

ICEBREAKER

Rob shared about wearing his jacket-shirt and suddenly getting noticed all day long—comments from 8am to 5pm, people rolling down car windows, students at Missio chiming in.

- **What is the most commented-on item of clothing, accessory, or personal item you own? Why do you think it gets so much attention?**

IDEA 1

Read Luke 1:26-38

Gabriel greets Mary as "favored one"—she's been selected, noticed, recognized when she least expected it.

- **Why do you think God chose Mary—a teenage girl from an obscure village—rather than someone prominent, educated, or powerful? What does this reveal about how God's Kingdom works?**
- **Rob describes Mary's response as 'fear and awe mixed with confusion'—that 'who me?' moment where you look behind you to see if God meant someone else. When have you experienced that mix of emotions when sensing God's invitation to do something? What made you question whether He really meant you?**
- **Rob goes on to say: "It's not about your resume—it's about your open hands. It's about willingness more than qualification." What "qualifiers" do you have in your mind that might cause you to miss or ignore nudges from the Holy Spirit?**
- **Where might God be inviting you to step into a Kingdom purpose right now—not because you're qualified, but because you're willing? What would it look like to say "yes" with open hands?**

IDEA 2

Mary doesn't blindly accept Gabriel's announcement—she asks honest questions. Her question isn't doubt; it's the beginning of understanding.

- The sermon challenges us: "*We often ask the how before fully grasping the why.*" **Why do you think we tend to focus on logistics before understanding God's larger purpose? How might this limit our obedience?**
- Walter Brueggemann says: "*Biblical faith is not the absence of questions but the courage to ask them in the presence of God.*" **Have you given yourself permission to be inquisitive in your obedience? Or do you feel pressure to have "blind faith" without questions?**
- The sermon notes that if Mary had jumped immediately to "Here I am" without questions, it would strip her of agency and reduce her to a pawn. **How does God's patience with our questions actually honor our humanity and free will?**
- Mary's surrender came after she asked questions and received clarity about the "why." **What questions do you need to bring to God before you can fully surrender to what He's asking of you?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

1. Identifying the Invitation (2 mins)

Invite everyone to slow down and get quiet

Say something like: "***Close your eyes. Ask the Holy Spirit: 'Where are You inviting me to step into a Kingdom purpose right now? Where are You asking me to be Your peace, power, and presence?'***

Don't rush. Just listen. Pay attention to what comes to mind—even if it feels small or you don't feel qualified."

2. Naming the Qualifiers (2 mins)

Once everyone is ready, invite them to reflect:

"Now ask the Holy Spirit: 'What qualifiers or excuses am I using to avoid this invitation? What am I telling myself about why I'm not the right person?'"

Now shift from identifying obstacles to engaging with God.

3. From Questions to Surrender (2 mins)

Say something like: *"Like Mary, you're allowed to ask questions. Talk to God about your 'how can this be?' questions. 'God, what do I need to understand about the why before I can say yes? What truth do You want me to know about this invitation?'"*

Pause and listen for his response

4. Humble Surrender (2 mins)

Lead the group in a prayer of surrender, echoing Mary's words:

"God, I am Your servant. I don't have all the answers, and I don't feel fully qualified—but I'm willing. May Your word to me be fulfilled. Help me move from 'Who am I?' to 'Here I am.' Give me open hands and a humble heart to say yes to Your Kingdom purposes."

5. Partner up & pray (2-3 mins)

Split into 2s or 3s and pray for each other, asking the Holy Spirit to give courage, clarity, and willingness to step into the Kingdom invitations He's extending—even when it feels costly or uncomfortable.

PRACTICE FOR THIS WEEK

Discuss as a group where you sense God inviting you to be His peace, power, and presence this week.

During the week, when you may feel disqualified about what God is asking you to do, pause and remind yourself, like Mary, "You have found favor with God." Allow the reminder and experience of God's favor to reorient and empower you to be his hands to others.