situation?

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

Consider Luke 1:38. How could you practically follow Mary's example of hope and obedience in your current situation?

Make a list of easy things you could do this week to bring back hope in someone else's life; hold each other accountable to this list when your group meets again.

Have everyone write this list down on a piece of paper. Then have people pair up and share their lists with the other person. Make a commitment to spend time next week with your partner and share each other's success stories.

Do you believe the best is yet to come after reading the story of Mary?

