

# **The Christmas Story**

**December 25, 2013**



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**“Joybell” Celebrates our Savior’s birth**



# A Godly, But Childless, Couple

(Luke 1:5-7)

## **I. Concentration: on a righteous husband and wife.**

1. In the time of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah (v.5a)
2. his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron (v.5b)
3. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. (v.6)
4. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. (v.7)

## **II. Meditation: on "God Remembers" "God's Promise".**

1. Herod "the Great" ruled Judea until his death around 4 BCE; Abijah (daughter of Zechariah [2 Chronicles 29:1b](#)) was just one of 24 divisions of priests; there were a LOT of priests; Zechariah, which means "God Remembers", was just one of them.
2. Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, which means "God's Promise" or "Oath of God", also descended from a long line of priests; she married one as well.
3. Regardless of any challenges placed before them, this couple remained faithful to God - even when their prayers seemed to go unanswered.
4. A woman's worth was established by how many sons she bore her husband - no sons, no value; a husband could divorce his childless wife, but Zechariah was a Godly man.

## **III. Revelation: on Our Value.**

1. God chooses many people to perform His services among His people; we are each just one of them, but each of us is unique - just as He made us.
2. As a wife of a priest, Elizabeth knew what was required of her; as God's children we should also know what He requires of us.
3. Sometimes we wonder . . . Is God listening (???)? does God care (???)? will He ever respond (???)? the answer is always YES (!!!) - in His perfect timing.
4. We all - men, women, children - have a great value to God - that is why He created us.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Realize that God makes no mistakes; He has chosen me; He has provided me with the skills needed to perform the tasks in the ministries He has chosen for me.
2. Gain strength in knowing I am doing what He requires of me; don't allow doubt to creep in; don't allow negative comments to take over - they are only Satan coming through.
3. Remember that God loves me - HE LOVES ME; He is always listening to me, he always hears what I have to say; make time to "say" more to God - know that He cares.
4. Know my value to God; shut down all my insecurities, build up my self-worth; know that He wants me to be me - He chose me - He loves me - Halleluiah!!!

# The “Lot” Is Chosen – The Worshipers Await

(Luke 1:8-10)

## **I. Concentration: on being on duty.**

1. Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, (v.8)
2. he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, (v.9a)
3. to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. (v.9b)
4. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. (v.10)

## **II. Meditation: on being selected.**

1. Since the time of Aaron priestly duties included handling offerings, giving thanks and singing praises at the gates of God’s dwelling place.
2. With so many priests few were singled out for ministry inside the temple’s Holy Place; the priests may have used ‘lots’ to decide, but God had already selected Zechariah!
3. This was Zechariah’s once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and privilege to serve the Lord in this way – burning incense every morning and every evening for a full week.
4. Everyone who was anyone would remain outside, praying; Elizabeth would wait outside in the Court of Women to support her husband; Anna, an 84 year old widow, who never left the temple but worshipped night and day, would also be there ([Luke 2:36-38](#))

## **III. Revelation: on taking advantage of opportunities.**

1. We may not be priests, pastors, clergy of any kind, but we should be offering thanks and singing praises to our Lord for all He gives to us each and every day.
2. We were not chosen by “lot”, just as God selected Zechariah He has selected each and every one of us for a special purpose – for His special purpose.
3. Take advantage of each opportunity; we may never know when that “one-in-a-lifetime” opportunity will come along to be involved in something so great for Him.
4. Often, the best we can do for others is to remain “outside” and pray; we don’t need to know all the details – God knows them – we just need to set aside time to intercede on their behalf.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Sing His praises with my testimony telling others what He has done in my life – how it has changed it from a dark, sad, lonely, hurting place to a light and joy filled life.
2. Know that there are no accidents in what I am doing – God has selected me and I am right where He wants me to be doing what He wants me to do.
3. Be grateful and joyful for every opportunity I am given to serve Him; think of all the times I have reflected back on events and wished I had spent more time enjoying each moment instead of looking forward to the “next thing”.
4. Listen to what people are saying about their lives and challenges; look for opportunities to ask them if I can pray for them.



# The “Other” Christmas Miracle

(Luke 1:11-12, 13, 15-16, 17)

## **I. Concentration: on the first angelic message “Do Not Be Afraid”.**

1. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. (vv.11-12)
2. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. (v.13)
3. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. (vv.15-16)
4. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (v.17)

## **II. Meditation: on answered prayers.**

1. Imagine how shocked Zechariah was to be visited by an angel; it’s not that he was unaware of Scripture where this happened – it just happened to prophets, not priests!
2. At long last their prayers have been answered; his wife was going to have a baby – but not just “a baby”, but a son . . . AND . . . he already has a name!!!
3. How many parents get told what their children will be like – before they are even born?
4. Each parent’s first born son is offered to God in service (consecrated); Zechariah learns that “John” isn’t going to follow in his footsteps as another priest in Abijah’s division, but is going to have a special role in changing the world forever.

