

CHRISTMAS

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



DECEMBER 2020

Day 1

What are stories that are told to children as fact when they are really fiction?
Why are they presented as fact?

When it comes to Jesus Christ, why do people present his story, especially his birth, as a work of fiction?

Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan, the Greek and Roman gods. All these are people or entities that when taught about them as children, they are taught in ways that make them seem like they were real people in real places. Now if you have good teachers, they are clear that these were myths, but others want you to buy into the myth. Sadly, many teach the story of Christ from the Gospels as a myth, a good moral story, to try to get us to be good people. As Christians we believe Jesus was real, that he was and is God who became human to die for us on the cross. We read about his incarnation, that he came to dwell with us, by being born to Mary in that stable in Bethlehem. Ask God to teach you as you read about the Christmas story in Luke this month.

Luke 1:1-4

What writers do you think Dr. Luke is giving credit to in verses 1 to 2? Think back to Genesis all the way to his point in time. Write them all down.

What is Luke saying about the Bible by saying these things about all these men in these first two verses?

In verse 3 how do we see that Dr. Luke took time and great care in writing what we are about to read in the Gospel of Luke? Why is that important when thinking about his credibility as a writer and witness?

Who does Luke name in verse 3? What does he want this man and everybody to have an know according to verse 4?

Are you certain that the things you are about to read in the Gospel of Luke regarding Jesus birth are true? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask God to teach you his truths and for faith to believe them.

Day 2

What is a hard situation you have to deal with in your life that you were powerless to change? Describe the situation.

I was a 27 year old man, in ministry, with lots of friends and no prospects of marriage. Many of my friends were getting married and starting to have children. My baby sister was getting married who was four years younger than me. It was a hard pill to swallow because I wanted to be married. I wanted to be a father. Why was God not blessing me in this way? I had lots of questions for the Lord as I thought about that part of my life. God did send me a wonderful woman who I married, and I now have four children but there were some years where I wondered if I would be single for the rest of my life. As we start a study on Christmas in the Gospel of Luke, we start our study by looking at Zechariah, a Godly man who had a big heartache. He and his wife Elizabeth could not have children. Ask God to instruct you in his truths.

Read Luke 1:5-7

How would you describe Zechariah from the information we are given in these verses?

How are Zechariah's and Elizabeth's walk with the Lord described here?

God certainly blessed them both. They lacked one thing; they did not have a child. What two factors contributed to them not having a child?

Think of these Godly people, what kinds of thoughts and questions do you think went through their minds and hearts regarding their inability to have children?

What is something in your own life that you "feel" you deserve God to bless you with that He has not yet? Why do you think that might be? Think about this.

PRAYER – Praise for his many blessings; ask for patience for situation above.

Day 3

What is something that has happened in your life, that you might say, “I sure was lucky to be in the right place at the right time”?

As people we are quick to toss around the “lucky” card. I was lucky I did not drive through that intersection 5 minutes earlier. I am so lucky to have a job that I love and get a paycheck. I have been so lucky that I haven’t been sick at all this year. Are we really “lucky”? Or is that the way God wanted to work in those situations? God is indeed in control of all things so nothing happens by luck or chance but by the perfect plan of God. We will look at a situation in Zechariah’s life where some could say you were lucky to be in the right place at the right time. Ask God to help you see his plan for your life at every turn.

Read Luke 1:8-17

In verses 8 to 10 what were the “lucky” things that happened for Zechariah to be at the altar of incense?).

What was Zechariah’s reaction to the appearance of the angel?

What does the angel say in verse 13 to encourage Zechariah in his fear, questions and doubts?

How would you summarize what the angel said about the kind of person that John would be?

How do you see that this meeting was not lucky but something that God planned to happen?

How does this encourage you and challenge you to think about your own life when you think about how you view good luck or bad luck?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you see His plan for your life.

Day 4

What is some good news you received that you had a hard time believing it was true? Why did you have a hard time believing it?

