



“God calls all of us to live lives of meaning and purpose.” What does this statement mean to you? How does it challenge you? Use the following reflections to dig deeper into this question with family and friends as Lent begins.

Adult to Small Child

Read: [Luke 3:21-22](#).

Reflect: God called Jesus at the beginning of his ministry with simple words of affirmation and blessing. In the same way, we can begin our journey with our children with a reminder that we, too, are beloved. We, too, are called and blessed by God. As we sojourn together, may we never lose sight of the blessing it is to be God’s own child.

Respond: Remember your child’s baptism. Dip your finger in a small amount of water and make the sign of the cross on the palm your child’s hand. As you do, say these words: *[Name], you are beloved by God and by me. May you know the love of God all of your days. In the name of the triune God I pray, amen.* If your child is old enough to dip his or her fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross on your hand, give that a try, too.

Adult to Elementary Child

Read: [Luke 1:46-55](#).

Reflect: Mary’s song might be my favorite passage in the entire Bible. In it she describes what the world will be like when the kingdom of God is fully here, when the Messiah, God’s chosen one, turns the world upside-down: *“He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.”* Mary reminds us that what God is doing in Jesus changes everything. Some people have called it a freedom song, a song of revolution, and I love to imagine it being sung by this young woman who had never been to school, who was poor and unmarried and about to have a baby. A girl who could say yes to becoming the mother of God’s child couldn’t have been meek and mild; Mary was strong, brave and bold. Her song is called the *Magnificat* in Latin; it begins, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Respond: Take a magnifying glass outside. Take a close look at a leaf, some grains of sand, a drop of water. When they are magnified, the simplest, most ordinary

things become wondrous. It's surprising, not at all what you expected! That's when you know God is at work.

Adult to Teen or Young Adult

Read: Luke 1:46-55.

Reflect: In Luke 1:46-55, Mary sings a song known as the *Magnificat*. It's a song of praise and thanksgiving, and Mary is celebrated as a faithful servant of God for her willingness to answer God's call. But there's no way Mary was singing praises as soon as Gabriel shared the news with her! (There's a reason the angel started with "Do not be afraid.")

Respond: Write a script together of how the conversation between Mary and Gabriel might *really* have gone from Gabriel's announcement to Mary's *Magnificat*. Then talk about a time you got news that really changed your life. How did you respond? What brought you from an initially dramatic response to acceptance, and even excitement, over the changes that were coming? How might your *Magnificat* read once you realized God was moving in your life?

Adult to Adult

Read: Luke 1.

Reflect: The Book of Luke opens with the intertwined stories of two related couples: Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Mary and Joseph. Zechariah did not believe the angel Gabriel when he prophesied that he and Elizabeth would have a son. As a result of Zechariah's doubt, the Lord struck him mute. Mary worried over the fact that she was an unmarried virgin when the angel Gabriel prophesied that she and Joseph would also have a son. The Lord extended favor to her, and Gabriel explained how it was possible. When the Lord sends angels to reveal a promise, let us not be struck mute. Instead, praise the One in whom we have found favor. "O, favored one, the Lord is with you" (ESV, Luke 1:21). Despite their doubts, God's will was carried out in both accounts. When in doubt, let our praise be greater than our fear.

Respond: This week find time to swap stories with your partner or a friend about a fear you are currently struggling with. How can you encourage each other to be people of praise in the face of this fear?