## **III. Revelation: on raising children.**

1. How many times do things happen for us where we are so surprised, even after we have been praying and asking for it for a long time; God’s time is always the right time.
2. After 400 years of silence, an angel speaks to Zechariah – of course he was shocked (!!!); we never have to fear when our prayers are being answered; God will never hurt us; “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” ([Psalm 27:1](#))
3. Every Christian aspires to be great in the eyes of God and filled with the Holy Spirit.
4. As parents and grandparents we have a responsibility to teach the next generation ([Psalm 78:5-8](#)) in order that they will understand God’s requirements and love.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Realize that God’s time is always the right time.
2. Share my answered prayers with others so that they can see Him working through me.
3. Be faithful, work hard, go where He leads me, share my faith, help others affirm theirs.
4. Continue to find ways to share the Good News with my grandchildren, Goddaughter and any other children (adopted families) who are in my life.



# Wait!!! What??? Seriously??? Silence!!!

(Luke 1:18, 19, 20)

## **I. Concentration: on “I have been sent to speak . . . now you will be silent”.**

1. Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” (v.18)
2. The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God (v.19a)
3. And I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. (v.19b)
4. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at the appointed time.(v.20)

## **II. Meditation: on not one more word.**

1. Zechariah doesn't mean any disrespect, but . . . seriously (???) . . . are you sure (???) do you know how old we are (???) . . . sure, we've been praying for years, but . . . seriously?
2. Gabriel (means “Strength of God”) makes it perfectly clear to Zechariah that he is a messenger sent from God.
3. Jump for joy Zechariah, Gabriel brings you the long awaited answer to your prayers!!!
4. Gabriel knows that Zechariah is a humble servant of God, but . . . he asked for “proof” and he is going to receive it . . . in the form of silence . . . not one more word!

## **III. Revelation: on shouting it from the roof tops.**

1. God decides when it is time, if ever, to answer our prayers and when He does, it is in His time and according to His plan – even though we may be incredulous – He knows when!
2. God has given us our strength; we should not become helpless and fall back on our weaknesses – we need to tap into and use the strength He has given.
3. Do we sometimes forget to praise God and thank Him after He has answered our prayers (???) ; do we become (remain?) so self-focused that we don't realize it was not us, but Him who made “this” happen?
4. God does not want us to be silent but to shout it from the roof tops; proclaim the Glory to our Lord who is capable of all things.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Be patient and wait; believe when He answers my prayers and rejoice for all to hear.
2. Use the strength He has given me – use it to help me to be patient and wait, use it to help me endure difficult times, use it to help me continue forward, use it to help others.
3. Praise God for all He does in my life – not just when He is answering my prayers; daily remember who put that sun in the sky, the birds in the air; take time to look around each day and be in awe at all He created – for me.
4. Use every opportunity to tell others of how my life changed when I began to focus on God instead of myself; share my story in relationship to His story – make it known to others that they, too, can have a changed life and a changed heart.





# Say Something!!!

(Luke 1:21, 22-23, 24, 25)

## I. Concentration: on signs.

1. Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. (v.21)
2. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. When his time of service was completed, he returned home. (vv.22-23)
3. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. (v.24)
4. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." (v.25)

## II. Meditation: on answered prayers.

1. It was customary for the worship to continue outside the temple, waiting for the priest to return, but . . . what is taking him so long???
2. Zechariah can't speak – maybe this is a good thing – he can't blurt out the message from Gabriel to the crowd – Elizabeth deserves to hear "their" good news first.
3. Wow – "I'm having a baby (!!!) – I'm going to hold this secret close in my heart; I'm going to stay inside with my husband – when I show them, there will be no doubt Zechariah and I are having a baby!!!"
4. "He heard us all along; after years of praying – He heard us and He has delivered; no longer will I be the talk-of-the-town for being childless."

## III. Revelation: on patience.

1. We have opportunities for prayer all day long, especially while we are waiting for something to happen – we could be at a red light, the doctor's office, standing in line at the grocery store – take advantage of these opportunities to praise our Lord.
2. Don't we sometimes just want to blurt it out when we are in the early stages of something new and fabulous???
3. But sometimes God wants us to wait until there will be no doubt of the glory of His accomplishments so others will see and believe . . . patience.
4. He will deliver His answer to our prayers in His time.

## IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:

1. Know that prayer doesn't have to be at a specific time of the day or at a specific place; take advantage of the little times throughout the day to focus on my Lord instead of what is going on around me that is of little consequence.
2. Know when to shout it from the roof tops and tell everyone I know of His magnificent glory; tell everyone what He has done in my life.
3. Know when to have patience and quietly hold my news inside until He is ready for me to share it with others, especially those who feel the need for proof – He will show them.
4. Praise God for His wisdom in knowing the perfect timing of every event.