In the beginning years of ministry I had a car that died on me. I did not have the money to buy a car. I had some wonderful people who let me borrow cars temporarily until I could figure out what I was going to do. My parents called me one day and said that a man who I knew in their church died and upon his death a fund was set up to help support missionaries. Before he died, he said that he wanted me to receive the first gift in the form of a car. Any car I wanted or needed to enable me to do the ministry God had called me to do. I had a hard time believing this answer to prayer. It was specific to my need. Did God really work this way? I believed it because I saw the check and drove the car. Maybe you or somebody you know has had a similar experience. Yesterday we saw how an angel appeared to Zechariah and told him he would have a son named John. This is something Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed for to happen. Today we look at Zechariah's reaction to the news of the angel. Ask God to strengthen you in your faith as you read His word.

Read Luke 1:18-25

What is Zechariah's reaction in verse 18? What thoughts and beliefs are wrapped up in his question to the angel?

What does the angel say about himself to show Zechariah what he says is true?

What happens to Zechariah to show to him that what the angel said would come to pass? What do you think went through Zechariah's mind and heart as the words of the angel came true?

How did the people know something significant happened to Zechariah? What do you think were their thoughts and questions?

What are some crazy things God has done in your life that you need to share with people, even if unbelievable?

PRAYER – Ask God to open doors to share the things God has done in your life.

Day 5

What kinds of things would you think, say, feel and do if your grandma came to you and said, "I am pregnant"?

Why would you react that way? What are you showing about your beliefs?

On August 20, 1997, Dawn Brooke at age 59, is the oldest woman to ever give birth naturally without being implanted with eggs in her womb. Think about that, almost 60 years old. It is unheard of in our day and age. There are many thoughts that go through our minds: "gross", "no way", "impossible", "she is the same age as my grandma, yuck", and the thoughts go on. This story is true. It is a rarity, but it can happen. For many of us we question if it is true because it does not make sense in our minds. Yet, God if he wants to, can do anything. We get to see Zechariah and Elizabeth, well advanced in years, ready to have a baby. Ask God to enlarge your faith and help you to believe his word today.

Read Luke 1:24-25

Reread verse 13. How do we see the angel's prophecy came true in these verses?

What does this show you about God's word?

This shows us God is powerful. What does it show us God has power over? Why is that incredible when you think about it?

Elizabeth hid herself for 5 months so she would not be a reproach among the people. Look up reproach. What does it mean?

What was she afraid of from people, as far as thoughts and questions, that she kept herself hidden?

She acknowledges that God is the one that made her pregnant. Why is that important when you think about her situation?

What is something unexpected and amazing that God has done in your life that you are afraid to show or tell people? Why are you afraid?

PRAYER – Thank God for working in your life and boldness share with others.

Day 6

When you think of the Biblical Christmas story, who is your favorite character? Why is that person your favorite character?

There are many characters to choose from that are encouraging and challenge us to think of our faith. When I was a kid, I really liked the angels who got to fly and sing and tell people good news. Gabriel is front and center. He got to tell Zechariah he was going to have a child in his old age. He also brought Mary a message of great hope and promise. We will look at that exchange that takes place between them over the next couple days. Ask God to encourage you and challenge you as you read this familiar story.

Read Luke 1:26-28

What are a couple observations you make about the angel Gabriel based on what we read about him in these verses?

How do we see from these verses that God is bringing his perfect plan to light?

What is Gabriel's message to Mary in verse 28?

What do you think he meant that Mary was the favored one?

Mary was going to be chosen to bear the Son of God and give birth to Him. Not because she was perfect and never sinned but because that was God's perfect plan. Mary was a part of that plan, chosen by God for this part in the story of redemption. How do we know that Mary being favored does not mean that Mary was chosen because she was perfect? (Hint: Read Romans 3:23)

As God's child, you are favored. God has blessed you by giving you eternal life and he wants to use you to tell other people about Him. How does it encourage you that God has chosen you to be His child?

PRAYER – Thank God for His perfect plan for your life and for how He wants to use you in bringing other people to Himself.

