**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 1 of 4

# Annunciation

### MEETING AIM

To communicate that God can do the impossible – even in messy situations.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-21

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Since we hear this story every year, it’s easy to lose sight of how extraordinary it is. Leaving aside the whole mind-boggling concept of God taking on human form at all, he chooses to enter the world in a staggeringly messy way. Gabriel visits a down-at-heel town (see John 1:46) to announce to an unmarried teenage girl that she will give birth to the Son of God, while another angel has to appear to her fiance to convince him not to break off their engagement. Why on earth does God go about this in such a complicated way? The truth is, God often does things we don’t fully understand. But he is at work in our mess. And ‘nothing is impossible with God’ (Luke 1:37, NIV 1984).

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

**You will need:** refreshments; matches

Enjoy some snacks and drinks with your young people, and take a few minutes to catch up with them. While this is happening, you can have one or two matchstick puzzles set up. You can find some example puzzles and solutions at [matchstickpuzzles.blogspot.com](https://matchstickpuzzles.blogspot.com/). Perhaps offer a small prize to anyone who can solve one of the puzzles. The idea is to illustrate that life is often confusing and sometimes utterly baffling. But that doesn’t mean God has left us to it.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** flour; small sweets; bowls; plates; floor covering; wet wipes

Fill two or three large bowls with flour. Embed a handful of small sweets (eg Smarties, Skittles) in each bowl. Pack the flour down so that it is flat on top. Invert each bowl onto a plate. This activity is likely to be messy, so cover the floor with a sheet or tarpaulin.

Ask for as many volunteers as you have bowls of flour. (Or if you have a smaller group, you could divide into small teams and take it in turns to play.) Remove each bowl, leaving a heap of flour on each plate. On ‘go’, the players should try to remove as many sweets as they can from the flour and drop them into their bowl, using only their teeth. The player (or team) who removes the most sweets in a minute, wins. Provide wet wipes to help the players clean their faces afterwards.

You could finish by mentioning that life can be extremely messy, but there is still a lot of good stuff within the mess.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; pens; paper

Divide the young people into pairs or groups of three. Explain that the bits of the Bible you’re about to read show us a couple at risk of breaking up. When a celebrity couple fall out, people often take sides about which of them is right or wrong, and decide which ‘team’ they’re on. So, are you Team Mary or Team Joseph?

Give out Bibles and have the groups read Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-21. Challenge each group to decide whether they’re Team Mary or Team Joseph. Ask them to think about these questions:

* Why is this situation so hard for Mary or Joseph?
* What do they say and do, and why do they behave this way?
* What does all this say about the kind of person they are?

Be on hand to offer suggestions to any groups who seem to be struggling. For example, it might help to point out that having a baby outside of marriage would have been a huge scandal at this point in time, and that an engagement was slightly different then from how it is now – Joseph would have had to effectively ‘divorce’ Mary to break it off.

Afterwards, take some feedback from each group. Try to get a range of perspectives.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Following on from ‘Bible exploration’, discuss these questions:

* What made this situation so hard for Mary and Joseph?
* What’s the good news in it all?
* Why do you think God chose to bring Jesus into the world in such a messy way?
* In Luke 1:37, Gabriel says: “Nothing is impossible with God.” What do you think of that?
* Can you think of any other examples (from the Bible or from your own experience) of God doing impossible things in complicated situations?

Finish by emphasising that we don’t always understand why God acts the way he does, but he is with us in our messy lives and can do amazing things.

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** A3 paper; magazines and newspapers; scissors; glue; pens; masking tape

Before the session, use the masking tape to create a cross shape in the middle of each sheet of A3 paper. Let the young people work on their own or in pairs for this activity. Give out the prepared sheets of paper and make the other materials available. Encourage the young people to create an ‘impossible collage’ by sticking down a collection of images which represent situations that seem impossible. These might be global, national or local events in the news, or more personal problems.

Towards the end of the 15 minutes, ask everyone to remove their masking tape, tearing through their collage and revealing a cross at the centre. Display the finished pictures in your meeting room, as a reminder that God is with us, even in messy, complicated, impossible-seeming situations.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** paper; pens; contents of paper recycling bin

Give out pens and paper. Encourage the young people to each write or draw something that represents a problem they want to ask God to help them with. What messy situations do they want to see God at work in?

Empty out a paper recycling bin in the middle of the room. Have the young people screw up their finished papers and throw them onto the pile, committing their mess to God. End with a short prayer, thanking God that nothing is impossible for him, and asking him to bring good out of your messy lives.

**SIMEON WHITING**

is a freelance writer and experienced youth worker.