

## Day 1

April 9



*Pray / For the humility to say “yes” to God.*

### MAKE MARY’S “YES” MINE

Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Savior of the world. How would you like that title or its responsibility? What about the submission that it would require carrying someone else’s child or the social ramifications of claiming that you’re a virgin and have been impregnated by the Holy Spirit?

In the movie *Moana*, Moana is a girl chosen by the ocean to right wrongs and stop evil. Moana humbly and bravely accepts the challenge and goes after her destiny. When struck a devastating blow, she says in defeat, “I’m not the right person. You have to choose someone else.”<sup>1</sup> Then, in a delightful song and dance, she realizes her identity and forges ahead toward her destiny. Similarly, Mary is given a daunting task and because of her confidence in her identity in God, she can accept the challenge.



*Read / Luke 1:26-38*

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<sup>1</sup> Cravalho, Auli’i. *Moana*, directed by Ron Clements and John Musker (Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2016), DVD.



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Consider for a few moments what it may have felt like to be Mary and all the challenges that lie ahead. What does her response say about her character? Praise God for her willingness to put aside her own life for the sake of his will.

Think about a time when God’s plan for your life was difficult for you and how you responded. After reading Mary’s story, what would you like to do differently? If you don’t feel that committing your life to God has brought difficulty, spend some time seeking him with a willingness to be inconvenienced for him and his plan for you.

Mary’s identity was rooted in the call of God on her life, which allowed her to humbly submit to him. Where does your identity lie? If all the circumstances in your life changed, what would remain?

For another resource, listen to the sermon “Mary’s Messy Yes” by Greg Boyd, and ask God to make Mary’s humble response yours:  
<https://whchurch.org/sermon/marys-messy-yes/><sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Greg Boyd, “Mary’s Messy Yes,” sermon, Woodland Hills, December 21, 2008, Audio file, 37:13, <https://whchurch.org/sermon/marys-messy-yes/>.

## Day 2

April 10



*Pray / Ask God to expand your heart for those on the fringes.*

### GOD IS IN THE FRINGES

In Bible times, women had virtually no rights and no authority. Mary was a dirt-poor, unmarried teenage girl, well aware of her marginalized place on the fringes of society. Then an angel tells her she is favored by God and is going to bring his long-awaited Messiah into the world! She submits herself completely to God. Skip nine months ahead, and her baby's first bed is an animal feeding trough. Ick.

Jesus is called Emmanuel, "God with us." God came to earth in the form of a helpless baby, through an unprivileged woman, and got right in the midst of his beloved people from day one. We often surround ourselves with like-minded people, and when we don't know how to relate with someone, we tend to back away. But throughout the Bible, God intentionally chose the marginalized to tell and spread his story, and his example is ours to follow.



*Read / [Matthew 1:18-23](#); [Luke 1:26-35](#)*



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Consider the feelings you've had when you have felt marginalized. Now consider the marginalized people on the fringes of your society. Jesus turned the tables over and over in his life by elevating with dignity those on the fringes of society. He actively dignified and loved on them. How can you follow his example?

If you feel isolated from those different from you, what practical steps can you take to find opportunities to minister to those who are different?

If ministering to the marginalized is something that you feel God stirring in your heart, reach out to someone at Five Oaks and inquire about how you can get involved. If you'd like to dig a little deeper, listen to the sermon "Ruth: Act I" by Chris Hay on restoring dignity to the poor and marginalized: <http://media.cornerstonesimi.com/media.php?pageID=6><sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Chris Hay, "Ruth: Act I," sermon, Cornerstone Church, August 6, 2016, Audio file, 38:51, <http://media.cornerstonesimi.com/media.php?pageID=6>.

## *Day 3*

*April 11*



*Pray / Thank God for the gift of song to bring us together.*

### MARY'S SONG

A very common theme in the Bible is one of song. The Psalms are all poetry and singing. There is an entire book of the Bible called The Song of Solomon. In 1 Samuel, Hannah sings her thanks to God as she dedicates her long-prayed-for son, Samuel, to God. In the book of Exodus, we see the song of Moses and the Israelites sung to God after the crossing of the Red Sea, which became a song that many of us grew up singing: "I Will Sing Unto the Lord."

The Israelite people respond to God's goodness with singing and poetry, and Mary does the same as she submits her life to God.



*Read / Luke 1:46-55*



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

What are the key characteristics of God that Mary's song celebrates? When have you seen those same characteristics from God?

If you were to write a song or a poem about God's goodness, what aspect of God's character would it celebrate?

Mary has just submitted her life to God and is uncertain about what this means for her future. But yet what does her song say about where her heart is? What would your song say about your heart towards God?

## Day 4

April 12



*Pray / Thank God for always, always being faithful.*

### MARY TRUSTS GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISES

Mary said, “Yes,” to an absurd instruction from God and is then inspired to sing praises to him. She knows her underprivileged place in her world and knows the logical impacts of her new pregnancy. She understands what this means for her new marriage and her family life. But she humbly and wholeheartedly submits to God because she trusts him. Mary lives by faith—not by logic. And Mary’s song to God shows she trusts in his mercy and faithfulness.

She understood that the baby she would carry would bring to completion a hope birthed in ancient times and brought into her reality. Mary trusts in the promises of God to her people from long, long ago and trusts that he will sustain her as he uses her to keep his promises.



*Read / [Luke 1:51-55](#)*



*Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

What are the promises of God that you believe are promises to us today? Be specific in listing out at least five promises. If you are unfamiliar, try an internet search or a search in [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) for some that speak to you.

How does remembering these promises spur you on during a difficult time? If it’s helpful, write these down somewhere you can easily access them during those times.

If you are unsure of God’s promises to you or feel an unsurpassable gap between the Bible and your life today but want to know more, reach out to someone at Five Oaks or your Group Life leader for more direction. We would love to help answer your questions and share in your journey.

Do you tend to live your life by faith in God’s promises or by common sense and logic? How do you think this affects your life or your relationship with God? For more on the subject of living your life by faith instead of logic, listen to “Ruth: Act IV”:

<http://media.cornerstonesimi.com/media.php?pageID=6><sup>4</sup>

## Day 5

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<sup>4</sup> Chris Hay, “Ruth: Act IV,” sermon, Cornerstone Church, August 27, 2016, Audio file, 47:45, <http://media.cornerstonesimi.com/media.php?pageID=6>.

April 13



*Pray / Praise God for leading with love!*

#### THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

As Mary submitted herself completely to God's difficult plan for her life, she felt a freedom that inspired her to sing praise to God because submitting to God's will doesn't bring confines but rather freedom. Unlike much of our society, we've seen that God intentionally dignifies the marginalized on the fringes of our society. In fact, the New Testament is full of parables about the Kingdom of God being accessible to the most lowly and humble of servants. To be rich, we let go of our riches. To be wise, we embrace what looks like foolishness to the world. We walk by faith, not by logic, with love as our leader.

Love's kingdom's qualities seem upside-down and backwards, but they bring freedom and joy.



*Read / 1 Corinthians 1:18; Luke 1:51-55*



*Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Where do you see the kingdom of God as being different from the world? Be specific. Matthew 5:1-12 can spur your creativity!

How does your life challenge the values of the world with the values of the kingdom? If this is a difficult question to answer, spend some time with God, asking what spiritual gifts he has given you to challenge the world's values and bring more of God's values to it.

If you have not yet submitted your life to this upside-down kingdom, it may look intriguing, though confusing and illogical. If you would like to talk more with someone about this kingdom and how it will change your life, please reach out to someone you know at Five Oaks or any of the staff to talk more about finding freedom through submitting to God.

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