



2022
CHRISTMAS
DEVOTIONAL

 MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH





DEAR CHURCH FAMILY,

I am so excited about the book you are holding in your hands. This Christmas devotional is a guided journey through the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke intended to help you and your family know and love Jesus more than you do now.

You will find 24 days of thoughtful devotional readings designed to help you slow down and focus your heart and mind on Him. The 25th day is a review of the Christmas story in Scripture.

It's my hope that this book will remind you that God was faithful to fulfill His promise to provide a Savior, and God will be faithful to fulfill all His promises to you and me today. The birth of Jesus is God's promise fulfilled and a reminder that God's promises are guaranteed!

Every page of this book was written with you in mind. You were not only thought of, but you were also prayed for as it was put together. The authors (Ashley Arey, Brook Taylor, Cyndi Logsdon, and Eliza Huie) are four amazing women from our staff who reflect the heart of all of our leaders who want this Christmas season to be days of ever-deepening enjoyment and ever-increasing exaltation of Jesus.

I love you, church, and I pray that this devotional will be a blessing to you.

**FOR HIS GLORY,
DAVID PLATT**



“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1–4)

The Old Testament begins by telling us that God created mankind in His own likeness.

Sadly, the first man and woman failed to obey their Creator. Sinful people formed sinful families and then sinful families gathered together to form sinful nations. One nation in particular enjoyed a special relationship with God, but they also couldn't escape sin. The Israelites, God's chosen people, lived in a repetitive cycle of aiming for obedience yet running after sin. They could not—and, in some cases, did not want to—live righteous lives.

How would this problem of sin be fixed? From the very beginning, God promised a Deliverer who would save His people from their sin. The Israelites longed for this promised Messiah so the Old Testament is full of expectation. When will the Messiah come to restore God's people's relationship with God? Over hundreds of years, God sent prophets, priests, and kings to lead His people and encourage them as they waited for the promised One.

And then, at the end of the historical events of the Old Testament, the people of Israel experienced 400 years of silence. Think about that! After centuries of more or less unbroken communication, God's people heard nothing for 400 years. There was no new Scripture, no new prophets—only deafening silence.

And then something changed. Actually, everything changed. After 400 years of silence—and probably 400 years of growing uncertainty—God kept His promise. The

Messiah had come. And so Luke wrote his Gospel so that we would have certainty about these things that we have been taught.



Today, many of us feel seasons of uncertainty. We often come into the Christmas season tired, anxious, afraid, and unsure. Can you relate? If so, let this story bring you rest. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write this orderly account so that we can be certain about the most important event in the history of world: the Son of God has come to save sinners like us.

The Christmas story shows that God keeps His promises. Believing in the promised Messiah is what leads to true and lasting peace, comfort, and joy.

SOME OF GOD'S PROMISES

- The Lord my God will be with me wherever I go. (Joshua 1:9)
- God will keep me in perfect peace if my mind is "stayed" on Him. (Isaiah 26:3)
- "I (the Lord) will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)
- "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)
- He cares for me. (1 Peter 5:7)
- If I remain in Him and His words remain in me, whatever I ask will be given to me. (John 15:7)
- If I seek to live godly in Christ Jesus, I will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)
- I am justified freely by His grace. (Romans 3:24)
- I have peace with God because I've been justified by faith in Jesus. (Romans 5:1)
- I have access to God's grace. (Romans 5:2)
- There is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)
- The Holy Spirit will help me to pray. (Romans 8:26-27)
- All things work together for my good. (Romans 8:28)
- Nothing will separate me from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35)
- I shall bear the likeness (and resurrection body) of Jesus, the 'man from heaven.' (1 Corinthians 15:49)
- My labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- God has created good works for me to walk in today. (Ephesians 2:10)
- I am being transformed into His likeness. (2 Corinthians 3:17)
- God comforts the downcast, including me. (2 Corinthians 7:6)
- God is able to make all grace abound to me, so all my needs will be met. (2 Corinthians 9:8)
- I am worth (to God) more than the birds that He feeds. (Matthew 6:26)
- God will supply all my needs. (Philippians 4:19)
- God's grace will be sufficient for me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- I have an inheritance. (Ephesians 1:14)
- I have been brought near by the blood of Jesus. (Ephesians 2:13)
- I may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12)
- The Father has qualified me to share in the inheritance of the saints. (Colossians 1:12)
- Christ now lives in me! (Colossians 1:27)
- God is faithful and will sanctify me. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)
- God will repay with trouble those who trouble me. (2 Thessalonians 1:6)
- God has given me a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7)
- I have a crown of righteousness awaiting me, because I long for His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8)
- God won't lie to me, because God cannot lie. (Titus 1:2)
- Jesus will help me when I'm tempted. (Hebrews 2:18)
- Varied trials will lead to my maturity. (James 1:2)
- If I ask for wisdom from God, He will give it to me. (James 1:5)
- If I resist the devil, he will take a hike. (James 4:7)
- If I draw near to God, He will draw near to me. (James 4:8)
- Prayer is effective. (James 5:16)
- After I have suffered for a little while, He will strengthen, confirm and establish me. (1 Peter 5:10)
- A new heaven and earth await me, called the "home of righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)
- He forgives and cleanses me as I confess my sins to Him. (1 John 1:9)
- When Jesus re-appears, I'll be made like Him. (1 John 3:2)
- God has given me eternal life. (1 John 5:11)

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. (Luke 1:5-7)

Have you ever read the word “righteous” and wondered what it meant? It’s definitely one of those “Christianese” words. It’s used all throughout the Bible, and we sing it in Christian songs. But we rarely use it in our everyday conversations.

In the Bible, only a handful of people are described as “righteous.” Now “righteous” doesn’t mean “sinless” or “perfect.” It means that the person is trusting God and walking with Him faithfully. So, when Luke describes Zechariah and Elizabeth as “righteous,” he’s saying they trusted and obeyed God. They were living examples of how God designed us all to live in relationship with Him.

