

LUKE 1:26–56; LUKE 2; JOHN 19:25–27

Mary: "Let It Be to Me According to Your Word"

Lesson at a glance

This is the closing lesson of the twelve-week study. The lesson walks through Mary's annunciation, the Magnificat, the birth and infancy of Jesus, the boy in the temple, Mary at the foot of the cross, and Mary among the praying disciples in Acts 1. The lesson also confronts Marian doctrines that go beyond what Scripture teaches, and ends with a series of reflection questions that look back over all twelve weeks. Plan this session with extra care. It is both the most theologically delicate of the twelve lessons and the most emotionally significant.

Goals for this session

First, that each woman would marvel at the obedience of a fourteen-year-old girl in Nazareth, and would consider where God is asking her own "let it be to me" answer this week.

Second, that the group would honor Mary the way Scripture honors her, neither diminishing her nor exalting her beyond what is written. 1 Timothy 2:5 is the key.

Third, that the group would close out the twelve weeks with shared celebration of what God has done in them through His word.

Fourth, that each woman would leave with a specific commitment about how she will go on with the Lord after the study ends.

Preparing to lead

Read all of Luke 1 and 2, and John 19:25 to 27, earlier in the week. Read 1 Samuel 2:1 to 10 again alongside Luke 1:46 to 55; the two songs share a striking number of themes.

Read 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:13 to 14; Hebrews 4:14 to 16; and Acts 4:12 in preparation for the Marian doctrine discussion. The lesson handles these calmly. Lead the same way.

Spend extended time praying for each woman in your group by name. This is your closing meeting; God has done work in each of them over these twelve weeks, and your prayer for them as the study ends is part of how that work is sealed.

Consider bringing a small token (a card with a Scripture, a printed Magnificat, a small bookmark) for each woman as a memento. It does not need to be elaborate. The point is to send each woman home with a tangible reminder of the twelve weeks.

Sensitive topics in this lesson

Catholic background and Marian devotion. Some women in your group may have grown up Catholic or come from traditions with elaborate Marian doctrine. Others may be instinctively defensive of any honor given to Mary, even the honor Scripture gives. Walk the careful line the lesson walks. Honor what Scripture honors. Decline what Scripture does not authorize. Make 1 Timothy 2:5 the anchor.

The virgin birth. This doctrine has been denied by liberal scholarship for over a century. Some women in your group may have absorbed those doubts without knowing it. The lesson commentary handles the doctrine plainly. Be prepared to defend it gently if needed.

Mothers releasing children (questions 12 to 13). The sword Simeon foretold pierced Mary's soul, and pierces the soul of every mother who loves her children deeply. Some women in your group may be releasing children right now, to adulthood, to marriage, to military, to college, to estrangement, to death. Be tender.

Saying goodbye (questions 18 to 22). The closing reflection questions look back over the whole study. Make real space for emotional response. Twelve weeks is long enough to grow real love among women, and ending it well matters.

Suggested 75- to 90-minute schedule

Plan for the closing meeting to be a little longer than the previous ones. The group has built real trust by now, and the closing reflection deserves time.

Five minutes: welcome.

Five minutes: open in prayer. Read Luke 1:26 to 38 aloud.

Ten minutes: warm-up. Ask each woman to share one moment from the past twelve weeks that she does not want to forget. Don't rush this. This is the moment your group celebrates what God has done.

Thirty to thirty-five minutes: discussion of Mary's story. Choose five or six questions in advance.

Fifteen to twenty minutes: closing reflection questions 18 through 22. Allow the women to write and share.

Five to ten minutes: prayer for one another by name. Read the Magnificat (Luke 1:46 to 55) as a benediction.

Discussion priorities

Make sure these are among the questions you discuss: 6 (let it be to me), 8 (the Magnificat), 11 (treasuring and pondering), 17 (Mary's model of submission), and 18 through 21 (looking back over the whole study).

Notes on key questions

Question 3. Notice that Mary's first response is to be troubled. Not proud. Not flattered. The angel's words humble her before they elevate her. That posture matters. Anyone God greatly uses begins by being troubled at the weight of the assignment.