# Gabriel Visits Again

(Luke 1:26, 27, 28)

## **I. Concentration: on half a year has passed since Gabriel's last visit.**

1. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (v.26a)
2. God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, (v.26b)
3. To a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. (v.27)
4. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." (v.28)

## **II. Meditation: on Gabriel's second visit is quite a distance from his first.**

1. Elizabeth had completed her self-appointed seclusion – imagine what her friends said when they saw her "baby bump"; did she tell them or do you think they suspected it had something to do with Zechariah's long stay in the temple and being silenced, muted?
2. Gabriel is back again – this time in Galilee, a good 70 – 100 miles away from Elizabeth.
3. As soon as a girl was able to conceive, about age 12 or so, she would be promised in marriage to an established man – one able to support her, probably at least 10 years older; this engagement would be celebrated and legally binding on both parties.
4. We don't know what Mary was doing, probably her daily chores, when all of a sudden Gabriel greets her; he tells her she is one of God's favored children AND that GOD IS WITH HER – not that He WILL be . . . HE IS!!!

## **III. Revelation: on God puts people together.**

1. As Christians we should strive to live our lives in such a way that the glory of God can be seen through us; we won't need words to tell others – they will see it for themselves.
2. If God wants to connect people together, there is no distance too great; as He works His ministries through us we begin to realize there are people in our lives who would never have been put there if it wasn't for Him; He knows which of His children He wants serving together and He knows the purpose.
3. Can we remember being twelve years old (??); today girls are not mature enough to be married and have a baby at that age, but some do; God chose the perfect mother for His Son.
4. We could be doing the most mundane thing when God calls us for His service; we should be prepared at all times to serve Him as He needs – remember GOD IS WITH US.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Be the kind of person that others see God through my actions.
2. Feel blessed for the people God has put into my life knowing that many of them I would never have had the opportunity to meet; realize how much richer my life is because of Him and His plans.
3. Always remember . . . God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called.
4. Be prepared to be called at any time and from any place – make YES flow from my heart.

# He Will Reign Forever and Ever – Amen!

(Luke 1:29, 30-31, 32, 33)

## **I. Concentration: on the second angelic message “Do Not Be Afraid”.**

1. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. (v.29)
2. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. (vv.30-31)
3. 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, (v.32)
4. And he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (v.33)

## **II. Meditation: on being favored by God.**

1. We aren’t told Mary was frightened by Gabriel’s appearance, but she was quite surprised at his words – after all . . . women had no status apart from a man.
2. Gabriel repeats that Mary is favored by God; she was full of God’s grace because He chose to bless her – God is honoring her - He will be called Jesus (“God Saves”).
3. For centuries every Jewish woman prayed it would be them; did Mary’s knees buckle when she realized she was going to be the one to carry the Messiah?
4. Her Son was not going to be an earthly king like David; He will reign over all creation forever and ever – AMEN!

## **III. Revelation: on being chosen.**

1. Unlike in Mary’s time, God speaks to and works through women all the time so that they may spread His word and His glory.
2. We aren’t chosen by God because we are blessed and righteous, we are blessed and righteous because we are chosen by God; God takes each one of us as we are and uses us as He will – for His glory.
3. Imagine being chosen by God; for sure our knees would buckle underneath us; who would we be like (???) - Mary or Moses; will we say “no Lord, not me, you got the wrong person, I’m not qualified, I’m not who you want”; will we presuppose we know more than God?
4. Jesus was with God during creation and has been ever since.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Pay attention and listen; it isn’t always necessary to be talking – sometimes I just need to “be” in His presence and listen.
2. Be thankful He has chosen me and shared some of His plans with me; I need to continue to be open to “what’s next” as He continues to enlighten me with His plans.
3. Stop pushing back and saying “no, no – not me – I’m not who you want” for this ministry or that challenge; accept that He knows what is best for me – go where He leads.
4. Know that I serve a Mighty King!

# I Haven't "Known" A Man

(Luke 1:34, 35, 36-37, 37)

## **I. Concentration: on asking but not doubting.**

1. "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" (v.34)
2. 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. (v.35)
3. 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. For no word from God will ever fail." (vv.36-37)
4. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (v.38)

## **II. Meditation: on understanding the miracles.**

1. Mary is not asking how her Son will be great and rule; Mary doesn't doubt or ask for proof like Zechariah did; she's asking how it will be done – she hasn't "known a man".
2. It's clearly okay to ask "how" God will perform His miracle; Gabriel tells her in order for Jesus to be the Son of God He will not come to her from a man, but from the Holy Spirit; every first born is consecrated TO God, but Mary's Son will BE God.
3. Gabriel tells Mary of another miracle that has just been performed – a pregnancy between a man and woman – the miracle of a late stage pregnancy between her kinfolk.
4. Mary doesn't barter with Gabriel to first go tell her parents and Joseph what is going to happen – even though having a child out of wedlock was punishable by death; Mary says "YES – I am His humble servant – I will do His Will."

## **III. Revelation: on serving.**

1. There's a difference between questioning God and asking Him how something will be done; in either case, God always knows what He is doing – He always has a master plan.
2. Just as the Holy Spirit came on Mary, the Holy Spirit comes in us when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Master; the Holy Spirit dwells within us, leads and guides us.
3. Often we think that our problems, challenges, issues are insurmountable and can't be fixed; there is nothing too great that can't be handled by God – all we have to do is ask.
4. Sometimes saying "yes" to God can mean "earthly" difficulties for us; to truly be His servant means we don't question Him even when others will question us.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Accept and watch God's master plan for me unfold in His time; I need to learn patience.
2. Speak to the Holy Spirit on a regular basis; ask Him to lead and guide me, to help me acquire the patience I need in order to not go off in the wrong direction, but in His direction.
3. Know there is nothing so broken in me that He can't fix – lift it up to Him.
4. Not worry about what others will think when I am doing God's work.



