

5. Elizabeth joyfully acknowledged the Lord's presence when Mary entered the house. How does acknowledging the Lord's presence set the tone in a room?

God's call upon our life is usually juxtaposed with all kinds of obstacles. As with Mary who surrendered in obedience to the angel's message, what we do when faced with a crisis of belief reveals our level of faith. Share how you are choosing to live in obedience even though obstacles fill your path. Name specific ways you have seen the Lord's hand at work on your behalf.

This season, watch hope spring forth as you magnify God above your problems and your relationships. Ask the Lord to help you keep obstacles in their proper place while keeping Christ on the throne of your heart. Go often to the secret place to be alone with God. He is your refuge. Worship Him. Determine to be faithful no matter what. Share your faith with those around you. And share life with your brothers and sisters in Christ—your church family, your Life Group, a prayer partner, a trusted friend. Hope shines in the dead of winter for those who acknowledge and trust Christ as Lord!

One Year Bible Reading

Dec. 7: Hosea 6:1-9:17, 3 John 1:1-14, Psalm 126:1-6, Proverbs 29:12-14
Dec. 8: Hosea 10:1-14:9, Jude 1:1-25, Psalm 127:1-5, Proverbs 29:15-17
Dec. 9: Joel 1:1-3:21, Revelation 1:1-20, Psalm 128:1-6, Proverbs 29:18
Dec. 10: Amos 1:1-3:15, Revelation 2:1-17, Psalm 129:1-8, Proverbs 29:19-20
Dec. 11: Amos 4:1-6:14, Revelation 2:18-3:6, Psalm 130:1-8, Proverbs 29:21-22
Dec. 12: Amos 7:1-9:15, Revelation 3:7-22, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 29:23
Dec. 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 29:24-25

Hope In The Dead Of Winter

Text: Luke 1:5-25, 26-38

The Plain Truth

Hope springs forth when we _____ God above our _____ and our _____.

A. Let hope guide the _____ of your prayers.

B. Let hope guide the _____ of your prayers.

December 6 & 7, 2014

Hope In The Dead Of Winter

Life Group Lesson • Week of December 7

No one has a problem-free life. Before we know it, one challenge followed by another, followed by another can mentally mount up in monstrous proportions. Whether we are dealing with one big problem or an accumulation of little problems, often our tendency is to either make more out of our situation than we should, or run from it entirely. The Lord doesn't want us to do either—He knows what we're dealing with and He wants to teach us to always turn to Him.

Choosing to magnify the Lord and trust His plan against a backdrop that appears hopeless will open the door for God to work the impossible for you. If you are dwelling on a problem today, remember the Lord is bigger than your biggest problem. If you are being tempted to give up, run away, or live in fear and isolation, remember that you can run to God. He alone is your refuge. He's good at solving problems and He can be trusted.

Read Luke 1:5-25 and Luke 1:26-38

1. According to v7 what two obstacles blocked Zechariah and Elizabeth from having a child?

According to v38, what obstacle did Mary perceive as she heard the news that she would bear a child?

The God of heaven broke through those obstacles by sending Gabriel to announce to Zechariah that yes, Elizabeth would have a son and yes, it would be in their old age—that Mary would bear a holy child, and yes it would be accomplished in her virginity. “For nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). Just like with Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary—God can break through every obstacle that mounts itself in your mind. Instead of seeing things from a human perspective, the Lord wants you to see what heaven sees, to see through the eyes of faith. “By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen” (Hebrews 11:2). God is not limited. He can do anything—even bring hope in the dead of winter.

2. Think about the problems you are facing today, even at this moment. What obstacles have mounted up in your mind? (Name them in the space below)

How are you “magnifying” those obstacles over God?

3. Think about *why* you are exalting these obstacles (that you've named above) over God. For example, do you think God doesn't see your troubles or that He doesn't really care about what you are going through? Read the following verses and ask the Lord what He wants to teach you about putting your obstacles in their proper place. From each reference write down one truth that gives you a different perspective on your problem (your obstacle).

Deuteronomy 33:26-27 Psalm 37:23-25 John 1:1-5, 14 Hebrews 10:35-39

The LORD is almighty God and He has the power to speak creation into existence, bring life to the barren womb, heal the leper, and raise the dead. He holds in one command more power than we know. Throughout time He has shown Himself to be mighty and through His Christ, the invisible God has become visible. “For God in all His fullness was pleased to live in Christ” (Colossians 1:19). God did the impossible for Zechariah and Elizabeth, God did the impossible through the virgin Mary, and God can do the impossible for you if you surrender to His plan and choose to magnify (enlarge, acknowledge, submit to) His hand at work.

4. Initially in his doubt Zechariah was silenced. When has the Lord shut your mouth for a season to remind you that He alone is Lord? How were you reminded that His plan and purpose is bigger than you?

Did the Lord reopen your mouth? If so, when and how? Like Zechariah did you give Him glory and praise?

It's important we testify to the Lord's goodness and faithfulness when He gives us a platform. People need to hear about what God has done in the past. Many people will draw hope and inspiration from hearing about what God is doing in your life.