There’s a kid in my church who may look like he’s not paying attention. He sits in the back row and keeps his eyes glued on his smartphone. But I know better. A friend of mine who’s a teacher told me that another kid said something ridiculous about the Bible that he no doubt heard from an inferior pulpit and our kid answered back with a sophisticated response involving my explanation of which book Jesus was quoting from the Hebrew scriptures and how his explanation is misused to falsely convict others. Aha!

In his nativity narratives Luke mentioned that King Herod, Ceasar Augustus, and the Governor Quirinius reigned during this time, but then proceeds to make it clear that history, human and divine, pivot on the choice of one Palestinian teenager. Mary isn’t afraid to ask questions of the Angel Gabriel before she makes her choice to courageously accept God’s special call.

What did Mary rely on to make her answer? The clue may be found in the poem she creates, sometimes referred to as the Magnificat. The poem describes how God works on behalf of the poor, the downtrodden, the least expect, and in that poem Mary quotes from many different scriptures. Mary was paying attention in synagogue service! Trust me, it’s not as easy as it looks.