

## Study

Read the text twice

Look at the painting

Read the Painting Caption

## Questions

What jumps off the page at you?

*FGP*

List the characters in the text and what the text tells us about them.

*3s / FB*

What can we learn about God from the appearance of the angel Gabriel and the content of his message?

*FGP*

The painting caption for The Annunciation painting states, “Traditionally, Gabriel presents Mary with lilies, which used to be a symbol of purity”. What does the text say about Mary’s purity?

*3s / FB*

The Annunciation contains several references to death: the lilies (“In our culture, they are more often a funeral flower”), the graveyard setting, and the Celtic crosses. Luke’s gospel also includes a reference to Jesus’ death into the story of Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:34-35). What do you make of this?

*FGP/GPS*

Consider Mary’s responses in the text. How are we responding to what God is doing and saying in our lives, and how do Mary’s responses help us as we seek to respond to God?

*3s / FB*

## Study Key

**3s / FB** - Groups of 3 with feedback to whole group

**FGP** - Full Group

**GPS** - Larger groups of 6 (if desired)



## The Project

The Gospel Sketchbook is a three-year project based in St George’s Tron, Church, Glasgow, in which Artist in Residence Iain Campbell is painting 24 canvases from Luke’s Gospel, one for each chapter.

Key to each painting is reflecting on the Biblical text and how it might apply to contemporary Glasgow.

## The Study

The following Bible Study considers both the Biblical text and the painting on which it is based, encouraging participants to think about how to apply the Biblical text to their context. The study is designed to be used with *The Portrait Gospel*, a special edition of Luke’s Gospel that features Our Last Supper on the cover, the first canvas painted as part of this project.

## Conversations Bible Study

Each of the individual studies uses the Conversations style. Conversations is a method of Bible study developed by the Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual

Bible Study Group. Conversations seeks to encourage people to actively engage with the Bible and apply it to life.

The questions are designed to stimulate conversation within groups where people may have varying backgrounds and knowledge of the Bible. You will notice a similar pattern of questions used throughout the studies. All of the questions are ‘open’ questions which don’t presume an answer but instead invite people to reflect personally on the text. The first question is always, “What jumps off the page at you?” – an opportunity for people to begin to share their thoughts on a passage. Then there are ‘listing’ questions that encourage a closer reading of the text, ‘theological’ questions that seek to understand the meaning, and finally ‘contextual’ questions that begin to apply the text to life.

We hope you find this a refreshing and stimulating way to study the Bible.

More Bible study resources that utilise the Conversations method can be found at: [scottishbiblesociety.org/equip](http://scottishbiblesociety.org/equip)

## The Annunciation

### Study 1 • Luke 1:26-38



**Text: Luke 1:26-38** Page 13-14 of The Portrait Gospel

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

<sup>34</sup> 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

<sup>35</sup> 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 the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.'

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

### Painting Caption

Chapter 1 of Luke sees the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary, a young bride-to-be, that she's going to have God's baby. To portray Gabriel, Iain opted for a bronze statue of an angel in the Glasgow's Necropolis. The model for Mary is Fereshteh, an asylum seeker from Iran, who was part of a Bible study group run by Glasgow City Mission called "New Glaswegians" for folks they work with who have English as an additional language. Mary and Gabriel represent both the new and the old Glasgow. Traditionally, in paintings of the Annunciation, Gabriel presents Mary with lilies, which used to be a symbol of purity. In our culture, they are more often a funeral flower, which coincides with the setting of the Necropolis. In the background of the image are Celtic crosses: this painting, which is initially about announcing the birth of Jesus, also foreshadows his death.