



# Near and Now

*Called – Mary*

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## **Warm-up Question**

*What causes you to be afraid?*



Photo by Brett Jordan on [Unsplash](#)

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

## Let it be with me according to your word

Read [Luke 1:26-38](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

Have you ever been afraid? I mean, really afraid? Have you ever found yourself in a situation or circumstance that seemed out of your control or beyond your control? Have you ever been asked or expected to do something that seemed unimaginable, or impossible, and you had no idea how you would do it? Have you ever been afraid? I mean, really afraid?

The story of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and telling her that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Christ-child is one of the better-known stories in the Bible, perhaps because of the outcome of the story, rather than the story itself. Mary is the Mother of our Lord, and so therefore, “the end of the story” is that she gives birth to Jesus. But it is interesting and valuable to note how the story begins.

When Gabriel appears to Mary, the first thing that Gabriel says is, “do not be afraid.” It is the greeting that the heavenly messengers give throughout the biblical stories. It is the message given to Abram, Hagar, Rachel, Moses, the whole people of Israel, the widow of Zarephath, Elijah, and a host of others. “Do not be afraid.” It is how the call of God begins, and it is the refrain that echoes through every moment of living into the called life. “Do not be afraid.”

With this beginning, Gabriel assures Mary, all those before her, and all those after her who are called by God to be a part of God’s reign in this world, that God is present and God will be present through anything and everything that God asks. After questioning how this is possible, Mary trusts in this holy promise, and embraces this assurance, and responds, “let it be with me according to your word.”

In our own lives of faith, we too can daily live into the called daily because Gabriel’s word to Mary is God’s word to us, too. “Do not be afraid.” Such is the beginning, the middle, and the ending of the called life.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Gabriel began the divine message to Mary with the words, “do not be afraid?”
2. What about God’s call causes you to be afraid?
3. How do you respond when your faith calls you to do something difficult?
4. What do God’s words “do not be afraid” mean for your life of faith?
5. How do the words “do not be afraid” make it possible for you to ask God questions about God’s call for your life?
6. How do you think Mary would tell this story?
7. How do you think Gabriel would tell this story?
8. Talk about a time when God’s call for your life caused you to be afraid.
9. When have you helped someone else live into the called life by reminding them that God says to them, “do not be afraid?”
10. How can the words “do not be afraid” help you live into the called life today?

### **Activity Suggestions**

Use the words “do not be afraid” as a daily mantra to enrich your life of faith.

Make a list of all the ways that you are called today, i.e. child, parent, employee, neighbor, citizen, friend, etc. Choose one of your callings today and make a plan to be intentional about how you live into that calling the week ahead.

Name one thing that your faith asks you to do that is hard. Talk with a trusted friend about this hard thing, and ask the friend to pray for you that you might faithfully do it.

### **Prayer Concerns**

Those who are afraid, all who are facing hard things, those who assure us of God’s promises

### **Closing Prayer**

Prayer: Move me, O God, to embrace your call for me life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