# Shalom, Elizabeth and Zecharia

(Luke 1:39-40, 41-42, 43-45, 56)

## **I. Concentration: on being ready to go where God leads.**

1. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. (vv.39-40)
2. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! (vv.41-42)
3. But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" (vv.43-45)
4. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. (v.56)

## **II. Meditation: on being ready to share the great news.**

1. We don't know what Mary told her parents to get permission to make an 8-10 day journey; unannounced, she probably called out "Shalom" as she entered Elizabeth's.
2. How did Elizabeth know that Mary was with child (???) ; she didn't show, she could only have been 10 days to 2 weeks pregnant; the only way she could have known was from the Holy Spirit – Mary was carrying the One her son would prepare for ([v.15-17](#)).
3. As the elder, it would be appropriate for Mary to visit Elizabeth, but as soon as Mary said "Shalom" Elizabeth knew Mary carried her Lord – this changed the protocol; untold, Elizabeth knew God's promise was fulfilled; even John, in the womb, knew it.
4. Imagine the daily conversations these two women had about what God was doing in their lives; Mary doesn't wait for John's birth; at three months pregnant, probably led by God, she starts home for Nazareth – with a child in her womb and a song in her heart.

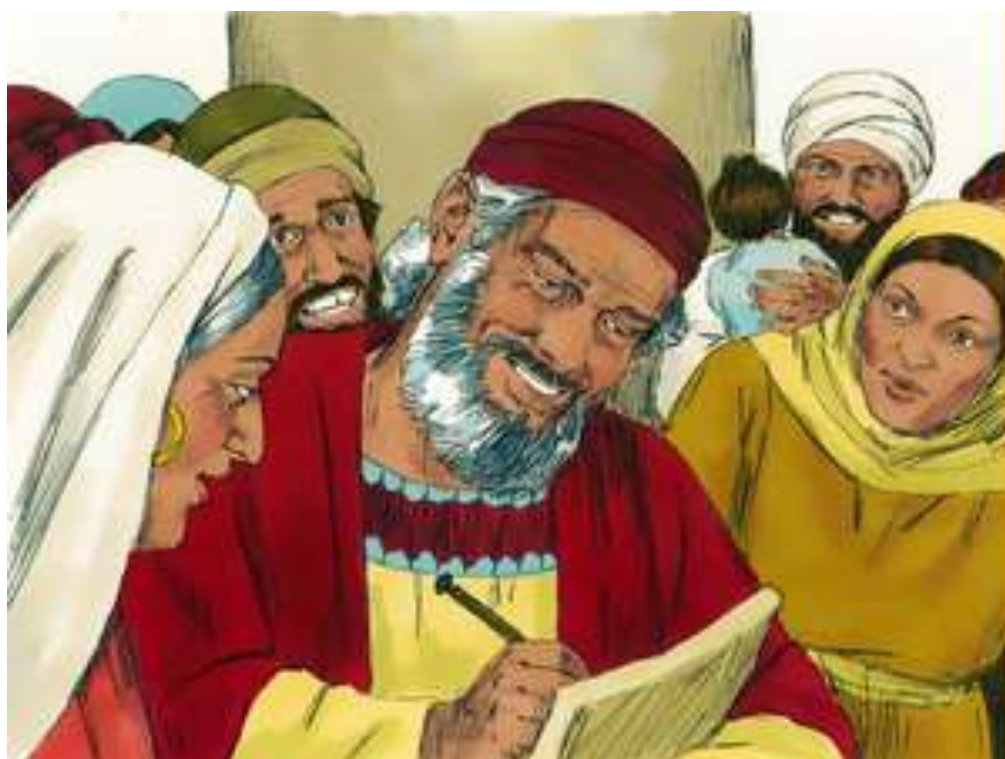
## **III. Revelation: on being filled and letting the Holy Spirit change our lives.**

1. How exciting it can be to take a journey, sometimes to a place unknown, where we will meet up with a fellow believer.
2. When the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth, He changed her life forever; if we want our lives to change we, too, need to open our hearts and minds to the guidance of the Holy Spirit
3. Don't we often say "why me", "why am I so blessed"; there are so many people more worthy than I; we wouldn't choose ourselves for the task, but God has.
4. God will always lead us – He will tell us when to go start a new journey and also tell us when it is time to move onto something new.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Sometimes journey into the unknown, with my Lord, always knowing He is with me.
2. Allow the Holy Spirit to change my life – forever – to be the person He wants me to be.
3. Realize He knows more of what I am capable of than I do.
4. Keep a song in my heart and go where God leads me – from ministry to ministry.





