

Word Aflame Sr. High

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Unit Aim: The greatest story ever told is that God became flesh—"God with us"—to provide salvation. Born into the humblest of circumstances for the noblest of purposes, Jesus Christ impacted those who were the first to encounter Him, revealing how He can change us as we encounter Him today.

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Unit 2: In the Beginning

Unit Aim: This series searches the Book of Genesis for answers about the origins of life, sin, and the universe. Students will explore the truth about science's witness to Creation, examine key aspects of the original sin, and discover the depth of God's love for them.

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Unit 3: Going Beyond

Unit Aim: This series is designed to challenge and prepare young adults to live the missional life exemplified by the apostles in the Book of Acts. We will discover that the mission of the church is fulfilled when we crucify our personal paradigms, pursue the empowerment and leading of the Spirit, and live as witnesses of the gospel in our world.

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Theme Development

Unit 1: The Characters of Christmas

- This series is designed to educate students on the lives and decisions of the main characters in and around the birth of Jesus. It will show the importance that each of them played, no matter how insignificant they may have seemed prior to these events.
- Consider the use of normal Christmas-themed decorations and imagery.
- Consider the use of a star, manger, cardboard cutouts of animals, and other items to set the biblical scene.
- Alternatively, you may consider making the stage or room look like the inside of a barn or animal stall, complete with hay and other farm equipment denoting a modern take on the biblical setting.

Unit 2: In the Beginning

- This series is designed to explore the Creation story, sin, and the Fall, as well as the restoration of relationship with God.
- Consider the use of greenery and plants with an animal or jungle soundtrack to provide background noise as if the class were transported to a jungle of sorts.
- Alternatively, consider utilizing space imagery and props such as glow in the dark stars, a dark room setting, or even a star map to light the room and reflect the feeling of being among the cosmos at the beginning of creation.

Unit 3: Going Beyond

- This series will explore evangelism and the manner in which we often limit ourselves and our potential to accomplish what God is calling us to do for His Kingdom.
- Consider the use of provided posters and dynamic lighting that changes week to week. This can be accomplished with the use of LED or can lights if they are available to you.
- Alternatively, utilize cardboard boxes of all sizes (preferably painted) to materialize the imagery and themes used in this unit.

Embark: This opening section is meant to elicit discussion and promote activity to encourage the learning process of students while creating a fun and engaging atmosphere.

Explore: This section is the basis for the lesson with various biblical references, key points, as well as personal examples to effectively convey the big idea in a logical and practical manner.


Expand: This section is intended to provide a consolidated yet effective means of closure perpetuated by closing discussions, activities, or prayers.

LESSON 1


MARY: MOTHER OF JESUS

WEEK OF DECEMBER 2, 2018

BIBLICAL PASSAGE

Luke 1:27–49 

BIBLE POINT

When we magnify God instead of placing the focus upon our own perception of our problems, God can fulfill His will in our lives. 

SUPPLIES

Bibles, smartphones, computer/screen

Legend:



PowerPoint Slide



Student Handbook



Activity

Unit Aim: The greatest story ever told is that God became flesh—“God with us”—to provide salvation. Born into the humblest of circumstances for the noblest of purposes, Jesus Christ impacted those who were the first to encounter Him, revealing how He can change us as we encounter Him today.

EMBARK

A. Option 1—Opening Discussion

1. *Instruct the class to use their student handbooks for this exercise.*
2. *Make a mental list of the three most influential events of the past week, year, or five years of your life. (Select the time frame based on group dynamics.)*
3. *Without revealing what those specific events were, consider whether most of those items you listed were positive or negative.*
4. *How do the results of this activity compare with your own assessment of whether you are by nature a positive person or a negative person?*
5. *What impact does our tendency to be optimistic or pessimistic have upon our relationship with God?*

B. Option 2—Missing Tile Syndrome

1. *Play the following video to explain the “Missing Tile Syndrome” or explain it in your own words: https://www.prageru.com/videos/missing-tile-syndrome#.U9_DoPldWhM*
2. *Follow with a discussion of how we often choose to focus upon those things that are wrong in our lives, even though there are many more things that are right at any particular moment in time.*
3. *Prior to watching the video, remove one of the ceiling tiles from a conspicuous place in the room or make some other blatant change to the room and see if anyone mentions it. If not, after the video ask participants how many of them noticed before you began versus after the video was completed.*


EXPLORE


A. The Power and Purpose of a Magnifying Glass

1. A monk named Roger Bacon is considered to be one of the greatest minds of his era. He wrote extensively on a variety of subjects and is


credited with being the first European to identify how the Chinese discovery called gunpowder worked.








- a. He also is said to have discovered the magnifying glass, or at least he was the first to write about its potential usage.
- b. We were all born into a world full of people who were already familiar with this tool, and I imagine we all have used one at least once in our lives.