Day 7

Has anybody ever greeted you in a way that was confusing or troubled you? What did they say? Why was it troubling to you?

Picture you are single (likely you are if you are reading this). Somebody of the opposite gender who is a complete stranger comes up to you and says, "I have been looking for you all of my life." Would you be troubled, confused or wanting to run for your life? I think you might. No matter what they look like or how nice they might be you would be a little scared, a little confused, wondering what you missed. Now that is a silly illustration to lead us into the part of our story when Mary reacted to the angel Gabriel's message to her. Ask God for a heart to understand His word and to know how it applies to your life.

Read Luke 1:29-33

Read between the lines in verse 29. Based on what you read in this verse what do you think were some of Mary's thoughts, questions and emotions as she responded to the angel's greeting?

What did Gabriel say to Mary to try and encourage her amid her fears? How did he repeat here what he said in his greeting?

What important things does Gabriel say about the son Mary would bear, Jesus?

How do we know that God's son, the Messiah, is being talked about here and not some mere human being?

Picture yourself as Mary, what would be wonderful and terrifying about the message the angel is giving you?

PRAYER – Thank God for who Christ is in these verses. Pray specifically.

Day 8

If somebody were to appear to you and say that tomorrow you are going to go to Radio City Music Hall in New York City and give a two hour long piano recital, what might be some of the questions you would have for that person?

If that was me, I would be asking, "how, I don't play the piano." I bet that was some of your responses above. Another question might be, "how am I going to get there?" New York City is not exactly close. If you do know how to play the piano you might be asking, "Do I know how to play two hours of music? What music will I play?" There would be a lot of questions. Yesterday we read the part of the story where Gabriel told Mary she would give birth to Jesus who would reign over the house of Jacob forever and whose kingdom will have no end. As Mary is hearing all that the angel is saying, there was one burning question in her heart and mind. What do you think that question was?

Ask God to teach you and grow you in your understanding of his word today!

Read Luke 1:34-35

What is Mary's biggest question to the news that Gabriel is bringing to her? What was her relationship with Joseph at that point in time?

She is not married yet and so in her mind it was not possible that she could be pregnant with a child.

How does Gabriel explain to a confused Mary about how she is pregnant without their being a human father?

Who is the Father of Jesus then?

By what is this impossible event made possible according to these verses?

Why was it important for the Messiah, for Jesus, to have a human mother and God as his father and not Joseph? (Hint: what does man have that God does not have? Read Hebrews 4:14-15.)

Jesus needed to be a man so he could experience all we experience as far as pain, hunger, thirst, temptation and so he needed to be born of a human. But man is sinful and so Jesus also needed to be the perfect sacrifice so he had to be born of God. This shows Jesus was and is 100% man and 100% God.

PRAYER – Praise God for sending Christ to be born of a woman so we could have eternal life through faith in Christ.

Day 9

How has God used a situation in somebody else's life to encourage you in some of the struggles or doubts you have faced in your life? Explain the situation and specifically the struggles or doubts he encouraged you in.

For some people that question was hard to answer because you have not had to deal with a whole lot of hard situations in your life. You will. And it will be great to see when you go through some of those hard times how God will encourage you through the example of somebody else. They will be a testimony of God's faithfulness and it will spur you to go on trusting in the Lord. There have been times in ministry when I questioned if I should keep doing what I am doing and if I should move on and do something else. Each time though God would bring somebody in my life or use a sermon, a verse from the Bible or something else to encourage me to keep going, to keep trusting and know that His plan for my life is a good plan, a perfect plan. God never said it would be easy to trust His promises but He does promise to walk with us every day. Gabriel talked with Mary. He wanted to use an example close to Mary to encourage her in what God was doing in her life. We turn to that example today. Ask God to use His word today to encourage you in a struggle you are dealing with in your life.

Read Luke 1:36-38

What example does Gabriel use to further encourage Mary in her doubts and fears at the news he had been sharing with her? Why would that be a powerful example for Mary?