The following verse, however, carries within it a hard truth for all of us: even righteous people who walk blamelessly before God have struggles. Why would God allow hardship for some of the few people who actually trust and obey Him? I wonder if Zechariah and Elizabeth asked the same question.

Take a moment and imagine what it’d be like, longing and praying for a child, but unable to have one. Perhaps they saw other people around them get pregnant multiple times and grow their families while they pleaded with the Lord and got no response as they continued to get older and older.

The amazing thing you might skip over is that despite the sadness or grief they may have felt, they continued to trust and obey God. For them, God was not minimized to a gift giver. God’s presence was the gift itself, His commandments were for their joy, and every good gift He chose to give were a reflection of His goodness. Zechariah and Elizabeth trusted God’s promises and purposes.

As we continue to read this story, we see that God did, in fact, give Elizabeth a child—one who would prepare the way for Jesus. God’s timing and plan is always better than ours. When we are in the midst of struggle and don’t understand what God is doing, we can trust His power, His character, and His track record. God makes the impossible possible for His glory and our joy.



Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." (Luke 1:8–15)

How long had Elizabeth and Zechariah begged God for a child? How many times had they cast themselves at the feet of Jesus, looking to Him to do what they weren't capable of by themselves? Luke doesn't include those details, but we can assume it was a long time based on the fact that they were, "advanced in years" (1:7), which is a polite way of saying they were old.

Perhaps you've prayed about something for years, and it seems that heaven is silent. Maybe you've prayed even longer about circumstances in your own life—a prodigal child, a longing for a spouse, health problems, a desire to have children, a job change,

financial difficulties, mental health issues—and you've yet to see the fulfillment of those prayers in the way you'd hoped.

If that's you, let verse thirteen be a balm to your weary soul: "for your prayer has been heard."

We're all familiar with Paul's words in Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose." If we truly believe those

words, not just as a warm and fuzzy memory verse but as bedrock reality, then we know that when God does not give us what we long for, we know it's for our lasting good and His ultimate glory.

God hears His children and wants us to persist in prayer just like Elizabeth and Zechariah. So keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking because God knows what you need, when you need it, but He is doing something in your own heart through the persistence and patience. He is conforming you into the image of Jesus.

As John Piper so beautifully reminds us, "God is often masterminding a thousand details behind the tapestry of our lives, and we only get to see three of them. Sometimes we see them immediately. Sometimes we don't for years. Sometimes we don't see them until we're with Him in eternity. And yet the truth remains: He is still in the business of answering our prayers."



CHRISTMAS SCATTERGORIES

Choose a letter, then think of words that fit the categories below that begin with your letter. Want to make it harder? Set a timer, and race to beat it!

1. A CHRISTMAS SONG _____
2. SOMETHING YOU EAT AROUND CHRISTMAS _____
3. A CHRISTMAS TRADITION _____
4. A PERSON, PLACE, OR THING IN THE BIBLE'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS' BIRTH _____
5. A CHRISTMAS MOVIE _____
6. SOMETHING GREEN _____
7. SOMETHING RED _____
8. A COMMON CHRISTMAS PRESENT _____
9. A CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY _____
10. A CHRISTMAS DECORATION _____



04

And He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. (Luke 1:16–17)

If you feel strongly about something, it doesn't mean you always will. You might have had a strong belief that animals belong outdoors until a pet enters your family and you find yourself willingly sharing your home and maybe even your bed with a furry friend. More significantly, maybe you had strong feelings about not wanting children but now you find yourself desiring a family. We can be passionate about something only to find ourselves feeling differently about it later. We change our minds. That's a natural part of being human.

But what about changing our heart? Is that so natural? No, that work is supernatural. It's a work of the Lord. Thankfully, it's a work He is committed to.

As you read the passage today, consider the different ways the Lord has changed your heart. Recall how you once used to pursue things that you thought would bring meaning to your life and now you know those things are futile. Consider how reading God's Word or spending the weekend worshipping and serving in the church at one time was an inconvenience but now it's a blessing to your soul. Maybe you used to be diligent to keep areas of your life hidden but now you're vulnerable and welcome godly accountability. If these things are true of you, the Lord has changed your heart.

As God's children, you should be eager to share with others how God changed your life when He turned your heart to Him. Who might you share that with today? Take some time to pray for one person with whom you can share how God turned your heart to Him.

If you are reading this and you know your heart is not turned toward the Lord, then today can be the day that changes. God has a plan for you. Pray and ask Him to turn your heart to Him.



And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." (Luke 1:18–25)

"He looked on her."

Consider what that phrase meant for Elizabeth and everyone after her who experiences the same. God looked on her. The Most High God set His gaze on Elizabeth to take away her disgrace.

In many cultures, infertility brings intense shame and suffering. To be labeled "infertile" in Elizabeth's culture would mean she likely experienced economic deprivation, social isolation, and loss of community status. Just imagine: an intense, personal pain turns into a hurtful, social stigma with devastating consequences.

We all know the feeling of shame. We're familiar with the temptation to hide. We don't want to be seen or known because if we are then we'd surely be rejected. It's when we believe that if someone knew _____ about me, they wouldn't want me or would mock me.

Shame creeps in when you're called names at school, cheated on by a spouse, or didn't make the team. We feel shame when someone takes advantage of us and we're powerless to do anything about it, when someone convinces you that you're unlovable or a nobody. Those feelings in this broken world can be crushing. What in your life leads you to feel shame? What facts about your life would cause you to be rejected if others found out?

What if someone could know everything about you and never even think about rejecting you? That's the kind of acceptance God had for Elizabeth when he "looked on her," and that's the kind of

acceptance God has for us in Christ Jesus. Only in the gospel can we be fully known, and fully loved. Restored, not rejected.