# It's A Boy . . . We WILL Name Him John!!!

(Luke 1:57, 60 +63, 76, 80)

## **I. Concentration: on he WILL be named John!**

1. When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. (v.57)
2. But his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." (v.60,63)
3. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him. (v.76)
4. And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.(v.80)

## **II. Meditation: on a name is not merely a name, but a life!**

1. As Gabriel had told Zechariah ([v.13](#)), his wife Elizabeth would deliver to him a son.
2. At the baby's circumcision when he was 8 days old their extended family was going to name him after his father (as proof of parentage?); Elizabeth strongly objected and said he must be named John; they deferred to the father and were shocked when he agreed; at that moment of obedience Zechariah was able to speak again!
3. Everyone wanted to know "what then is this child going to be"; Zechariah sings a song to his son and tells him about his future, as told to him by Gabriel.
4. John lives in the wilderness where his "clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey." ([Matthew 3:4](#))

## **III. Revelation: on preparing the way.**

1. God's messages are ALWAYS true; He is never wishy-washy – it's never "maybe" something will happen – if He says it, it is so!
2. As Zechariah's silence turned into words through His obedience, so will ours; God is always aware when we are obedient to His ways and He often rewards us.
3. Like John, we Christians are called to prepare the way for Him by bringing unbelievers to Him and by helping "part-time" believers build a genuine daily relationship with Him.
4. To be "strong in spirit" means that we are living a Godly life and becoming more Christ-like with everything we do; focus on the Word, live in the Word, become like the Word.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Always listen to God's messages for me and through me – He will do what He says He will; it may be a surprise, but never a surprise that He comes through with His word.
2. Be obedient – be the kind of person He designed me to be; be loving and caring, kind and compassionate; be a servant to the needy, help others seek Him.
3. Help others understand that it's not about "being a good person" – that's important, yes, but we must be a believer in Jesus Christ – atone, forgive and love.
4. Become stronger and stronger in the Spirit each day; time spent in the Bible, studying and understanding the Word will build my strength; keep my commitment to Him!



# Joseph, Take Mary Home As Your Wife

(Matthew 1:18-21)

## **I. Concentration: on the third angelic message “Do Not Be Afraid”.**

1. This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. (v.18)
2. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (v.19)
3. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (v.20)
4. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (v.21)

## **II. Meditation: on making decisions.**

1. By the time Mary returned home her pregnancy was likely showing, hence she was ‘found’ to be almost 4 months pregnant, not something Joseph would have expected.
2. Joseph would have been within his rights to deny any involvement, this would have set off a fatal stoning of Mary; by not renouncing her he implicated himself as the father; he had a decision to make – her life and reputation or his.
3. God came to Joseph in a dream – through the Holy Spirit – I am the Father of this child; God could have sent him earlier, but this plan was set in God’s time – perhaps to see how faithful Joseph would be to Him; the angel nudges – go ahead and marry Mary.
4. Joseph learns he is going to be a step-father to a Savior of the world.

## **III. Revelation: on keeping commitments.**

1. When we make a commitment to God we need to honor it even if it disappoints others; He knows what is best for us and what needs to be done to fulfill His plans.
2. Because we know the ending, we don’t often think about the beginning; Mary would have been shunned by family and friends; sometimes we are rejected, criticized and shunned when others don’t understand why or what we are doing in His name.
3. Like Joseph, we want to protect those we love; sometimes this comes at a cost to ourselves or our own reputation.
4. As Christians, we need to help lead people to Jesus so they can be saved from their sins.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Keep my commitments, even when others break theirs when “something more fun comes along”; fulfill the plans He has for me – go where He leads.
2. Keep doing what God expects me to do – regardless of reactions of others.
3. Keep protecting those I love; as a wise teacher told me recently, sometimes that means handing them off to Jesus and “letting go” of them.
4. Keep leading the way to Jesus – especially through my own actions.

# They Will Call Him Immanuel – “God With Us”

(Matthew 1:22-25)

## **I. Concentration: on prophecy of God’s plans.**

1. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: (v.22)
2. “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”) (v.23)
3. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (v.24)
4. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (v.25)

## **II. Meditation: on fulfillment of God’s plans.**

1. This prophecy, written 700 years earlier by Isaiah, was being spoken to Joseph in his dream and about to be fulfilled.
2. [Isaiah 7:14](#) says . . . a virgin – check, a conception – done, a son – if God says so, his name – already decided; at long last, in God’s perfect timing – His Will be done!
3. Both Joseph and Mary did what the Lord asked of them – imagine Joseph married the woman God chose to carry His Son – a match made in heaven.
4. We never hear Joseph speak, but we know he was tender with Mary during her pregnancy – perhaps he didn’t want to interfere with God’s plans.

## **III. Revelation: on timing of God’s plans.**

1. Time has no meaning to God – it was created for the benefit of man; God works in His time – on His clock . . . “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” ([2 Peter 3:8b](#)); ; prophecies will always be fulfilled in His time.
2. We can always be assured God is with us – night and day, everywhere and every way.
3. If we take time to listen and to shut down the clutter going on in our minds, we will hear God speak to us; God will guide us to make the right decisions in our lives.
4. If we interfere with God’s plans we jeopardize losing out on His will for us – after all, who, besides God, knows what is best for us?