Question 5. Compare Mary's question with Zechariah's earlier in the chapter. Zechariah asks for a sign because he is skeptical. Mary asks for information because she is willing. The angel's response to each is different. God knows the difference between the question of a doubting heart and the question of a believing heart.

Question 6. Mary's answer is the great example of surrender in Scripture. Sit with it in the group. Ask each woman to consider, silently, what "let it be to me" would mean for whatever God is currently asking of her.

Question 8. Mary is perhaps fourteen years old when she sings the Magnificat, and yet her theology is rich, rooted in the Old Testament, and aware of God's pattern of lifting up the lowly and bringing down the proud. This is the fruit of years of memorizing and meditating on Scripture in a quiet, ordinary village. There is hope in that for the ordinary women in your group.

Question 9. Mary calls God her Savior (1:47). This is the simplest and most important answer to elaborate Marian doctrines. Mary herself knew she was a sinner in need of a Savior. Make sure this lands.

Question 11. Mary treasured up the things she saw and pondered them in her heart. This is the habit Luke himself probably relied on for the material of his Gospel (Luke 1:1 to 4). A faithful woman quietly storing up the works of God in her heart, year after year, becomes one of God's chief instruments for preserving the truth.

Question 14. Mary at the cross. The Son who came through her body is now dying for her sins as well as ours. From the cross He honors her, entrusting her care to John. He keeps the fifth commandment with His last breath. Linger here. This is one of the most tender scenes in the Bible.

Question 17. Mary's model of submission is not weak. It is informed, courageous, costly, and free. She knows what she is saying yes to. She says yes anyway. This is the kind of submission Scripture asks of all of us, in different shapes, in different seasons.

Questions 18 to 21. These are the closing reflection questions. Do not rush. Give the women time to write before sharing. Some may be moved to tears. Some may struggle to name what God has done. Trust the Holy Spirit, working through His word, to bring it to the surface.

Question 22. Each woman writes her own closing prayer. Invite any who are willing to read theirs aloud at the end. The group's last spoken words will sit with them for a long time.

About the Study Skills in this lesson

Two Study Skills appear in Lesson 12. Following Old Testament Promise to New Testament Fulfillment is a habit the women will use the rest of their lives. The annunciation in Luke 1:31 to 33 is full of fulfilled prophecies. Try walking the women through the cross-references in the group hour. The second skill, the Habit of Treasuring God's Word in Your Heart, is less academic but more important. Encourage every woman to leave the study with one verse memorized.

A suggested closing prayer

Pray your own prayer. A sample, if you would like one, for the very last moment of the twelve weeks:

"Father, thank You for the gift of these twelve weeks. Thank You for the women You have placed around this table, for the courage they have shown in coming, for the stories they have shared, and for the work You have done through Your word in each of us. Thank You for Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rahab, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Esther, the Samaritan at the well, Mary of Bethany, the woman of Luke 7, and Mary the mother of our Lord. Most of all, thank You for the Son they each, in some way, were made to point us toward. Hold us close in the days after this study ends. Keep what You have planted in us. And send each of us home tonight more like Your Son than we came in. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, who was born of Mary, who died for us on the cross, who rose on the first day of the week, and who is coming again. Amen."

After the study ends

Twelve weeks is a long enough season that ending it well is its own pastoral act. A few suggestions for the days after.

Send a personal note to each woman within a week of the final meeting. Mention one thing you saw God do in her over these weeks. Tell her you are praying for her. A card in the mail is worth more than a thousand text messages.

Consider planning a casual gathering (coffee, dinner, a walk) one month after the study ends. The group has become a real fellowship; do not let it dissolve without one last chance to meet face to face.

Encourage the women to choose a next study together. Many groups will be ready to continue in some form, perhaps a book of the New Testament or a topical study. The habits built over these twelve weeks are worth keeping in motion.

Finally, thank the elders and the preacher for their support of the ladies' study. The work of the church is the work of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12), and the women's deepening in the Word makes the entire congregation stronger.