Notice how Elizabeth responds to the Lord's acceptance in verse 25. God has transformed Elizabeth's shame-ridden identity into one marked by great honor. What an exchange! That same exchange is true for all of us who trust in Christ. On the cross, He took the full weight of our sin and shame (Isaiah 53:4–6). And when we come to Jesus by faith, He looks on us and takes away our reproach. He looks on us, the real us, and washes away our sin so we can be with Him for eternity.



SCAVENGER HUNT

Don't forget to get photo or video evidence!

5 POINTS

FIND A RED TREE DECORATION

FIND CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

VISIT MCLEANBIBLE.ORG/CHRISTMAS

10 POINTS

PRETEND TO BE AN ANIMAL THAT MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE MANGER WHERE JESUS WAS BORN

WRITE YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS JOKE

TEXT OR TELL SOMEONE YOU LOVE THEM

15 POINTS

WHISTLE, HUM, OR SING THE MELODY OF ANY CHRISTMAS SONG

GIVE SOMEONE A CHRISTMAS GIFT

DO AN ACT OF SERVICE IN YOUR HOUSE, NEIGHBORHOOD, OR WORK THAT WOULD BLESS SOMEONE ELSE

20 POINTS

SING A CHRISTMAS CAROL

INVITE SOMEONE TO JOIN YOU FOR A CHRISTMAS EVE GATHERING AT MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH

RECITE LUKE 2:10-11 FROM MEMORY

i SPY



CAN YOU FIND...

___ BABY JESUS

___ 3 WISEMEN

___ 5 CAMELS

___ 2 COWS

___ 1 ANGEL

___ 6 SHEEP

___ 3 CANDY CANES

___ 4 PALM TREES

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:26–33)

This is the reason we celebrate Christmas every year, and this is where the story of Scripture begins to shift. Remember what we learned on Day 1? We learned how God made people, the first people chose not to trust God, and their relationship with God was broken. The world was broken and not as it should be, but God promised to come back and fix what we broke. So people waited. And looked. And prayed. More and more people continued to disobey God, and God continued to rescue people from their broken world. And then, there was 400 years of silence.

It's in this passage that Mary finds out that God was finally coming back to fix what we broke through her giving birth to His Son. Let's focus on a few phrases from the angel's announcement.

"Son of the Most High"

"Most High" was a title for God. Mary and other Jews would have been familiar with that title because it's used throughout the Old Testament. So when Mary hears the angel identify Jesus as the "Son of the Most High," she understood what that meant. Her son would be unique in that He would have the same essence as the Most High God.

"the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever"

So Jesus would be the Son of God, and He would also be a son of David. The angel told Mary that Jesus was the one everyone had been waiting for, the fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises. The Old Testament prophesied that a descendant from both David and Jacob would defeat their enemy and rule over God's people. Jesus would be the "King of the Jews."

"of His kingdom there will be no end"

Not only was He the one everyone waited for, His arrival meant there would be no more waiting ever again. He would restore His people forever. Unlike previous kings, His regime would not have an expiration date.

This is why the story shifts. Jesus, God's Son who is like Him, promised to us back when we broke our relationship with God, has finally come to restore us back to Himself, now and forever. As followers of Jesus, we celebrate His rescue of us not once a year, but every day. We are walking, living, breathing, redeemed children, and we get to tell others all that He has done for us!



And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34)

In Day 5 we saw Zechariah's response to an angel's message. He doubted that his old, barren wife would have a son. His question revealed his unbelief. That's why the angel exposes Zechariah and takes away his ability to speak.

Yesterday, we read about another angelic visit but not at the altar and not to a priest. This time, the angel appears in the small town of Nazareth to a teenage girl named Mary, and gives her similar news to Zechariah—an unexpected baby is on the way.

To this shocking news, Mary—like Zechariah—asks a question, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" But she asks not out of unbelief but amazement. She—a virgin!—was to carry the Son of God in her womb, and she felt unworthy. Tomorrow, we will learn more about how Mary's response reflects her humble heart. But for today, consider simply that our questions to God don't always reveal our unbelief.

Mary had questions, but she also had faith. The two are not opposed to one another.

Have there been times in your life where you had questions for God? When have you, like Mary, asked the Lord, "How will this be?"

When we bring our questions to God while still believing He is our sovereign Lord, we can ask questions without fear. He does not judge us when we don't understand.

So bring your questions to God. Share your doubts with Him. Your questions may actually reveal your faith as you ask with a heart of humility and trust.



And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren." (Luke 1:35–36)

The angel of the Lord answered Mary's question. He explained that the Holy Spirit Himself would come upon her and she would have a child who would be called holy, the Son of God.

As a young Jewish woman, Mary would have been taught that God had promised a Deliverer. But an angel of the Lord tells Mary that she will bear the child.

Yet God doesn't only provide an answer to Mary's question. He also reveals a personal plan to care for her during this season. In His extraordinary plan, Mary learns that she does not have to walk through her unexpected pregnancy alone. You see, God also had an extraordinary plan for Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who carried in her womb the man who would prepare the way for her son, the promised Messiah.

Neither of these women expected this plan for their lives. Yet they trusted in their caring God to provide according to His good timing and His good plan.

Just like in the lives of Mary and Elizabeth, God has a plan for each of us that intersects with His plan for others in God's family. As we faithfully walk with God, according to His plan for our life, we encourage others who are walking with God according to His plan for their lives.

This Christmas season, pause to consider those whom God has brought around you. Consider your family, your friends, and your community and know that your faithful obedience to Jesus and His plan for your life should affect them in some way. Be encouraged that you, too, are an important part of God's unfolding plan to take the good news of Jesus Christ to those around you, and to the world.