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Be patient and know that He has plans for me ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)).
2. Feel God’s presence in and around me; recognize all He provides for and to me.
3. Clear my mind and provide Him space (in my head and heart) to speak to me.
4. Stop trying to do it all on my own, thereby jeopardizing the wonderful plans He has for my life.



# The Word Became Flesh

(Luke 2:1-3, 5, 6, 7)

## **I. Concentration: on what it means to survive in a Roman world.**

1. In those days Caesar Augustus issued a degree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register. (vv.1,3)
2. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (v.5)
3. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born (v.6)
4. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (v.7)

## **II. Meditation: on what it means to live in God's world.**

1. Micah foretold the place where Jesus would be born ([Micah 4:2](#)); so . . . God created a census to transport Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to have her baby boy – the Son of God; after all, “God can do anything” ([Ephesians 3:20](#))
2. Sending all back to their ancestral origin gave Caesar numbers of the strength of their tribe; everyone did what they were told – after all – Caesar *thought* he was in charge.
3. We don't know how long Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem before her contractions began, but we know it was “while they were there” gathering with all of David's descendants - it was very crowded and now . . . it was time!
4. The prophecies came true – the miracle was complete – the Savior of the world rested in Mary's arms- “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” ([John 1:14](#)); God could have chosen to arrive on earth, yet he entered through a virgin's womb.

## **III. Revelation: on being a Child of God.**

1. Everything happens for a reason or a season, even when we can't see it or understand it; He doesn't make mistakes – He doesn't even have practice runs – He knows what He's doing; all we need to do is let His will be done.
2. As Christians, we have strength in numbers and through the Holy Spirit; God works it all out for good ([Romans 8:28](#)) – let Him be in charge!
3. We may not know what “tribe” we are from, but we do know we are Children of God so “while we are here” we should make the best use of our time to serve Him.
4. The world, as they all knew it in Caesar's time, ended with the birth of the Son of God; our world will continue to change as fewer people are focused on the Son of God.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Remember how many times things didn't make sense – looking back I realize that it was His plan all along; stop struggling and just . . . “Let Go and Let God”.
2. Use my faith to help others strengthen theirs; serve Him faithfully.
3. Serve Him by listening for His calling; then obediently go where He leads.
4. Not allow today's world to corrupt my faith or pull me away from where I am heading; strive to be more like Christ.



Good Things of Great Joy (The Angel Appears to the Shepherds), by Walter Rane, courtesy Church History Museum



# An Angel Visits The Shepherds In Their Field

(Luke 2:8-9, 10, 11, 12)

## **I. Concentration: on the fourth angelic message “Do Not Be Afraid”.**

1. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (v.8,9)
2. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. (v.10)
3. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (v.11)
4. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger” (v.12)

## **II. Meditation: on He is never hard to find.**

1. Shepherds remained outside with their flock when the weather was not too cold to send them into the caves where they dwelled in the winter months; socializing, imagine their surprise when the angel appeared and outshone the fire they were sitting around.
2. God could have sent the angel to the elite, the educated, a prophet or a priest – instead, He sent him to some poor shepherds, outside, socializing around a fire after a long day; for the fourth time we hear . . . “Do not be afraid”
3. This was not a prophecy – this already happened – today – a King was born – not in a palace, but in a little town a short distance away – he is a Savior for YOU, for all of YOU!
4. He won’t be hard to find when you get there; He’s not lying in a beautiful bassinet that His (earthly) father, the carpenter, built for Him; He is lying in an animal feeding trough; it doesn’t get much more astonishing (or humbling) than this!

## **III. Revelation: on having a King, a Savior, with us at all times.**

1. When we socialize we can look for opportunities to tell others about what God has done in our lives; we can help them get on fire for the Lord.
2. It was no accident that the heavenly host came to earth and sought out the shepherds, not the kings; as Christians we need to seek out those who need the most, not those with the most; God sends us blessings, not curses – we don’t need to fear Him.
3. We have a King in our lives; a Savior; One who is always with us; we don’t need to travel a distance to find Him; He is right here at all times.
4. The shepherds, unlike Zechariah, didn’t ask for a sign, but were given one anyway; at times God gives us a sign to ensure we will go and tell others; He will always lead us.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Continue sharing my testimony; realize that any pain I experience by telling my story is used by God for the good of others – after all “God doesn’t waste a hurt”.
2. Be thankful God uses broken people (like me) to serve Him.
3. Praise God that He is found right here – right now – no travel necessary – just an open heart and mind.
4. Pay attention and listen – sign or no sign He will tell me what He expects from me.