What does Gabriel emphasize about God in verse 37?

What are three examples in the Bible of God doing something that seemed impossible and yet God still did it?

1.

2.

3.

Think of two examples like that from your own life or family?

1.

2.

After hearing the news, hearing about her cousin Elizabeth, what happens in Mary's heart? How does she express that?

What is a situation you are dealing with in your life right now, that you need to trust God with even though it may be difficult?

PRAYER – Pray for your situation you just wrote about.

Day 10

Now this is going to be a weird question, but bear with me. Have you ever felt the belly of a woman who is pregnant when the baby inside her womb was moving? What were your thoughts about that experience? If you have not, how do you think you would feel when seeing and feeling that baby move?

I have 4 children and each time it was an awesome experience to feel my children moving in my wife's belly. I got to feel kicks, punches and yes even hiccups from something that they ate or drank while in the womb. At times it felt like some of my children were trying to escape before it was their time. It was a pretty amazing experience to see that life growing from my perspective. Our God is such a creative God when you think of how a person grows like that inside their mother. This question will relate to our reading today. I promise. Ask God to encourage you in your faith as you read the Bible today.

Read Luke 1:39-45

Who did we just read about yesterday who Mary went to visit?

Why do you think she wanted to see Elizabeth so badly? Look back to yesterday if you want to see why? What are three things she wanted to see and know?

1.

2.

3.

The amazing thing in this experience was not the two women seeing each other for the first time, a young woman and elderly woman. What was the amazing thing that happens as these two women come together?

Why is how the baby John reacted in the womb so amazing?

What does this show us about who Jesus is?

How should this challenge us in how we think about Jesus and react that he is the Messiah, our Lord and Savior?

In a world that is increasing its support of abortion believing that a life isn't a life until born, how does this passage show that babies in the womb are in fact real and living beings?

PRAYER – The issue of abortion; for moms and their unborn babies.

Day 11

What is something significant you have seen God do in your life?

What did you learn about God through that situation?

God teaches us so many things in so many ways throughout our lives. Sometimes those things are little subtle things that we almost miss and sometimes they are big. What song is on your lips when you think of this God, who teaches you, grows you and provides for you? Mary saw some amazing things in a short amount of time. She saw the angel Gabriel. She was told she would be pregnant without being married and would have the Messiah as her son, who would save people from their sins. She saw her elderly relative Elizabeth pregnant when she was supposed to be barren. She was seeing God in so many ways. The next couple days we will read the song Mary sang as a result of all she saw God doing in her life. Ask God to help you see the ways he has worked and blessed you in your life as you read this song of Mary.

Read Luke 1:46-50

After reading Mary's words, what were some of her thoughts and beliefs when it comes to who God is?

With all that happened to Mary, it would have been very easy for her to be prideful and puffed up with all God was doing for her. What was Mary's attitude about herself considering all that was going on in her life? What does this show us about the character of Mary?

Read Romans 9:18 and then read Mary's words in verse 50. What do we see about the mercy of God?

I want you to take a minute and write down all the sins you have committed in the last week in the space provided. Take this seriously. Go!

Have you confessed those sins above? If not, take time now and do it. After you confess or if you have confessed them already then write in big letters in the space: GOD'S MERCY. In Christ, those sins have been forgiven. You have not received what you deserve and that is punishment. That is mercy.

PRAYER – Thank God for his mercy. Take time to praise Him.

Day 12

Who is the strongest or the most powerful person you know? What have they done that makes you think they are strong or powerful?

If you know me, then you know I am thinking of several different superheroes when it comes to that question. We think of heroes who fly, pick up cars, heal themselves, and have cool suits of armor that are almost impenetrable. My mind goes to several missionary stories I have read. There are many stories of women whose husbands were killed while serving the Lord on the missionary field or for some people within their own countries. It is amazing to me to read many stories of these widows who are ready to forgive the killers. Not only that, but then they go back into the areas where their husbands died, with their children, and share the Gospel with those people who killed their husbands. That is strength. That is faith and trust in the Lord. That example pales in comparison to the strength and power of the God of the universe. Today we read what Mary says about God after experiencing the wonderful things He had done in her life. Ask God to show you who He is today and grow your faith.