AD-LIB FUN

There are many ways to celebrate Christmas that make _____ memories that last a
(adjective)
lifetime. You can _____ ornaments to _____ on the
(verb) (adjective) (verb)
tree. Baking cookies shaped like _____ or _____, decorating them with
(plural noun) (plural animal)
_____ and _____ is a tasty way to celebrate with friends
(color) (color) (plural noun)
and family. Finding the perfect gift and _____ it in _____ paper with a
(verb-ing) (adjective)
_____ bow on top is a great way to be generous during Christmas. But my favorite
(adjective)
way to celebrate Christmas is going to church with _____ on Christmas Eve, singing
(person/people)
_____ and _____ with my church family.
(song title) (song title)



09

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

Try this. Lift your right foot off the ground and begin circling it in a clockwise direction. While you continue to move your foot in circles, draw a six with your finger in the air two times. Did your foot change direction?

For most people it is impossible for your foot to be moving clockwise while your finger is moving counterclockwise, which happens when you draw the number six. Was that true for you?

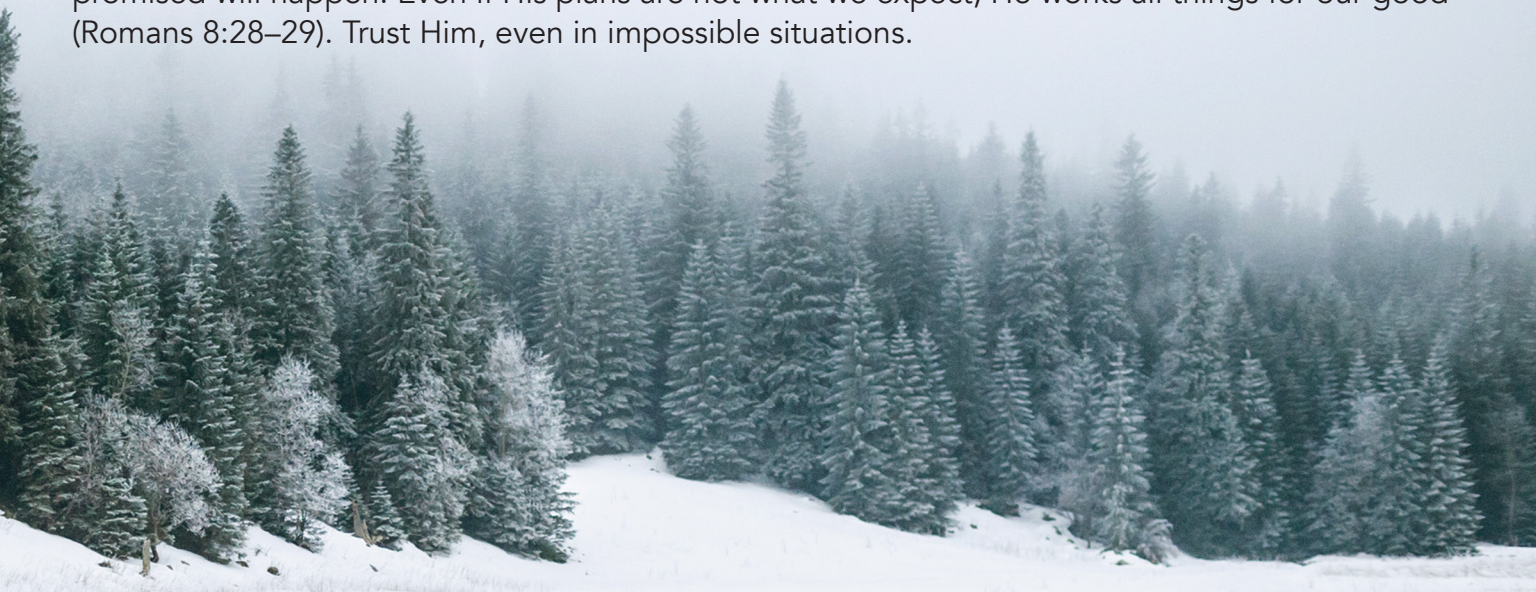
Here is a simpler experiment. Stick out your tongue and try and touch it to your nose. Can you do it? Ask a friend or family member to try. Can they do it?

These are silly things, and they’re also impossible things. They make us laugh as we try to do them. But there are other things that are equally impossible but entirely not silly. There are some things we just cannot do.

When you face impossible things, it can bring up many difficult questions. What will happen if we can’t make ends meet? What will happen if my wayward child will never come back to the Lord? What will happen if I am always alone? What will happen if my friend or family member never comes to know Jesus? These questions can tempt us to hopelessness. But hopelessness comes when we are preoccupied with the impossible situation rather than the God for whom nothing is impossible. Our God isn’t limited by any situation.

Mary heard seemingly impossible news, but the angel reminded her of a crucial truth: “Nothing will be impossible with God.”

We all need this reminder at various times—no, not when we’re trying to touch our nose with our tongue, but when God’s promises seem impossible and unbelievable. When your situation feels beyond repair, when a heart seems as cold as ice, when you can’t imagine things turning around, remember what the angel told Mary. “Nothing will be impossible with God.” Whatever God has promised will happen. Even if His plans are not what we expect, He works all things for our good (Romans 8:28–29). Trust Him, even in impossible situations.



And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

For the second time in this chapter, a birth is foretold. On Day 3, we read about the angel Gabriel telling Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son named John. On Day 6, we read about the angel Gabriel telling Mary that she will conceive and bear a Son, and His name will be Jesus.

We see two very similar situations with two very different responses. Two frightened followers of Jesus, greeted by angelic visitors with the news of unexpected pregnancy.

