

# Underdogs

## “Mary – The Favor of God”

Matthew 1

### Small Group Plan

*In order to show that Christ was a real person, he was born of a woman; but in order that his Godhead might be clear he was born of a virgin.*

— By Thomas Aquinas

#### OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- When you were young was it easier for you to picture Jesus as a flesh and blood person or as a heavenly being?
- Has one or the other become clearer in your mind as you have grown older and more mature?

#### LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

#### — MARY’S MESSENGER —

Matthew 1:26-28

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

- If you had been Mary, how would you have felt and responded to Gabriel’s announcement?
- What would have been the most difficult part of this experience for you — understanding God’s favor, being pregnant as a virgin, or facing your family?

#### — MARY’S MESSAGE —

Matthew 1:29-33

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

- Why did Gabriel say, “Do not be afraid”?
- What do we learn about Jesus from this announcement?
- At first, was Mary more focused on her own personal limitations or on the honor being given to her? Explain your answer.

### — MARY’S MIRACLE —

**Matthew 1:34-38**

<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.” <sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

- Mary asked one question and then concluded, “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Would you have asked more questions? What are some of them?
- Of the descriptions given by the angel Gabriel, what about Jesus amazes you the most — his miraculous birth, his human mother, his heavenly Father? Explain.

### — GOD’S GIFT TO MARY —

**Matthew 1:46-49**

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, <sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name.

- What does this song tell us about Mary’s family of origin?
- What is God’s gift to Mary?
- Is Mary being arrogant by forecasting how she will be thought of as “blessed”?
- What does she mean? How was it a blessing for her to carry, give birth to, and care for the baby, the child, and then the young man Jesus?

### — GOD’S GIFT TO EVERYONE —

**Matthew 1:50-55**

<sup>50</sup> His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful <sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”

- For what does Mary praise God in this song?
- Mary puts “mercy” and “fear” together in one sentence (v. 50). What does it mean to fear a God of mercy?
- What two attitudes does Mary contrast in this song (vs. 51-53)? Why?
- How did God’s gift to Mary become God’s gift to everyone?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Mary had to work through fear, confusion and a troubled mind. She had to ask for clarification. How would you describe the process of spiritual growth today?
- Which of these words from Mary’s song best describes your spirituality now? Explain your answer.
  - v. 47 - *Joy*
  - v. 48 - *Humility*
  - v. 48 - *Blessed*
  - v. 52 - *Lifted Up*
  - v. 53 - *Filled*
  - v. 53 - *Empty*
- Is your relationship with Jesus steady or stagnant, growing or confusing? Explain.
- Close in prayer asking God for eyes to see his blessing, his favor, and his presence his mission.