



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides! If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions beginning at the bottom of page 2.

NEW this year: These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders. As always, use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group. And of course, please continue to give us feedback.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for the Sermon given on December 11, 2022

by Pastor Leah Knight Breton

"THE LANGUAGE OF SILENCE"- Luke 1:26-38; 2:17-20



Question: What does Mary's response to God teach us about the language of silence?

Bottom Line: Learning the language of silence holds space for silent moments to speak.

This Advent season we have been looking at the interplay of sound and silence in the Christmas story. So far we have learned the silence of God prepares us to hear the voice of God, and that the sound of silence is the sound of a listening heart. Today Pastor Leah explores the language

of silence. How and when can silence be a meaningful response to the work of God? How do we speak through silence? How do we embody silence in our world today? *What is the language of silence?*

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38; 2:17-20

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Luke 2:17-20

¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Group Discussion Questions

1. After the angel Gabriel sends greetings from the Lord, “Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be” (Luke 1:29). The Greek word for troubled is *diatarassō*, which means to *disturb wholly*. Put yourself in Mary’s shoes - What would you be feeling, experiencing, or thinking in that moment of silence?
2. After the shepherds came to visit the baby Jesus, “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19). Pastor Leah used the term “*wintering*,” meaning to prepare and store up for what is to come. Can you think of an extraordinary moment that you have treasured up for the winters of life?
3. The language of silence helps us to be receptive to God, and also to each other. One way we can do this is by *listening with care and compassion*. Is there someone you know who you can create space for by giving him your undivided attention?
4. Pastor Leah explained that the language of silence includes *wondering, wintering, and waiting*. Which of these do you think would help you grow closer to God?
5. The language of silence is not passive waiting, but *active, expectant waiting*. Is there someone or something that you have been praying for, an unanswered prayer? If you are comfortable sharing with your group, ask them to pray with you.

Take Home Message:

Learning the language of silence holds space for silent moments to speak. This is the *mystery* of faith. Of a God who is mystery and yet who has become *known*, through a baby born in these circumstances. *Teaching us with his life, beginning with the life of his mother, how the language of silence can hold space for silent, uncertain, painful, impossible moments to speak.*

Homework Until Next Time:

Ask the members of your LG to complete the Discipleship Planning Tool and the GPS Assessment Tool before your next meeting. Here is some fresh language:

We’re all on a journey; where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it’s not just good for us, it’s good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn’t come from just hearing the words of Jesus; it comes from putting them into practice. Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The with-God life of our personal habits and routines;
- The with-others life of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The for-the-world life that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Let's Pray

Support for the Leader (These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and also opportunities in the life of our church).

Teaching Points:

- Silence is a language God understands
- Silence is more than just stillness and solitude. It is an acceptance of mystery. It is words and gestures that holds space for unknowing.
- The language of silence is *wondering*, to try to make sense of what's going on
- The language of silence is *wintering*, storing up in preparation for what's to come
- The language of silence is *waiting*, actively and expectantly
- The language of silence doesn't just help us to be receptive to God. It helps us to be receptive to each other. There is a silence that waits for the other person to speak and listens without judgment, but with compassion.

For Further Biblical Study:

Exodus 14:13-14

¹³ Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

1Kings 19:11-13

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
 - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
 - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Group Leader Support: Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor Tim or Grace Lee from the Group Life team.