Think for a moment about the contrast between Mary and Zechariah. Zechariah is an elderly man, and Mary was likely a teenage girl. Mary lived in the despised region of Galilee, in an insignificant village called Nazareth. She was a nobody from nowhere. Zechariah was a priest in the temple, constantly surrounded by visible signs of the living God. He was a somebody from somewhere. Yet still, in the most magnificent turn of events, Mary demonstrates a simple faith—and Zechariah struggled.

Zechariah was a righteous man who loved God's Word, yet he struggled to believe God's words through the angel. Mary hears the word of God and believes something even more astonishing: that she, a virgin, will conceive.

Mary's reply to the angel in today's verse is the language of great faith and humility.

Mary's example can help us to reflect on the nature of true faith. Mary believes what God speaks before she can see the evidence of it in her own life. Faith by its very nature is not the same as sight and as followers of Jesus we live by faith and not by sight. The Bible teaches us not to expect, in the normal Christian life, the kind of angelic visit that Mary experienced.

But we nonetheless have the same task: to believe the words God has spoken to us through His Word. This Christmas season, may we marvel at the beauty of Mary's faith and ask God to give us a faith like hers.



In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." (Luke 1:39-44)

Right after Mary learned she was pregnant with the promised Savior of the world, she went to see her relative Elizabeth; she'd just learned from an angel that she was pregnant, too. As Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby inside Elizabeth's womb leaped! After she was filled with the Holy Spirit, she called Mary the "mother of my Lord."

Did you catch that? It's so easy to read through God's Word and miss little details. What happened after Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit? She proclaims, through a revelation of the Holy Spirit, that the baby inside Mary was the Lord, that is, the One whom the Scriptures had promised since the beginning of humankind (Genesis 3), back when the first sin separated us from God. Who told her this information? The Holy Spirit!

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity (God's triune nature). To make it really simple, the Holy Spirit is God. In the first book of the Bible, God promised to come back and fix what we broke, and in these verses, God tells Elizabeth that the time has come to fulfill that promise through the Lord in Mary's womb.

Followers of Jesus today have the same Holy Spirit living in them. The same Spirit who revealed to Elizabeth the identity of the Messiah is the same Spirit who later raised Him from the dead (Romans 8:11). If you're a follower of Jesus, then you are indwelt with the Holy Spirit.



You may have heard the Christmas story countless times. You may have celebrated this holiday longer than you can remember. But never grow tired of the truth that God's Spirit lives inside you. You can do more than go through the motions of your own traditions. You can marvel in awe at God's power and love each time you hear the same story.

JUMBLE

Unscramble these jumbled letters, one letter to each square, to form five words found in the song "Joy to the World."

RTHUT

○				
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HRATE

		○		
--	--	---	--	--

GIUDNNOS

		○					
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--

OSIRLEG

			○			
--	--	--	---	--	--	--

VAEHNE

					○
--	--	--	--	--	---

ANSWER:

○	○	○	○	○	○
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"Joy to the World" was named the most-published Christmas hymn in North America in the late '90s. The lyrics were written by English writer Isaac Watts, who based them on the second half of Psalm 98. Rather than celebrating the birth of Christ, the text of this hymn represents Christ's triumphant _____.

Answer: unscramble the circled letters to form a new word to fill in the blank above.

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:45)

The word “blessed” in this passage is sometimes translated as “happy.” The Lord spoke to Mary, she believed what He said, and she was truly happy—she was “blessed.”

Do you long for lasting happiness? Do you long for the deep contentment and satisfaction that can be found in walking with God even on really hard days? If you want to be blessed, what should you do? Believe the Lord when He speaks.

The Old Testament is filled with priests and prophets who bring messages from God to His people. But what about today? Do you ever wonder if the Lord still speaks to His people?

Today, God speaks to His people through His Word. The original authors wrote the Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That means that when we read God’s Word, we are hearing God “speak”!

We should take comfort in what we read because God’s words are sure and trustworthy. He always keeps His promises, and what He says will indeed come to pass. Like Mary, if you want to be blessed, take God at His Word. You might begin by meditating on these three promises from God:

1. God will be near to His people.

See Psalm 119:151, Psalm 145:18, Romans 8:11, and James 4:8.

2. God forgives the sins of those who repent and believe.

See Isaiah 43:25, Acts 10:43, and Romans 10:9.

3. God brings comfort and peace to those who are in Christ.

See Psalm 119:76, Matthew 11:28-29, and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.







13

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home. (Luke 1:46–56)

Why me?

Have you ever asked yourself that question? We usually ask it with a sigh of discouragement when something disappointing happens to us. But this question can be asked with a completely different motivation. It can be asked from a heart of humility and gratitude. When you receive kindness that you don't deserve or when you are shown unmerited favor you can find yourself asking, "Why me?" This kind of question might have crossed Mary's mind when she was told she would be the mother of the Messiah.

Mary was an ordinary girl with a heart deeply devoted to knowing her God. Her song of praise overflows with her knowledge of Him. Did you notice how little of the song is about her? Instead, she sings about her great God and how he cares for his children from generation to generation. She wasn't an amazing leader or a charismatic pillar among believers. She was a girl who loved God—and He saw her devotion and faith. He looked on her lowly estate.

God sees you, too. You don't have to write a book, preach a sermon, lead a movement, or make a significant contribution to some special cause to be seen by God. He sees the faith of all who humbly trust and obey Him. He sees and He shows Himself to be a merciful God who is kind to His children.

Have you experienced the blessing and grace of God in your life? Has God's goodness surprised you in ways that made you ask, "why me?" Take some time to write out a personal song of praise to God in response to the ways He has blessed you. Let Mary's song inspire you. It doesn't have to be poetic or artistic. Let it simply be an overflow of your gratitude that He sees you as you seek to follow Him day-by-day.

MY PERSONAL SONG OF PRAISE:

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:57–66)

As we approach the end of Luke 1, we come to the birth of John. The story is simple and yet beautifully profound.

