

BIG IDEA

When life feels uncertain, we don't have to fear because Jesus is King.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:26-35, Matthew 1:20-25, John 18:36-37

ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

We might be tempted to view the people in biblical stories as superhuman individuals, but the truth is they were often afraid, felt inadequate, and wavered in their faith. Their stories are not told so that we would make heroes out of them, but as an encouragement to trust like them. The hero of the story is God, and we learn how he accomplishes his purpose through flawed and fragile people just like you and me. Israel faced many moments of uncertainty, as did Mary, and so do we.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

It is generally thought that Uzziah died in 739 BC. One year later, the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser made his first campaign west (740-738). This campaign was the beginning of a serious military threat that will eventually bring about the downfall of the northern half of the split kingdom, and the destruction of its capital city of Samaria (along with many other cities of Israel and Judah) and the deportation of large segments of the population. In this scripture, the Assyrians are on the brink of establishing the empire that will dominate the ancient Near East for over a century.

Mary would be facing a great deal of uncertainty. What would it mean for a young peasant girl to give birth to a king? How could her baby be a Messiah? How would it work out culturally for her to be pregnant before she was married to her fiancé? She even asks how it can be that she could be pregnant since she was a virgin. The angel told her she was highly favored. What might have gone through her head when she heard that? How was she supposed to go about living her life? What would change? What would stay the same? Those are perplexing questions.

However, Mary could rely on her experience of the angel in conjunction with the promised pregnancy. She had received word from the angel that God favored her, and that her child, though she didn't have all the details, would be great. She would also be able to take refuge in her cousin Elizabeth's presence and have Joseph to lean on (though he also went through a time of questioning - see Matthew 1:18-25).

LIFE APPLICATION

In times of difficulty, we are often compelled to give easy or "pat" answers to challenging questions and problems. Sometimes these come in the form of pithy sayings (everything happens for a reason, every time God closes a door, he opens a window). Most of the time, those answers are better left unsaid. What people generally need to experience is a place to express their frustration, insecurity, and doubt. When we seek the presence of the Holy Spirit, we will find the strength to face our everyday troubles and to live out the mission of Jesus in the world. Often sitting in silence and asking for the Holy Spirit to make his presence known to us is what we need to face the uncertainty of the day or the challenges we may be facing in a difficult season of life.