

# *The Easter Experience*

## **Episode Four: My Life Has a Plan**

### Opening Thoughts

1. What do you do when life turns out differently than you planned?
2. When is it difficult to trust God? Why?

### **Read Luke 1:39-56.**

<sup>39</sup>At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup>where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup>In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup>But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup>As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.

<sup>53</sup>He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful

<sup>55</sup>to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
even as he said to our fathers."

<sup>56</sup>Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

3. Who do you go to first when you have good news to share? Why?
4. How should Mary's faith serve as an example to us?
5. How does Mary see herself in her situation?
6. What do you appreciate most about Mary?
  - a. Her faith
  - b. Her character
  - c. Her joy
  - d. Her passion for God
  - e. Other
7. What word in Mary's Song best describes how you feel about your relationship with God?
  - a. Rejoicing
  - b. Humble
  - c. Proud
  - d. Lifted Up
  - e. Hungry
  - f. Empty
8. What level of status do you need to play a part in God's plan? What does that encourage you?

**Read Luke 2:21-35 and 39-40.**

<sup>21</sup>On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

<sup>22</sup>When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup>Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup>"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you now dismiss your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too..."

<sup>39</sup>When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

9. Jesus' name means *salvation*. Why is that important?
10. Why are affirming words so meaningful? Who in your life regularly uses words to uplift and encourage? Are you that kind of person?
11. How or where do you find encouragement in your relationship with God?
12. Knowing what you know about Jesus' story, do you feel sorry for Mary? Could she have expected something like the crucifixion? Do you think she understood Simeon's cryptic message?
13. What do you learn about Jesus' parents from the events of this ceremony? What kind of people were they?
14. What do you think the conversation between Mary and Joseph was like as they went on their way home from the ceremony? What areas do you think they focused on? Which ones do you think they might have purposefully tried to forget? Why?
15. How is Jesus causing the "falling and rising" of people you know today?
16. Has God ever brought along a "Simeon" to confirm something in your life? How well did you accept the news?

### **Read John 19:25-27**

<sup>25</sup>Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup>and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

17. Why do you think the video portrayed this moment as the breaking point for Mary?
18. Have you experienced such a moment in your life? If so, does it strain your relationship with God? What advice would you give someone going through a "breaking" moment today?

## Digging Deeper

The prophet Isaiah recorded four poetic descriptions of the coming *servant of Israel*. Traditionally these four units are called the “Servant Songs of Isaiah” and are appropriately attributed to Jesus. As you read each song list the attributes and descriptions of Israel’s servant. Then, take a brief moment to compare the servant to Jesus.

Read Isaiah 42:1-9

Attributes of the Servant- \_\_\_\_\_

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Could this be Jesus? How so? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Isaiah 49:1-7

Attributes of the Servant- \_\_\_\_\_

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Could this be Jesus? How so? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Isaiah 50:4-9

Attributes of the Servant- \_\_\_\_\_

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Could this be Jesus? How so? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Attributes of the Servant- \_\_\_\_\_

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Could this be Jesus? How so? \_\_\_\_\_

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Imagine for a moment that you were a Jew in the crowd when Jesus was crucified and the *Servant Songs* came to your mind. What thoughts and emotions might you have experienced while watching Jesus from the time of his scourging through his death on the cross?

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