When we first read these verses, it may seem like we're reading a story about Zechariah and the instantaneous miracle of him regaining the ability to speak. Or maybe this is a story about Elizabeth and the miracle of giving birth in her old age. One could even say this is a story about John and the great significance of his life and ministry.

But ultimately, this is a story first and foremost about God. He is the main character in this drama, and Luke wants us to see in vivid detail the hand of the Lord. Everything in the story of John the Baptist is evidence of the mighty intervention of God which is why Luke ends this passage with the comment: "For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him" (1:66).

We saw the hand of God when the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he would have a son. We saw the hand of God when an elderly, barren couple miraculously has their first child. We see the hand of God when Zechariah is made deaf and mute as judgment for his unbelief. And again, we see the hand of God when Zechariah's tongue is loosed and he begins to bless God. The hand of God is everywhere in these verses and Luke doesn't want us to miss it.

The same can be said for all of Scripture. Psalm 19:7 calls the Bible the testimony of the Lord. Scripture is how God reveals Himself to us. So as we approach Scripture, let us look for the hands of God. Every passage declares something about Him, and pursuing knowledge of Him is a rich endeavor that carries with it a great reward.



And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."
(Luke 1:67-75)

Notice the change in Zechariah. Remember, Zechariah was the priest who was unable to speak because he didn't believe God's message. Now we see a completely different picture. This once-silent priest is now filled with the Holy Spirit and can't help but speak! He prophesies that God's covenant to Abraham so long ago is now being fulfilled. Zechariah's uncertainty is gone. So the man who once questioned God now boldly declares God's faithfulness to David and David's household.

Salvation has come.

Zechariah responds by blessing God for visiting His people. God didn't send just any strong leader to save those He loves. Instead, God Himself came in the flesh. God personally visited His people to redeem them.

Zechariah blesses God because He raised up a Savior. The Israelites were hopeless on their own. Now God sends a Savior to keep His promise to their forefathers to show them mercy.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah rightly acknowledges what God has done. He then acknowledges that this mighty work of God demands a response from God's followers. Let's not miss that! God's people have been delivered, which means that we who were once afraid of Him can now serve Him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all of our days. This ability has been "granted" to us.



What would it look like for you personally to serve God without fear? Are there areas where you should serve Him more courageously? Do you have gifts that you can use in your local church? Are there people in your community who could use a helping hand?

What would it look like for you to take a step of faith in service this Christmas season? If we have been saved, we can serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness.

So let's remember that our salvation is based on the righteousness of Christ alone. Therefore, we have nothing to fear. We can boldly serve our holy God with clean hands and clean hearts.

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:76–80)

On an ordinary day in Thailand in 2018, twelve boys from a soccer team and their coach were enjoying a day together when a torrential rain caused them to flee to a nearby cave for shelter. The water forced them further back; they desperately searched for dry ground and couldn't find it. Eventually, they got trapped in the depths of the cave in complete darkness. Minutes turned into hours and hours turned into days as they waited for the water to subside. But the rain outside continued. As the days went on, their perilous situation left most thinking that there was no way for them to survive. Until, against all odds, rescue divers found them alive. Certainly, there were times when they despaired. But the day the rescue diver's light broke through the water at the base of the pitch-black cavity that held them, hope returned to their hearts.



The complete blackness of the cave confused the boys. After they were rescued, many of the boys immediately wanted to know how long they had been down there. Darkness not only steals our ability to see but it also takes away accurate knowledge about our lives. Outside of a relationship with God, our lives don't make sense. Trials disorient us, our sins entrap us, and we are left without hope. What can pierce this spiritual darkness? Only the Lord.

Though you may never have been trapped in a cave, all of humanity has a similar story. For hundreds of years, the world was like the boys in the cave—full of people sitting in darkness and only marginally aware that death was just around the corner. But God was on a rescue mission of mercy and He sent a messenger to prepare the way. Like the rescue divers, a messenger of hope would proclaim that the Messiah had come. And His coming meant that there was now a way out of the darkness.

If you know Jesus, you have been rescued. You must share the message of hope to those who remain in darkness. Who in your life needs this message? Consider inviting them to attend a Christmas service with you.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

Luke was a doctor (Col. 4:14). He devoted years of his life to studying and training for the medical profession. Given this background, you might expect more detail in his retelling of the birth of Jesus. However, Luke recounts the story with seven simple words, “And she gave birth to her son.” As one author put it, “these simple words excite profound imagination.”

What was Mary thinking? How did two teenagers manage the birth of a child with no support system? Did Joseph lift voiceless prayers to heaven while holding Mary’s hand through a long night of labor? We don’t know any of that information.

An established author knows that vivid descriptions can greatly improve writing but going overboard on detail can slow down a narrative and overwhelm readers. It’s here that we must remind ourselves that the point of these verses is not the physical birth of Jesus but rather the astounding fact that the Lord of heaven came to live on Earth in human flesh. The Creator of the universe entered creation as a helpless baby. One silent night—on a night just like any other in Israel, with no pomp or celebration from anyone—a child unlike any other was born. This child was the Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses record the single most important moment in all of history. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). In God’s goodness, He sent Jesus to ransom us from the power of sin and make us ready to be with him, both now and forever. This is the good news of Christmas, and the reason the name of Jesus is the name above all names.





And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. (Luke 2:8–9)

Have you ever wondered why the angels went to the shepherds to proclaim Jesus was born? Why didn't they tell the priest, or the king, or the popular people? In just a few words, we're introduced to the people who first received the message God's people had waited centuries to hear. While we don't know a lot about them, we can reasonably draw a few conclusions based on the culture and practices at that time.

Because these shepherds were out in the field at night, they were likely not landowners who owned the flock, but probably night-shift bondservants or low-paid wage earners who protect the flock at night. This could have made them unclean, unable to enter the temple, and unable to participate in worship.