Read Luke 1:51-56

In verses 51-52 what do we see about the strength of God? How does he show His strength? Can you think of a modern day example of how God does this?

How does God in his strength and power provide for his people according to verses 53 to 55?

You will have to think back to the Old Testament on this question. How did God use his strength and power to provide for his people Israel? Take a few minutes and write down as many things as you can think of.

Now think of your life. How has God provided for you in your life? Think of the little things and the big things. Write lots of things.

PRAYER – Look at the two lists you just made. You have a lot to pray and thank God for in your life. Take time to pray for both right now.

Day 13

If someone close to you was to have a baby, what would be the different things you would do, say or feel at that news?

Why would you react this way?

We have been reading about Mary, her visit with her relative Elizabeth and then the song she sang when she thought about all that the Lord had done in her life. For the next several days we are going to turn back to Zechariah and the birth of his unlikely (from a human perspective) son, John. Ask God to help you understand his word and apply it the situations in your life.

Read Luke 1:57-64

In verses 57 to 58 it says the neighbors and relatives rejoiced with Elizabeth because of God's mercy. How was God merciful Elizabeth?

What did the people push for in regards to their child in the next several verses?

What was Elizabeth's reply to the people? What was Zechariah's reply?

Elizabeth –

Zechariah -

What happened to Zechariah when he verified his son would be named John?

Why would that be amazing to him and the people around him?

How did what happened next fulfill the prophecy of the angel in 1:20?

What impact does or should that have on you when you see how this prophecy of the angel comes to fruition in Zechariah's life? What does this show you about God's power and word?

PRAYER – Thank God for how he works in the hearts and lives of His people.

Day 14

Have you ever seen something totally unexplainable or surprising that made you afraid and excited all at the same time? Describe that situation. Why were you afraid? Why were you excited?

Seeing a baby born is a wonderful experience. Witnessing a life come into this world is awesome. But as a dad it is also to a degree a fearful and anxious filled experience. The reality of being a father who is responsible for the training and nurturing; protecting and instructing of that child sets in and there is a healthy dose of fear. Can I do this? How is my life going to change? Am I the right man for the job? There are lots of fears and questions. Today we look at the people who were excited and rejoiced with Elizabeth over the birth of John. They were perplexed that that the parents did not choose a family name. Mute Zechariah opened his mouth and told the people that the boy's name indeed would be John. Whoa, he spoke. This hasn't happened in over 9 months. Now we come to our verses for today. Ask God to fill you with wonder as you read the Bible.

Read Luke 1:65-66

What was the people's first reaction to what they just saw? Why?

After coming to grips with their fear, what did they start to do in verse 65? Why do you think they started to do this?

What are three things you have shared with people regarding things God has done in your life?

1.

2.

3.

In verse 66, what did the people do when they heard what God was doing in the life of Zechariah? How do you think they answered this question?

What are ways in which you can lay the truths of God up in your heart?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you understand and remember His Word and the things He has done in your life.

Day 15

What are some promises that of God that you have experienced in your life?
Write down 5.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What ways have you thanked God for fulfilling those promises in your life?

We are quick to pray when in trouble, when things are not going according to plan. We don't always take time to thank God for the promises he has fulfilled that we take for granted: that he provides all our NEEDS, he does not leave or forsake us, that he gives us the words to say when we need to say them, etc. Ask God to challenge you in your prayer life and how you pray as you read through Luke today.

Read Luke 1:67-75

Before we look at what Zechariah prophesies, what key thing do we see about what he would say in verse 67? Why is that important?

List the attributes of God that Zechariah lists in these verses.

How do the things Zechariah said point us forward to Jesus Christ?

As men we are sinful. What do these verses show us about our need for a relationship with Jesus Christ?

