

The Story Church - 12.18.22

## A Physician and the Facts: Luke's Pursuit of the Truth

Volume 1: *How Can It Be?*

Part Three: *Why Does Mary's Virginity Matter?*

**SERIES INTRO:** He was a doctor - a scientist trained to do meticulous research in pursuit of the truth. He was also an educated Gentile who became the only non-Jewish author of the Bible. And in the middle of the first century AD, this man devoted his life to answering one question: ***Can Christianity be trusted?***

His name was Luke, and after years of researching the extraordinary claims being made by a small, highly motivated sect called *The Way*, he became an unlikely disciple of Jesus. How could a reasonable researcher come to believe that a 1st Century Jewish rabbi who was executed by the Romans is the living Son of God? We'll explore this question and more at The Story Church throughout this 22-week series as we follow Luke's logic from the Christmas manger to Easter's empty tomb.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:** **Have you ever felt called by God - or simply compelled by your conscience - to do something extraordinary that would make a difference in the world, only to have that feeling stifled by the belief that you're underqualified or ill-equipped to do what needs to be done? Reflect on this question for a few minutes, and write down your thoughts here:**

**What do we know about Mary's background and life *before* she became the mother of Jesus?**

**READ:** Luke 1:26-38 - In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

**How did Mary's age and marital/sexual status make her an unlikely candidate to conceive, carry, and deliver the most important child in human history?**

**What stands out to you about Mary's conversation with the angel, and why?**

**Many people - including many Christians and former Christians - struggle with the notion of the Virgin Birth. Why is it hard for folks to accept the idea of Jesus being born of a virgin?**

Even though Mary was clearly more than a virgin, her virginity is the one characteristic that she's known to this day. Why is that, and how and when did Church teachings like "The Perpetual Virginity of Mary" and "The Immaculate Conception" develop?

As misguided as some of the Church's teachings about Mary have been throughout the years, her status as a virgin in Luke 1 is a critically important detail in the story of Jesus' life. Let's explore what Mary's virginity does mean, and what it *doesn't* mean.

*What Mary's Virginity Means*

*What It Doesn't Mean*

How does Mary's story of radical obedience to the will of God inspire you to live differently today?

**December 2022 Reading Plan**

<p><b><u>Week 1</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/5 - Colossians 4:7-14 (esp. 4:7), Philemon 1:23-24, 2 Timothy 4:9-13 (esp. 4:11)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/6 - Luke 1:1-7</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/7 - 1:8-17</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/8 - 1:18-20</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/9 - 1:21-25</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Week 2</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/12 - 1:26-33</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/13 - 1:34-38</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/14 - 1:39-45</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/15 - 1:46-56</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/16 - 1:57-66</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Week 3</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/19 - 1:67-80</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/20 - 2:1-7</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/21 - 2:8-14</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/22 - 2:15-20</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/23 - 2:21-24</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Week 4</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/26 - 2:25-35</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/27 - 2:36-40</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/28 - 2:41-52</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/29 - 3:1-20</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 12/30 - 3:21-38</li> </ul>