COLOR THE SHEPHERDS!



According to Jewish law, sheep that were used for the offerings on the Sabbath could be used to atone for sins and reconcile the sinner back to God for a season. They had to be a one-year-old male sheep who had been outside for one year. Generations of shepherds tended these sacred flocks and sometimes risked their lives to keep the animals from going astray. After pouring their lives out into their flocks, the shepherds would separate the lambs, choosing only the perfect firstborn males to take to Jerusalem. There, the lambs would be purchased by those who wished to atone for their sins.



None of this is in Luke's text. So we can't know for sure who these shepherds were. But based on cultural history and Jewish Law, we know it's likely they were caring for and protecting lambs reserved for sacrificial atonement. This was the very thing that could restore their relationship back to God, and ironically they weren't able to do it for themselves because they were unclean.

So why did angels tell these shepherds first? We don't know for certain. And yet, I wonder if it's because these were people who had no hope. If you find yourself in a similar position, know that the Lord sees you and pursues you.

[Spoiler alert] What happened after they heard the news of Jesus' arrival? A few verses later, we read they left the sheep behind. They didn't need them anymore!

19

“And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10)

What a significant and important statement! When we take it to heart, our fear is replaced by joy. This good news is for ALL people.

We’ve already talked about the initial recipients of this good news: lowly shepherds. And yet, we see here that this news is for kings and rulers, too. It’s for “all people”— for the Jew and the Gentile, the slave and the free, the rich and the poor, the young and the old. The angel declares good news for the timid and the bold, the sinful and the shameful, the mighty and the weak. The angel brings good news for all people.

Please hear this: that means that the angel brought good news for you, too.

The angel brought good news for your family, your neighbors, your co-workers, your friends, and even your enemies. It’s good news for all people everywhere.

Are you experiencing the joy of this good news? If not, what anxieties and stresses weigh heavy on your heart, robbing you of joy this Christmas season?

Rest assured that this good news of great joy is for you. You’re invited to worship the Savior just as you are. Come weary. Come lonely. Just come. Take comfort in this news. And don’t be afraid. Right now, before jumping back into your busy day, take a few minutes to process this amazing declaration and what it means for you.

Pause and consider these questions:

What are you afraid of?

What keeps you from experiencing the joy of this good news?

How can you find comfort in this news today?

How could you share the comfort of this good news with those around you?



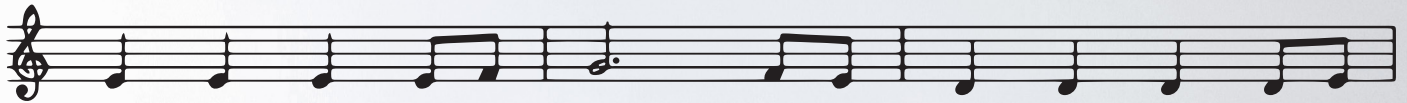
JOY TO THE WORLD



Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her King; ____
Joy to the World, the Sa - vior reigns! Let men their songs em - ploy; ____
No more let sins and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in - fest the ground; ____
He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na - tions prove ____



____ Let e - very he - art pre - pare ____ Him ____ ro - om, And
____ While fie - lds and ____ flo - ods, rocks, hi - lls and ____ plai - ns Re -
____ He co - mes to ____ ma - ke His ble - si - ngs flow ____ Far
____ The glo - ries ____ of ____ His right - teous - ness ____ And



Heaven and na - tu - re sing, And ____ Heaven and na - tu - re
peat the soun - di - ng joy, Re - peat the soun - di - ng
as the curse is ____ found, Far ____ as the curse is ____
won - ders of His ____ love, And ____ won - ders of His ____



sing, And ____ Hea - ven and Hea - ven and na - ture sing.
joy, Re - peat ____ re - peat ____ the soun - ding joy.
found, Far ____ as ____ Far as ____ the curse is found.
love, And ____ won - ders, And won - ders of His love.



WORD SEARCH

Y Z F C H X X A J B E V E S Y
C S Z J H N S Y M H Y X U I R
H V H W D R O L H Y J G E G O
F E U T J O I X O D G W E N I
J R S R L B S S T Q H R E H V
H G E W E F I B T H Z A Q O A
N A C G M I C V A G D P I U S
X H T U N G K H D B V P J H D
B V Z T D A R Z X F Y E X L V
U S X C O I M F X U H D A T U
N J P K T T V T M C B Q N Y T
L N L B Z V O A S U H T B X T
C G B N U S W A D D L I N G L
S G V Y F G P W D B M S G U H
P H N M B S K O B O F M D V D

BORN
CHRIST
WRAPPED

DAVID
LORD
SWADDLING

SAVIOR
BABY
SIGN

Can you find the hidden word not listed? Hint: It's another word from Luke 2:11-12.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. (Luke 2:11–12)

Take a second and think of all the titles people might attach to you. Some call you mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, nana, or grandfather. Others call you doctor, teacher, student, boss, coach, neighbor, or friend.

Today's passage is very important because of the titles that are attached to the Jesus. These four titles speak volumes about who Jesus is. Did you catch them all? He's referred to as Savior, Christ, and Lord. He's also referred to as a baby. Each title carries significant meaning. The first three refer to His divine station and the last one speaks of His humble humanity.

There's much to be said about the humanity of Jesus. The fact that He came as a helpless baby by miraculous conception would by itself make Him a historically unique figure. But Jesus came into a world that needed more than a virgin birth. While that was astounding, by itself it would be a headline that might mark history but not change it. Jesus was more than just an extraordinarily conceived baby.

He entered our world and lived a life like us. He understands our struggles and all that it means to be human. But Jesus came to a world that needed more than empathetic understanding. More than a reformer, a political leader, or another adviser, the world needed a Savior who is also Lord.

