

# Stories of Christmas: Obedient Suffering

Discussion Guide for December 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025

## Summary

This week's message centers on obedient suffering—the cost that often comes with saying "yes" to God. Through the stories of Mary and Ruth, we see how faithfulness to God's call can bring sacrifice, hardship, and uncertainty, yet also lead to redemption, joy, and God accomplishing His purposes both through us and in us.

Mary, a young teenage girl, responded to God's disruptive call with immediate obedience, even though it would cost her reputation, security, and personal dreams. Ruth, a foreign widow, chose loyalty and faithfulness to Naomi and to God, knowing it meant leaving her homeland and stepping into vulnerability and poverty.

Both women demonstrate that obedience is not always easy—but God never wastes a surrendered "yes." Through their suffering, God brought redemption, restoration, and ultimately the coming of Jesus into the world.

## Intro Prayer

God, we acknowledge that Your call on our lives is sometimes costly and uncomfortable. As we open Your Word, soften our hearts to hear You clearly. Teach us what it means to trust You even when obedience leads to sacrifice or suffering. Help us say "yes" quickly, faithfully, and completely. Amen.

## Ice Breaker

Share a time when saying "yes" to something difficult ended up shaping you in a meaningful way. What did it cost you, and what did it produce?

## Key Verses

1. Luke 1:26–38
2. Ruth 1:16–18
3. Hebrews 5:8
4. 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

## Discussion Questions

1. What did Mary's immediate "yes" to God cost her personally, and what might a fast "yes" cost you right now?
2. Where in your life have you assumed that obedience to God should make things easier rather than harder?
3. What sacrifice has God asked you to make that you've been hesitant or slow to obey?
4. Where are you currently saying "no" to God, either directly or through delay?
5. How has God used suffering or hardship in your life to shape your faith or obedience?

6. What is one specific step of obedience God is inviting you to take this Christmas season, even if it comes with discomfort or uncertainty?

### **Life Application**

This week, ask God to reveal one area where you've been hesitant or slow to obey. Take one concrete step of faithful obedience—even if it feels costly—and trust God with the outcome.

### **Key Takeaways**

1. Saying "yes" to God often comes with sacrifice and suffering.
2. Obedience does not guarantee ease, but it always invites God's presence and purpose.
3. Suffering in obedience ultimately leads to redemption and joy.
4. God accomplishes His work in us through hardship and faithfulness.

### **Ending Prayer**

Father, thank You for being faithful in every season—especially in suffering. Give us hearts that trust You fully and respond quickly when You call. Help us surrender our lives to You, believing that You are working for Your glory and our good. Strengthen us to say "yes," no matter the cost. In Jesus' name, Amen.