# Glory To God In The Highest Heaven

(Luke 2:13, 14, 15, 16)

## **I. Concentration: on comings and goings**

1. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, (v.13)
2. “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (v.14)
3. When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” (v.15)
4. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (v.16)

## **II. Meditation: on signs.**

1. They were so excited (as if a host of angels appearing wasn’t “sign” enough!!!), they couldn’t wait to join the angels praising the Lord for this event that would change lives for all eternity, but . . . they were speechless.
2. They sang their hearts out, praising and worshipping the God of all creation who once again created something more magnificent than anyone could ever imagine.
3. As they came, they left; the silence after they departed must have been deafening; they could no longer contain their excitement - they had to go and see for themselves.
4. They left their sheep behind, knowing that God would watch over them while they went off to see this miracle He created – they found the “sign” exactly as and where the angel said – they were easy to find – they weren’t hidden in an Inn in an unknown room.

## **III. Revelation: on God’s work surrounds us.**

1. Imagine how magnificent this must have been - like the time God told Job when “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” ([Job 38:7](#)).
2. Peace comes from knowing God; if we find ourselves unsettled or “peace-less” all we need to do is go to a quiet place and spend time alone with Him.
3. As the shepherds found their voices after the angels left, so must we; with great excitement let’s go and share the Good News.
4. We see God’s work all around us – do we take it for granted or do we praise Him?

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Rejoice and praise God for all He has given me – I have so much to be thankful for.
2. Seek peace through quiet time spent with God; let the Holy Spirit fill me to the brim.
3. Daily experience the thrill of spreading the Good News – everywhere I go.
4. Spend time thanking God throughout the day – when I feel the warmth of the sun and breathe fresh air or when I hear children laughing . . . make time to be aware of the beauty He surrounds me with . . . take time to praise Him.

# And All Who Heard Were Amazed

(Luke 2:17, 18-19, 20, 21 )

## **I. Concentration: on being the messengers.**

1. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, (v.17)
2. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them, But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.(vv.18,19)
3. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (v.20)
4. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived. (v.21)

## **II. Meditation: on being believed.**

1. The shepherds, handpicked by God, were the first to spread the Gospel – the Good News – Jesus the Christ has been born – a Savior – the Messiah – the Lord.
2. Shepherds . . . were not called on to be witnesses – they were despised because they couldn't keep ceremonial laws while traveling about the hills – but this time THEY WERE BELIEVED by all who listened; Mary . . . was called on to be His mother.
3. We can be assured that the shepherds returned to where they were known and spent the rest of their lives making sure Christ was known to all who would listen.
4. In Moses' time babies were named as soon as they were born; in Jesus' time public naming and circumcision went together; He was named Jesus before He was even born.

## **III. Revelation: on now it is our turn.**

1. Now it falls to us, two thousand years later, to follow in their footsteps and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.
2. God calls on each one of us for His very specific purpose on this earth – it may not always make sense to us, but never doubt . . . it makes perfect sense to Him.
3. Let's spread the Good News among those who know us, then branch out; allow ourselves to be like a drop in the water that then ripples out from the center (us).
4. God knows how our lives will unfold – nothing is a surprise to Him.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Be like the shepherds, not wasting a minute, but to tell everyone I know everything I know about Jesus.
2. Be like the shepherds and spread the gospel; be like Mary – quiet, humble, willing, obedient and focused on the Lord.
3. Spend time thinking about who Jesus is and why He came to earth as a baby; become that drop in the water rippling out to as many others as I can.
4. Watch as God unfolds my life before my very eyes – be surprised, be amazed, but be obedient.



# **Simeon Sees, Praises God, Says “Now I Can Die”**

(Luke 2:22, 25a-26, 28-29, 30)

## **I. Concentration: on being purified.**

1. When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (v.22)
2. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah (vv.25a, 26)
3. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. (v.28,29)
4. For my eyes have seen your salvation (v.30)

## **II. Meditation: on holding the Lord.**

1. Mary was required to wait forty days after bleeding to be purified – she was forbidden, by law, to worship in a sanctuary or handle anything holy – except the Son of God; Jesus the Son was being presented to God the Father.
2. We don’t know when the Holy Spirit revealed this message to Simeon, but we can assume he waited many, many years, remaining righteous and faithful to God; unlike Zechariah who needed proof – Simeon just waited and listened.
3. Simeon was among those few, chosen by God, to hold the Lord in his arms, to feel His breath upon him – he now knew he was prepared to die – what more could he ask for?
4. Simeon looked directly into His eyes – seeing the Savior of the world; his life was more than complete – he had seen it all!

## **III. Revelation: on holding the Lord in our hearts.**

1. Praise God for His most amazing gift – EVER; ask Him to make our hearts pure and help us always hold the Son of God, our Lord, in our hearts, mind and spirit.
2. Instead of turning to others for answers, know that God alone can provide the wisdom we need; be like Simeon remaining faithful to God and waiting for Him to reveal His will through the Holy Spirit dwelling in our heart, mind and soul.
3. The thought of holding the Lord as an infant in our arms is incomprehensible, but as Christians, we will hold Him in our hearts for all eternity.
4. Complete our lives by seeing Him throughout the day in everything we see.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Keep a pure heart, keep it filled with the love of the Lord; let my actions display His presence in me; make my life complete.
2. Strive to be righteous, but never self-righteous; be devout in my faith and love of the Lord; spend my remaining years serving Him.
3. Always hold Him in my heart and live my life in such a way as to always be “prepared”.
4. Spread the Gospel so others may complete their lives by “seeing” Him and being saved.