- **What have you used a magnifying glass for?**
- **Do you know anyone who uses one for an unusual purpose?**
- *Respond with various answers to the questions and lead participants into a discussion of unusual uses of the magnifying glass, such as magnifying the rays of the sun to kill ants or melt toy army men.* 


- c. As we can see from these various responses, a magnifying glass can be used for good, and it can be used for what some may call destructive (and others would define as entertaining).
2. In a sense it is a lot like money.
 - a. Money can be used for good, such as to fund missions work and help those in need.
 - b. Money can be used for evil—to finance illegal or immoral activities.
 3. We could say that both money and a magnifying glass are amoral; they are neither good nor evil in and of themselves, but the person who controls them is the one to determine how they are used.
 4. When you get to an age when your eyes start to fail you, it may be necessary for you to purchase a magnifying glass so you can see the fine print of your Bible and read the Word of God.
 - a. That would be a wonderful use of a magnifying glass in your life.
 - b. But years before that kind of thought will probably ever pass through your mind again, there is another type of magnifying glass that you use every day, and it is one that you will use consistently from now until your last breath.
 5. **That magnifying glass is your attitude.** 
 - a. Just like the physical magnifying glass that can be used for good or evil, your attitude can determine much about the level of joy in your life now and where you go from here.
 - b. This is true for you and me, and it was true a few thousand years ago for one of the most famous characters in the Christmas story, a teenage girl named Mary.


B. An Encounter With God


1. *Read Luke 1:27-29.* 
2. We should immediately notice a few things about this famous passage.
 - a. Mary was a virgin who was espoused (engaged) to a man named Joseph. In the Israelite society, this was a legal partnership that could only be broken with a written decree of divorce.


- b. The angel paid a wonderful compliment to Mary: “thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”
 - c. Her reaction was not to be flattered nor excited, but the Bible says she was troubled and wondered what the angel would say next.
Thankfully, Gabriel knew exactly how to handle such a circumstance.
3. *Read Luke 1:30–33.* 
 - a. Because Mary had found favor with God, she was chosen to be the one to give birth to the Messiah, the Savior of her people and the entire human race.
 - b. It was revealed to her that this child would have the name Jesus, which means “Jehovah has become my salvation.”
 - c. She was told He would sit on the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob forever, as His Kingdom would be eternal, never seeing an end.
4. *Read Luke 1:34–35.* 
 - a. Mary was trying to wrap her mind around what she was being told.
 - b. **She was not wondering *if* what God said was going to happen but *how* what God said was going to happen.**  
5. She asked a logical question about how she could be pregnant since she was a virgin.
 - a. The answer is essential for us to understand from a theological standpoint.
 - b. The Bible says the Holy Ghost would overshadow Mary and cause the conception.
 - c. **The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the one God, and in this process (called the Incarnation) God became a human. Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man.**  
 - d. *Explore the Oneness doctrine at an appropriate level for your participants.*
6. Next the angel continued to provide Mary with additional information about what God was doing in order to build her faith.
7. *Read Luke 1:36–37.* 
 - a. Mary was told her cousin would also bear a miracle baby, John the Baptist, because when God is involved, there is no such thing as an impossibility.
 - b. In addition to building her faith, this fact also gave Mary hope that another person she knew was experiencing the miraculous and could be of great comfort to her.
 - c. Mary accepted the words of the angel and verbally expressed what was in her heart: let what God desires to happen in my life be fulfilled, just as He desires.
 - d. With that great step of faith from Mary, the angel departed, and Mary began what certainly was the most difficult portion of her quest to complete the will of God.

C. Mary's Attitude




1. As admirable as Mary's initial response to hearing the will of God is, it was still necessary for her to **faithfully continue walking with God from that day forward.** 
2. After the initial conversation with Gabriel and her acceptance of God's plan, the difficult work had only begun.
 - a. She had to decide how to tell her fiancé, Joseph, about God's plan for their family and hope he would believe her.
 - b. She would have to face her parents and explain that she was going to have a child and yet insist that she had remained pure.
 - c. She would face ridicule and condemning glances from former friends who certainly would not believe her story.
 - d. Worst of all, if Joseph made a public accusation against her, she faced the certain judgment of death for the sin of adultery.
3. Just as important as the question of how she could become great with child is the question of how she would be able to survive such great difficulties in order to bring this child into existence.
4. The answer: She had to have the right attitude. She had to find a way to have faith not only for what facts said was a biological impossibility, but also for what surely must have seemed a cultural impossibility as well.
5. She had to make the decision to magnify the Lord instead of magnifying her problems.

- Have you ever faced a seemingly impossible situation?
- How did you respond to it?
- Did you find yourself asking why?
- Did you tend to focus on the problem or God? Why? 


