



WEEKLY STUDY

Week 2

We come to the second week of Advent and our look at Christmas through the eyes of Mary. After the angel had appeared to Mary and shared news of Jesus' arrival, Mary had an experience of confirmation and consolation led by the Holy Spirit. This took place when she visited her cousin Elizabeth. How does the Spirit work in your life to convince you of God's presence and will for your life? Prayerfully consider how God is meeting you in the middle of monumental decisions and losses. May you take notice of the little confirmations that point to God's movement this week.

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt. Pray this or another prayer as you move into your day.

*O Spirit of God,
Convince me of your call.
Confirm that calling in me.
Bring consolation to my grief and mourning.
Come Lord Jesus.
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.39-45 (The Message)

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly,

*You're so blessed among women,
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!
And why am I so blessed that*

*the mother of my Lord visits me?
The moment the sound of your
greeting entered my ears,
The babe in my womb
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,
believed every word would come true!*

- Mary was carrying more than an unborn baby, She was also carrying all that it meant to be visited by an angel and to be pregnant out of wedlock. She was carrying joy for her cousin who was expecting a hoped-for child in her old age. Before they even have a conversation, the baby in Elizabeth's womb (John) leapt. It was confirmation for Elizabeth who then interpreted it for Mary. She named the truth about Mary and the child she was carrying. It can be easy to doubt God's big plans, and so a word of confirmation through Elizabeth must have further humbled and yet emboldened Mary. Who has God used in your life to confirm God's plan?
- *Holy Spirit, confirm in me my purpose according to God's plan. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ROMANS 10.17-18

*...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.¹⁸ But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:
"Their voice has gone out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.*

- The word about Christ has gone out into the world, but for many the words are not enough. Words themselves do not change minds, this requires convincing. The gift of the Holy Spirit is that the good news of Jesus Christ can transform us. Depending on where you are in your life of faith, you might be able to identify a specific time or a season when the Spirit was convincing you of who Jesus is. If so, describe what that was like. Was there a singular moment when you first said, *I believe!?*
- *Jesus, continue to do your work in me so that through me the message of the Gospel might be heard and the convincing work of the Spirit might take hold of hearts. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: HEBREWS 10.15-16

*The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:
¹⁶ "This is the covenant I will make with them
after that time, says the Lord.
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds."*

- The Holy Spirit doesn't quit on us. In Hebrews, we read that the Spirit is testifying that we are being made holy when we receive the gift of Jesus' sacrifice for us. When we remain in a covenant relationship with God, we will become more and more like Jesus. Our identity in him is being confirmed. Read Hebrews 10.1-14. How do these words about Jesus' sacrifice impact your faith? Can you think of times when your faith has been made firm?
- *Holy Spirit, make firm my sometimes wavering faith. Remind me today of the covenant with God made possible through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Amen.*

THURSDAY: 2 CORINTHIANS 1.3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

- God brings us comfort in our times of trouble. In Monday's reading, we saw that Elizabeth was a living example of these words from Paul. She had been brought consolation through pregnancy in her old age, and was now offering consolation to Mary. In this world we will have trouble—no matter how spiritually mature we grow—but the Holy Spirit brings us back to the peace we find in Jesus. When have you most needed consolation in your life? How did you remember finding consolation?
- *God, I will praise you before my breakthrough. May I find consolation through your Spirit to be a light in this broken world. Amen.*

FRIDAY: PSALM 42.5-7

Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

⁶*My soul is downcast within me;*

therefore I will remember you

from the land of the Jordan,

the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

⁷*Deep calls to deep*

in the roar of your waterfalls;

all your waves and breakers

have swept over me.

- We don't have to pretend that we are not sad or hurt. Instead we offer the deep parts of our hearts up to God, and trust that the Spirit will console us by connecting us to the deep parts of God's heart. How could we have the "deep calls to deep" connection with God if it were not for the Holy Spirit?
- *God I put my hope in you and I offer you praise today. Come to me in the valleys and the peaks of my day. Amen.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 103.1-5, 9-12

Praise the Lord, my soul;

all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

²*Praise the Lord, my soul,*

and forget not all his benefits—

³*who forgives all your sins*

and heals all your diseases,

⁴*who redeems your life from the pit*

and crowns you with love and compassion,

⁵*who satisfies your desires with good things*

so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- Mary's words in Luke 2.46-56 reflect Psalm 103. It was as if she had these words ready to go. They seemed to pour out of her in response to God's call on her life. What words of God surface for you in times of surprise?
- *O God, give me the words of life to carry around in my heart. I pray that they will pour out of me in response to your call in my life. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

We often sing this song in worship at Providence Church. It is called Praise Before My Breakthrough. As you read through the lyrics, what images or situations in your own life do the words resonate with?

*When I'm holding up my hands
When I'm counting every breath
Lord, all I need to know is
You choose me
You choose me*

*I'll praise before my breakthrough
'Til my song becomes my triumph
I will sing because I trust You
I will bring my heart, I will lift my song*

*When I'm listening for Your voice
And I'm shutting out the noise
I know that You will speak clearly*

*When I'm living out my faith
When I'm stepping on the sea
I know You take my hand
And walk with me
Walk with me*

The song then repeats the following refrain. Where do you need the consolation of the Holy Spirit? Ask the Spirit to convince you, confirm the truth, and bring consolation to your heart.

*He who came in power, He will come again
He who heals the sick, won't He move again
He who raised the dead, won't He raise again
And I will sing, I will sing*