

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Gabriel

Dave Cover | Luke 1:26-38

Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To help us see that there is a spiritual reality alongside our normal, everyday world and reflect on what that means for our lives.

Icebreaker: Name a Christmas tradition that you and/or your family participates in every year. Share why you enjoy (or dislike) it.

Transition: Just as we participate in our Christmas traditions over and over again, many of us have heard the biblical stories about Christmas enough times that we've become accustomed to how many surprising or strange things they contain. Today we want to look at one part of the Christmas story with fresh eyes.

Read:

[Luke 1:26-35](#)

...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² 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, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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.

Discussion:

1. What aspects of this passage strike you as out of the ordinary, i.e., we wouldn't expect them in the ordinary course of events?

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2. Let's look closer at just one element of the supernatural aspect of the story: Gabriel. His interaction with Mary isn't the first time we encounter Gabriel in the Bible. Five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, we see him giving aid to Daniel in Daniel 8-9:

Read:

[Daniel 9:21](#)

21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.

In fact, part of Gabriel's message to Daniel concerns the coming Messiah ("anointed one"):

Read:

[Daniel 9:26](#)

...The Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing.

Gabriel also appears earlier in Luke 1 to a priest named Zechariah. He announces the Zechariah's previously barren wife Elizabeth will bear a son named John, who will prepare people for the Lord's coming.

Read:

[Luke 1:13-17, 19](#)

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." ...The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

3. What do we learn about Gabriel from his interaction with Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary? Why should his presence/role in these stories be an encouragement for us?

4. While the angel Gabriel is an example of a supernatural being working on behalf of God and his people, the Bible clearly tells us there are other spiritual beings who have rebelled against God and are working against him/us. Dave mentioned that, in the Old Testament, they are referred to as “gods” (lesser spiritual beings, false gods, but still real!):

Read:

[Psalm 82:5-7](#)

5 “The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ 7 But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.”

In the New Testament, Paul uses a host of other names to describe them:

Read:

[Ephesians 6:12](#)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

5. What do we learn about these opposing spiritual forces from the passages above?
6. Later in Ephesians 6, Paul mentions that one way we can stand against these evil spiritual forces is with the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v 17). How can God’s word help us in this battle? What’s one concrete way you can get God’s word more consistently into your life for this purpose?
7. Finally, as a way to start using the sword of the Spirit for the battle even now, let’s look at the two passages that Dave mentioned which speak to Jesus’s death and resurrection and their effect on the spiritual forces that oppose us. How are these passages an encouragement to us?

Read:

[Colossians 2:15](#)

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And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

[Ephesians 1:18-21](#)

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

[Sharing and Prayer:](#)

Pray for one another that:

1. We'd remember that whatever the everyday details of our lives, we're in the midst of a spiritual battle that we need to take seriously.
2. We'd be given grace to trust and follow Jesus, and so side with the one who has the ultimate power and authority in the battle.