



LOVE STORIES: WEEK 3

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LOVE STORIES

WEEK 3: Mary and Joseph (Luke 1-2)

Bible: Luke 1:38 (NLT)

Bottom Line: True love helps you fulfill God's purposes for your life. It never pulls you away from it.

SUPPLIES

Opening Game (In-Person & Online)

- "What's the purpose?" Description Sheet (found at the end of this lesson)
- Gather the following items or pictures of each item.
Display the items or photos around the room.
 - 1 Bic ink pen (if you cannot find Bic, any ink pen that has a cap with a hole in the top)
 - 1 pair of denim jeans with watch pocket
 - 2-3 paper condiment cups (like the ones in a restaurant)
 - 1 Chinese takeout container
 - 1 winter hat with a pom-pom on top
 - 1 disposable cup with a plastic lid (cups that come from a fast-food restaurant or gas station will work)
 - 1 soda can (specifically the tab)

OPENING GAME (IN-PERSON VERSION): "WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?"

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Explain to the students that the items on display are common items we use every day.

However, many items are not being used the way they were intended.

Say: Your job is to listen to the description of the item.

When you think you know the item being described, go and stand next to the item.

Once all students have made their selection, reveal the item being described.

Repeat until all items have been identified.

OPENING GAME (ONLINE VERSION): “WHAT’S THE PURPOSE?”

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Follow the same instructions as the in-person game with the following variations:

- Find pictures of all the items listed and create a collage to be displayed on the screen while reading descriptions.
- Students will give their responses using the chat feature.

After the game... Share with the group that everything and everyone has a purpose.

Just like we did not know the purpose for some of these items, some people won't know or fully understand your purpose.

The creator of Chinese food containers knew they were to be used as plates, even if we didn't.

Our Creator knows our purpose too. Because He loves us, He will give us people to love and help us along the way.

TEACH

Say: There are so many items that we use incorrectly daily.

Who knew a hole in a pen cap could be critical to saving a life?

Just like every object was created with a purpose, every person created in God's image has a purpose.

At this age, you may be wondering, “What is my purpose? What am I supposed to do with my life?”

These are valid questions.

The only way to know the purpose of the creation is to ask the Creator.

The more you walk with God, pray and study the bible, God will help you to understand His purpose for your life.

Not only that, but He will also surround you with people to help you fulfill your purpose.

Over the past two weeks, we've seen the impact loving relationships can have in our lives.

Those who love us encourage us to trust God.

Love also seeks the beauty within a person and does not stop at outer beauty.

True love also does something else; it moves you toward your purpose.

This week, we will look at another power couple in the Bible: Mary and Joseph.

Who better to teach us about love and fulfilling our purpose than the parents of Jesus?

Let's look at **Luke 1:26-28** to see the beginning of Mary's purpose.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee.

To a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!"

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.

And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.

What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month.

For the word of God will never fail."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true," And then the angel left her.

Note to leader: This passage of scripture deals with the virgin birth of Jesus. This may lead to other questions. Be mindful of the ages of the students in your group when preparing to teach.

Wow! Talk about a mic drop!

In these verses, we see that Mary learns she will be the mother of the Messiah.

That is a major job to take on for someone at a young age.

Have you ever felt that way?

Do you wonder how the ideas and dreams you have will happen?

You are not alone, Mary did, too. She asked the angel, “How can this happen?”

Just like the angel assured Mary, God will do the same for you.

He will also place people in your life to support you as you walk in your purpose.

That’s what God did for Mary through her cousin Elizabeth. **Read Luke 1:39-45** to find out what happened.

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town Where Zechariah lived.

She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth.

At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed.

Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?

When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy.

You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

How awesome is this picture?

Two mothers carrying out their purpose to bring sons into the world, who are also full of purpose.

Elizabeth was the mother of John the Baptist, the one who led the way for Jesus.

Mary was the mother of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

They were cousins and no doubt loved one another.

Elizabeth and Mary helped each other complete God's purpose for their lives.

God will place people with similar goals in our path to help us along the way.

You may be thinking, *Everyone we encounter is not there to help us.*

You're right. Those people do exist.

You will know the people who are there to support your journey because they will help with your purpose, not interfere with it.

Although Elizabeth was a relative who loved and supported Mary, that relationship is not our focus.

The stars of this week are Mary and Joseph, a young couple engaged to be married.

Then, God sends Gabriel with the biggest plot twist in history.