# A Sword Will Pierce Your Own Soul Too

(Luke 2:33, 34, 35)

## **I. Concentration: on the blessing and the message.**

1. The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. (v.33)
2. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: (v.34a)
3. "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, (v.34b)
4. So that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (v.35)

## **II. Meditation: on Isaiah's prophecy.**

1. Because Mary was in the temple, they were in the Court of Women; did this humble couple recall Isaiah's prophecy . . . and . . . were they amazed when they heard this respected man call their baby the light of the world?
2. In Simeon's arms lay the finest treasure the world would ever know; first he blessed both parents, then he spoke directly to Mary, the mother of the Son of God.
3. These were difficult words for any mother to hear; Simeon went from praising God to prophesizing gloom regarding her precious baby boy, Jesus.
4. What people think will be made known and Mary will suffer as if she had been stabbed.

## **III. Revelation: on He Is The Light Of Our Life!**

1. [Matthew 5:14](#) tells us a "town built on a hill cannot be hidden" – Jesus is "the light of the world" and we are blessed to have that light shining in our lives.
2. Sometimes we receive a message that is meant for many while other times God speaks directly to us.
3. Even when the message is not what we want to hear, we must remember that God planned everything since before creation ([Psalm 139:16](#)); we need to keep our faith.
4. Nothing we have suffered or will suffer could be greater or equal to what our Lord and His mother suffered; there's no point in trying to hide our true feelings from Jesus – He knows our every thought

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Let the light shine in EVERY DAY; be thankful and grateful He has chosen me as His!!!
2. Listen for Him; spend quiet time where I can "just listen" instead of being busy doing.
3. Keep my faith, especially during tough times; we won't always understand the "why" but we can be rest assured that He will always see us through it because "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." [Psalm 34:18](#)
4. Know that even though my suffering was real, it does not compare, but still I need to not hold back – let myself go – reveal my innermost fears, hurts, pains, sins and desires . . . after all . . . He is not surprised . . . He already knows; [1 Peter 5:7](#) tells us to "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."





# She Told Everyone Who Would Listen

(Luke 2:36-38)

## **I. Concentration: on the prophetess.**

1. There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. (v.36a)
2. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage. (v.36b)
3. And then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. (v.37)
4. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (v.38)

## **II. Meditation: on the comforter and announcer.**

1. Anna was among just a handful of female prophets; her tribe settled in western Galilee; some must have migrated to Jerusalem less than 100 miles away where Anna lives.
2. How perfect that an elderly woman would come forward when she is needed – to comfort this young mother who has just heard the prophecy of her son, Jesus.
3. Perhaps Anna remembers when she was a young woman and suffered the loss of her husband; most widows returned home to their families, but Anna lived in the temple devoting herself to her spiritual life – like the widow Paul talks about in [1 Timothy 5:5](#).
4. “At that very moment” . . . the moment Simeon prophesied (???) ; Anna knew the same way Elizabeth knew – the Christ was revealed to her by the Holy Spirit; she blessed God and told everyone who would listen about Jesus – all the temple regulars, the priests, the worshipers, the Pharisees; Anna was a prophetess – unafraid to speak out.

## **III. Revelation: on being where God wants us.**

1. We are where God wants us – where He wants us to spread the Gospel – if not, He will move us.
2. God values us; regardless of our age we have worth to God.
3. Simeon, a man, and Anna, a woman, were both where God wanted them “at that very moment” – waiting at the temple, waiting for Jesus to enter with His parents; as a Christian, regardless if man or woman, know that God wants us to spread the word that Jesus came for everyone.
4. Thank God that we live in a time where we can tell everyone who will listen “at this very moment” about our Lord; don’t be afraid to speak out – tell everyone.

## **IV. Application: As a Christian, I need to:**

1. Praise God and recognize that He moved me from south to central Florida “for such a time as this” ([Esther 4:14](#)) so that my life would cross paths with the exact people I am serving and helping; there are no accidents – only God’s plans.
2. Comfort others.
3. Use my past experiences and sorrows; show compassion and empathy to others.
4. Be like Anna – unafraid to speak out about our Lord; tell everyone who will listen.

# ♪ Mary, Did You Know? ♪

Artists: Kenny Rogers & Wynonna Judd; Author: Mark Lowry

Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Will one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Will save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy  
Has come to make you new?  
This child that you've delivered  
Will soon deliver you

Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Will give sight to a blind man?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Will calm a storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy  
Has walked where angels trod?  
And when you kiss your little baby  
You've kissed the face of God

Oh, Mary, did you know  
Oh, Mary, did you know

The blind will see, the deaf will hear  
The dead will live again  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak  
The praises of the lamb

Oh, Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Is Lord of all creation?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
Will one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your Baby Boy  
Is Heaven's perfect Lamb?  
This sleeping child you're holding  
Is the great I am

Mary, Mary, did you know?