As you read the passage today, ask yourself, "Which description of Jesus most resonates with how you relate to Him?" Is He a historical baby born long ago, or is He something more? Is Jesus your Savior? Is He your Lord?



And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:13-14)

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased."

Can you imagine hearing multitudes of angels saying those words? How many angels make a "multitude"? Probably too many to count. Imagine what it would have been like to take in not only the news of Jesus' birth, but to experience all of these sights and sounds. It would have been overwhelming!

And yet, even this would have been nothing more a small glimpse into how overwhelming it would be to experience the majesty of God. Remember when the Lord revealed Himself to Moses? He hid Moses in a rock and passed by because "no one can see His face and live" (Exodus 33). Our human bodies here on earth physically can't handle the full presence of God. He is truly worthy of our praise.

This infinitely powerful God had just arrived on earth in the form of a helpless baby, fully human and fully God, who came to earth not only to redeem us back to God, but first and foremost to glorify God. Christ was born to glorify God. Christ died to glorify God. Christ saves us to bring glory to God.

We were made to glorify Him too! When we praise God for who He is, we are satisfied, settled, at peace, safe, and operating how we were wired to live now and forever.

If you're a follower of Christ, did you know that you show up in the Bible? And do you know what you're doing? You're praising God with the angels! At the end of the Bible, we get a glimpse into heaven, where God dwells among his people. Here's how John describes what His people are doing: "[There is] a great

multitude that no one could number, from every nation, all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb"

(Revelation 7:9-11).

They're praising God alongside angels. Who knows? Perhaps we'll be alongside the same group of angels from Luke 2.

This Christmas season, let's celebrate that God glorified Himself by coming as a humble servant to die for us so that we can live in freedom and know this infinitely powerful God personally.



CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

1. Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
2. What was the name of the angel that told the Virgin Mary she would have a child?
3. Why did Mary and Joseph leave to go to Bethlehem?
4. Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
5. Where does the Bible say Jesus was born? a) *In a stable* b) *In hay* c) *In a manger*
6. In which city was Jesus born?
7. What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
8. How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
9. What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
10. According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
11. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
12. Who was the Roman ruler at the time Jesus was born?

1. Nazareth 2. Gabriel 3. To register for the census (and possibly to pay taxes) 4. There was no room at the Inn 5. In a manger
6. Bethlehem 7. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all men' 8. The bible doesn't say 9. Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh 10. None 11. 8 – as was required by law at the time 12. Caesar Augustus

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:15–21)

There are countless lessons we can glean from these faithful shepherds.

We've already seen God divinely interrupt the mundane duties of the shepherds with declarations of good news for all people. We pick up today with the same shepherds in the wake of a supernatural encounter. The angels are gone, and the shepherds are once again alone beneath a dark and desolate sky. And yet, something's very different this time. These unclean shepherds, near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, now have inside information: they know where Jesus was born!

Mary and Joseph gave firsthand account of the birth of Christ. Zechariah and Elizabeth

were told beforehand this would happen, but these lowly shepherds are the first to hear the news of the birth of Christ. Jesus has come to save His people from the penalty and power of sin and on this side of the story we get to see exactly how the shepherds respond.

Did you notice how the shepherds responded to the news that the Lord "made known" to them? "They went with haste" (2:16). What do they go "with haste" to do? They went to "make known the saying that had been told them concerning [Jesus]" (2:17). In other words, what God had made known to them they made known to others. The result? People "wondered" (2:18). This Christmas pray that God would give us opportunities to tell others about the Good News of Jesus and that they will respond with repentance and belief.

These faithful shepherds were the New Testament's first evangelists. This Christmas, pray that God would help us to follow in their footsteps. Pray that we might be bold to tell others about Jesus and that those who hear would be left to "wonder" as a result.

And be encouraged that as we share this great news with others, the angels in heaven are doing exactly what they were doing approximately 2,000 years ago on that very night, praising God for salvation.

Who should you share the gospel with this Advent season? Spend some time praying and asking God who He has placed in your life specifically for this purpose.



And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:22–32)

Simeon was a righteous and devout man. He was a faithful Israelite who trusted God’s Word, and he believed that the promised Messiah would come. But Simeon wasn’t the only Israelite waiting on the Messiah. And, there was something unique about Simeon’s life. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he’d seen the promised Savior.

Imagine this elderly man, full of the Holy Spirit, eagerly awaiting this very important day. And then it came! When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the temple, Simeon knew. He recognized that Jesus was the One for whom he had been waiting. That’s why he joyfully took the baby into his arms and blessed God. He could now face his own death in peace because he had seen his salvation in the flesh.

Notice what Simeon said: “My eyes have seen your salvation.” He didn’t say, “My eyes have seen the One whom we hope will bring salvation one day.” He declared that Jesus is our salvation. Simeon could rest in peace at the end of his life because he was completely confident that salvation had come.

Do you ever feel like what you believe is uncertain? Do you ever feel like you’re wandering in darkness waiting for someone to take the lead and just show you the way? If so, just as Simeon did, look to Jesus.

Read what’s revealed about Him in God’s Word—and choose to believe it with complete certainty. Notice how Jesus’ life was prophesied long before His birth. Read the Gospels and observe both His life and His teaching. Who did He talk to? What did He say? Consider His life, death, and victorious resurrection.

Look to Jesus and trust in God’s Word. If you believe in Him, you will find peace throughout all the days of your life—just like Simeon.



In this coming year, who can you pray for and share Jesus with? Think through places you frequent, people you live around, and people you may have known your whole life. List names below and commit to pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Challenge: Consider sharing anything you've written here with friends, family, or your church family before the year is over!



Read Luke 1–2

LUKE 1

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and

you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent



from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be [g] a

fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us[h] from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

LUKE 2

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave

birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord,

"Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned

into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

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