How have you come to understand you need Jesus to have any hope at all?

PRAYER – Praise God for how He has saved you through faith in Jesus.

Day 16

Who is somebody you know that you believe is going to do great things for the Lord? What do you think they will do? Why do you think that about them?

As a youth pastor it is neat to be able to work with students for seven years and see them grow and mature in their faith. It is also neat to think about all the things that they are going to do for the kingdom of God. Some I see as being future pastors and elders in the church. Others I see doing a great job in the counseling field. Others I know will serve youth and children. It is exciting to think about how God is raising up another generation that will lead the church of Christ in so many different ways. Yesterday we started reading Zechariah's prophecy that was inspired by the Holy Spirit. First he was pointing towards man for salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In today's study Zechariah aims his words towards the son God blessed him and Elizabeth to have, John. Ask God to encourage you with his words today.

Read Luke 1:76-80

What title does Zechariah give to John in verse 76? What does that title say about John and about God?

What does a prophet do?

Zechariah fills out for us what John will do as a prophet in verses 76 to 79. What will he do according to these verses?

Now think about all that the Apostle John said in these verses. How did his words point to the one John the Baptist preceded, Jesus Christ?

What are other important things we see about the person of John in verse 80?

John was important in God's plan. You are too as a child of God. Think about your spiritual gifts and talents, what are ways in which you believe God can use you to help people come to faith or grow in their faith?

PRAYER – Ask God to use you and your spiritual gifts to serve Him.

Day 17

When you think of the Biblical Christmas story, don't over think this, what words are the first ones to pop into your mind in regards to the start of the story?

The verses we will read today are verses that start many Christmas pageants, movies, songs, etc. We are introduced to the ruler in power, to the husband of Mary who was pledged to be married to her and how they would come to be in Bethlehem. We have read these things so many times. Let us read them a little closer today. Ask God to make his words open your eyes wide today.

Read Luke 2:1-7

What important connection did Joseph have in this story?

Read Micah 5:2. Why is this verse so important when it comes to the passage of study today? What and who was Micah writing about many hundred years earlier?

So taking the prophecy in Micah and this passage in Luke, how do we see that God is in control and not Joseph or Caesar or Quirinius?

This should encourage us that there are no accidents in life. God knows exactly what is going to happen – the whens, wheres and hows. How do we see this prophecy from Micah come to fruition in verses 6 to 7?

Based on these verses how do we see that Jesus was fully man?

Based on what we read today, what kind of confidence can you have in God's Word? Do you? Why or why not?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you know, understand and trust his word.

Day 18

If you wanted to get an important message to a lot of people, who would you be likely to share your message so the word could get out? Why them?

Who would we talk to today if we wanted to get our message out? We would want to talk to a celebrity or perhaps a news reporter. We would want somebody who had name and face recognition because we know people will listen to them. You are not likely to confide your message to people who are despised, rejected or outcasts of society. As we read yesterday, Jesus was born in a manger. Today we look at who God wanted to be the first visitors to see the baby Jesus. Ask God to encourage and challenge you to be his messengers as you read this part of the Christmas story today.

Read Luke 2:8-12

Why do you think God chose shepherds to share his message?

What were the shepherds thinking and feeling as this angel appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them?

Describe what that scene might have looked like based on what Luke shares with us in this section.

What Good News does the angel bring to the shepherds in verses 10 and 11?

Now there had to be one question in the shepherd's minds: how can we trust you? How do we know what you are saying is true? What does the angel share with the shepherds to verify that the Messiah was in fact born and that they would see Him? Why would that be enough to get the shepherds to believe?

Babies are not born in mangers. They were going to see something that wasn't something that would normally happen. As we will see the next couple days, the shepherds believed and made a search for the Christ child.

PRAYER – Thank God for using different people to share the Good News.

Day 19

Has there ever been something somebody really wanted you to do, but you were hesitant in doing it, not because it was wrong, but because you were unsure of how it would turn out? What did it or would it have taken for you to do the thing they wanted you to do?