Because they were to be married, Joseph has a major role to play in Mary's calling to be the mother of Jesus.

This means Joseph had to be told what was going on as well.

See **Matthew 1:18-25** for Joseph's encounter with the angel of the Lord).

Let's review the facts.

Joseph is engaged to Mary.

He is visited by an angel and told that his fiancée is about to have a baby that is not his.

AND...he is still supposed to take Mary as his wife.

Whew!

That may have sent the average man running.

Thankfully, Joseph was not that man.

He clearly trusted the Lord, and he truly loved Mary.

True love helps you fulfill God's purposes for your life. It never pulls you away from it.

It's important to know that, when we have an assignment from God, everyone may not understand it.

That's okay. Everyone is not meant to understand.

But the people who are designed to help you fulfill your purpose will.

We see that with Mary and Joseph.

Once he was visited by the angel, Joseph understood what was happening with Mary.

He didn't understand and first and planned to privately divorce Mary. (**Matthew 1:19**)

Although Mary still would have fulfilled her purpose if Joseph left, the journey could have looked different.

Nothing could stop God's purpose for Mary.

That goes for you and me, too.

God loves us and wants to help us carry out the purpose He calls each of us to.

Fortunately, love was working in Mary and Joseph's lives as well.

Joseph did not pull Mary away from what God called her to do; he partnered with her to do what the Lord purposed for both.

Read Luke 2:21-24.

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord."

So, they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Together, these two form a mighty pair.

Relationships can be difficult to navigate on a normal basis.

When you add in the birth of the Messiah, things go to a new level.

But we see God's love for Mary and Joseph and their love for each other.

They were examples of obedient faith and love.

According to Jewish law, babies were to be circumcised and dedicated to the Lord.

And they did everything the law required of them.

They didn't get "big headed" and think, "This is the Messiah; we don't have to do those things."

Instead, like many godly parents, they followed God's word and dedicated their child back to God.

The Bible doesn't mention any debate or disagreement about this.

The scripture shows us a united front.

Two parents who love their child and each other.

Whoever is going through life with you should be someone who moves you to do what is right.

When we love someone, we help them to be their best, not their worst.

In doing so, we reflect God's love for us.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think that Elizabeth, having had a similar experience as Mary, helped her fulfill her purpose?
2. How would you have responded to the news from the angel if you were Mary? Joseph?
3. What does the Bible tell us Joseph planned to do when he found out Mary was pregnant? Would you have agreed with his actions?
4. What are some ways people can keep you from fulfilling the purpose God has for you?
5. 1 Corinthians 13:4 says that love is patient and kind. Apply that verse to Mary and Joseph. How were patience and kindness shown?

6. What do you think you are being called to do in life? If you don't know yet, pray and ask God to help you know.
7. Luke 1:28 shows Mary's response to Gabriel. What conclusions can you draw about Mary from her response?
8. Think about the married couples you know (family, church, community). In what ways are they fulfilling God's purpose.
9. How does it make you feel to know that God has a specific purpose planned for your life?
10. What hobbies, interests, and skills did God give you? In what ways can you use those skills for the kingdom of God?

“What’s the purpose?” Description Sheet

Hold each item up for students to see.

SAY: What is the purpose of this item? (Allow time for students to guess, then read the description of the item’s purpose.)

1. This item was designed with small kids in mind. The manufacturer knew that it could be a choking hazard for children who might put it in their mouths. The manufacturer took measures to prevent children from suffocating by placing a hole in the cap so that if one were to get stuck in a little one’s throat, the child could still breathe air into his lungs.
2. This item started with gold miners in California in the mid-1800s. One of the most important items they kept on them was their pocket watch, which was generally delicate and spendy. This item was designed to protect their expensive pocket watches by keeping it snugly and safely tucked into place.
3. When you unfold this item, it will turn into small paper platter that can hold a great deal more sauce for all your dipping needs.
4. Like another item we’ve seen today, it can be unfolded to become perfect-sized cardboard dinner plates.
5. The purpose of this item is to keep the seams from coming apart at the top. In later years, people began using buttons instead of this item to bind the seams, and it looked like a small bean at the top
6. This item is not only designed to keep liquid inside the container. When you’re ready to sip on your drink, it has specific ridges that can allow it to double as a coaster and hug the base of your cup.
7. Designed with a large hole in the top, this item is intended to serve as a placeholder for your straw.

Item descriptions adapted from <https://shareably.net/40-everyday-things-hidden-purpose/>