6. No one could blame Mary for making a visit to her cousin Elizabeth.
 - a. Was it true that she was having a son?
 - b. Would she believe Mary's story?
 - c. If so, perhaps there was hope that Joseph and her parents would as well.
7. When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's home, immediately the type of confirmation she certainly must have hoped for began to come to pass.
 - a. *Read Luke 1:39–45 and discuss. Discuss how Mary responded to Elizabeth's declaration that what God had promised to Mary would come to pass.* 
 - b. She had passed the first test of believing the angel Gabriel and accepting the will of God for her life.
 - c. She had made a wise decision to go to Elizabeth, most likely to seek confirmation for her faith.
 - d. Then when Elizabeth gave a good report, when she told Mary God would do all He had promised, Mary could either respond in faith or she could unload all her questions and concerns.

- e. As we read what Mary said, consider how powerful these words were in her life and what it could mean in your life if you made the same decision.
8. *Read Luke 1:46–49.* 
 - a. She did not say, “But what about Joseph? What about my parents? What about my friends? What about the Law? Will I even live? How can I be sure that was actually an angel?”
 - b. No, Mary said, “I will not magnify my problems. I will not focus on everything that could go wrong. I will let God be God, and I’ll just try my best to be His servant. I will magnify the Lord!”
 - c. That attitude and that decision defined Mary’s ability to navigate through all the remaining circumstances of her life in her quest to fulfill God’s will.

D. Your Magnifying Glass

1. Consider what would have happened if Mary had made a different decision.
 - a. If she had magnified her fears, she never would have been believable enough in her conversation with Joseph for him to take the time to think about what to do.
 - b. This decision was critical because it gave the Lord time to speak to him in a dream.
 - c. If she had magnified her embarrassment, perhaps she would have refused to return home to Nazareth and waited to have the baby while living with Elizabeth, thus not fulfilling the prophecy of Bethlehem being where Jesus was born.
2. Now consider the magnifying glass of your life.
 - a. Just like Mary, there may be things in your life that concern you. There may be things that anyone in your situation would acknowledge have the potential to not turn out the way you would want.
 - b. Perhaps a relationship concerns you.
 - c. No circumstance, problem, past failure, or current problem can prevent you from magnifying the Lord if you decide to believe His report.
3. In fact, the trial you are facing or the broken relationship that may be taking your focus away from what God has in store for your life just may be the Lord’s attempt to get your attention.
 - a. God will bring difficulties into our lives at times because He loves us.
 - b. *Read and discuss Hebrews 12:6.* 
4. **If you will make the decision to magnify the Lord, there are tremendous promises about what He will do in your life.**  
 - a. I can’t promise you that the relationship you want is going to work out. I can’t promise you that your friends or parents will immediately see things your way.
 - b. What I can promise you is that God can use all situations in your life to work out for your good if you will take the magnifying glass

of your attitude away from your problem and place your focus on the God who is more powerful than your problem.

- c. *Read Romans 8:28 and discuss the responsibility we have to love God and seek His will along with the comfort that can be found in allowing Him to use all circumstances for our good.* 
5. Because Mary decided to intentionally allow her soul to magnify the Lord instead of magnifying her circumstances, Christ was formed in her.
 - a. In a similar manner, after you receive the Holy Ghost, Christ begins to be formed in you.
 - b. We are not talking about a physical Christ.
 - c. We are talking about the spiritual formation of Christ in your life.
6. The only way that process can be completed is if you magnify the Lord.
7. When you focus upon the Lord, when you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then you will begin to see the promises God gives us in His Word come to pass in your life.

EXPAND

A. Option 1—Discussion

1. Listen to what the apostle Paul told the church in Galatia about what will happen when we have the right focus in life.
2. *Read Galatians 4:18–19.*
 - a. Is there anyone here who is “zealously affected . . . in a good thing”?
 - b. If so, please tell us about it. When did it start? How did it start?
 - c. How do you know that God is being formed in you as you magnify Him and focus upon what He desires for you to do?
3. *Provide personal examples and solicit volunteers to share. It may be difficult for participants to talk about such personal topics, especially if they fear they will appear to be bragging. Encourage them that it is OK to “brag on Jesus.”*

B. Option 2—Personal Challenge

1. *Encourage students to think of a person they know who is going through a difficult situation and needs help placing his or her focus on magnifying the Lord.*
2. *Once everyone has someone in mind, ask each participant to take a few moments to specifically pray about the problem they know that person is facing. Students may partner together as needed if someone can't think of their “Mary.”*

C. Option 3—Prayer

1. *Pray specifically for participants who may be struggling to keep their focus upon the Lord during a difficult time.*

2. *Any time enough young people get together, one or more could be struggling with a personal relationship that has them thinking their world is falling apart. Don't shy away from boldly praying that they would focus upon the Lord (instead of praying their problem would go away).*
3. *Consider asking participants to pray for each other. In a tight-knit group, this strategy may be more effective as you encourage them to play the role of Elizabeth to a friend they know is going through a rough time.*