There is a phrase that goes, “and that was the icing on the cake.” Now I love cake. But there are not very many cakes I like without icing. The icing makes the cake. A bad icing can turn a good cake into something horrible, but a great icing can take a mediocre cake and make it better. The phrase is used to show that this one last thing that was said or done is what pushed me over the edge to want to do something I did not want to do. It was the icing on the cake. A case in point is the shepherds. They were minding their own business, tending their flocks, and then an angel of the Lord appeared to them. He gave them a great message about the coming of the Messiah. Okay they were interested. But could they trust the angel or were they just seeing things? Then the angel gave them a sign of a child born in a manger that didn’t happen very often. Now they were really interested. I can see some hesitation still in the faces of the shepherds. Then something totally awesome happens. Ask God to use this story to excite you about the Gospel you need to share with many lost people.

Read Luke 2:13-14

How would you summarize in your own words these two verses?

How would this experience be the icing on the cake for the shepherds to leave the fields and go search for the Christ child?

What were the angels singing? What were they saying about God? About Jesus?

What did those words mean to the shepherds? How did they encourage them?

The angels praised God. I want you to think about all that God has done in your life and what He has been teaching you lately. Write your own praise to God.

PRAYER – Now pray what you just wrote and take time to keep praising Him as you think about all He has done and provided for you in your life.

Day 20

What are two examples of having to see something to believe it for you?

1.

2.

What are three examples of things that you believe without seeing?

1.

2.

3.

There are things that I need to see to believe. Like what you ask? I am glad you asked. I would need to see a UFO to believe they exist. When a tent at the fair says come see the two headed horse, I have to see it to believe it. I can list many other things but those are things I just do not believe. Now there are things I believe without seeing. I know I am breathing air though I cannot see it. I believe I am going to heaven one day because of what Christ did for me and I haven't seen heaven. These are a couple things I believe without seeing. We come back to the shepherds. They saw some pretty amazing things, one angel and then a multitude of angels. They were told some amazing things about the Messiah. Would they go and make a search? Ask God to help you believe without seeing as you read the word today.

Read Luke 2:15-16

How do we know from the shepherds words that they believed without seeing?

What were they willing to give up in order to find the Christ child?

How do we know that they not only believed but they were excited to go and see this thing they were told by the angel?

What did they find? What thoughts and feelings do you think were going through their minds as they took in this sight?

What praises do you think they were singing when they found Jesus with Mary and Joseph and in the manger?

PRAYER – Think about things you are having a hard time believing in relation to God. Ask God to help you in your unbelief.

Day 21

If you could share one thing with people about what God has done in your life, what would you share with them and why?

I know being a 48-year-old, who has been a Christian for 30 years, there are lots of experiences to choose from to share with people. Do I share with them about how I met God in very real way on that mountain top in upstate New York? Do I share with them the time when I missed 4 paychecks in a row and my bills were all due and God provided all the money I needed to pay my bills? Hmmmm. Do I share the experiences I have had with demonic possessed people? That would be too scary. There are lots of experiences that I could share with people of how God has worked in my life and how he has taught me from his Word in a variety of ways. The shepherds found the Christ child just as the angel said they would. What would they do now? Ask God to encourage you to open your mouth and share what God has done for you as you read Luke today.

Read Luke 2:17-18

What did the shepherds share with the people according to verse 17?

They related their experiences in the field with the angels, what they were told they would find and how they found the Christ child.

Why do you think the people wondered at all the shepherds were telling them?
What might have been unbelievable to their ears?

Yet, in what ways did many of them believe what they were being told?

How were the shepherds doing the job of evangelism here, telling people of how our only hope is in the Messiah, Jesus Christ? (Hint: look back at verses 10-11).

Who is somebody this Christmas season, that you can share the hope that you have found in Christ? What is one thing you can share with them to point them towards Jesus Christ?

PRAYER – Pray for the person you just wrote about above.

Day 22

What is something that somebody has said to you, that really encouraged you and that you have remembered in times of difficulty?

When I was studying youth ministry and Bible at Houghton College, my college professor shared with us, to treasure any compliment we might ever get, whether from a student or parent. He said those compliments will probably be few and far between and so be encouraged by them. God has blessed me in my ministry to work with some pretty fantastic youth and families. They have encouraged me so much in my ministry and in my life. There have been times of difficulties, when you wonder, how much longer am I meant to do this? Am I still being effective? It is in those times of doubting that God brings to mind the encouragement of people who have learned and grown under my ministry. It is so important to treasure those experiences in our hearts. Today we see what impact the shepherds visit has on Jesus mother, Mary. Ask God to help you remember how he has encouraged you through others as you read today.

Read Luke 2:19

What do you think went through Mary's heart and mind as she witnessed this whole scene with the shepherds?

Think about all that Mary has gone through with her experience with the angel, seeing her elderly pregnant relative Elizabeth and now these shepherds coming to see her son, Jesus. Go back and read 1:30-33. What is she thinking and pondering?

Think about Mary's experience in chapter 1, and the experience with the shepherds. Now fast forward to the scene of the cross. How would these experiences encourage her and give her hope while seeing her son being brutally killed on the cross?

What is something that you need to remember about God when going through difficulties in your life? What makes it hard to remember those things?

PRAYER – Take time to thank God for the things He has taught you lately.

Day 23

I want you to write about 10 things you can praise God for today.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

I hope that wasn't a hard experience for you. There are so many things that you and I have to praise God for. I pray that you will take time this holiday season to think about those things that God has done in your life and not focus on what you think you need or want for gifts at Christmas. Praise God continually! Ask God to help you know how to thank him as you read Luke today.

Read Luke 2:20-21

What reasons do the shepherds have to praise God?

Where did they return to? Why is that important?

What do you think was different about them as they returned back to their homes and to the site of their job, tending the sheep? Take time to really think about this question and write the things that come to mind.

What do we see here about Mary's trust in the Lord's words? What does this show you about Mary's character and faith?

How is your life different because of your relationship with Jesus Christ? If it isn't different, then why not?

PRAYER – Take time to thank God for the changes He has made in your life.

Day 24

Write down 5 things that God's Word requires of you. Next to each thing write briefly how you have done that in your life.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Micah 6:8 says, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? This is what God requires of us. It seems so simple to sum it up in one verse and yet we make it so complicated in how we live our lives. Think about how you treat your family, what you believe when it comes to God, when you think about your future goals. How do they all look when you meditate on this verse from the Old Testament? God gave us His word to guide and direct us in what we are to believe and how we are to live. Mary and Joseph knew God's word and wanted to live it out in their lives. Today we see how they lived obedient lives to what God set forth in His Word. Ask God to use his word to guide and challenge you in how you are living for Him.

Read Luke 2:22-24

From your reading of these 3 verses, what did Mary and Joseph need to do to show that they followed God and his law?

Did they have faith in God and his commands? How do you know? What did they do?

Think about all that Mary and Joseph experienced up to this point, what would have made it easy for them to follow the law and trust the Lord with Jesus, their first son and only child?

Jesus is God. How was he set apart from men, even before this ceremony?

How is your life different than the non-Christians God has placed in your life?

PRAYER – Thanks for setting you apart, making you holy. He did it, not you!

Day 25

What is something that you look forward to with eager anticipation? Why do you look forward to that so much?

There are things that we all look forward to with much anticipation. Some of those things when they happen, we almost feel like, "I have totally lived and now I can die happy and fulfilled. What are some of those things: marriage, having children, getting that prized possession, traveling to Jerusalem or some of those biblical locations where things in the Bible took place. We have lived. Those would be wonderful experiences. Over the next three days we are going to look at two people that really looked forward to seeing and meeting the Messiah. Ask God to use their examples to challenge your expectations, worship and how you love Jesus.

Read Luke 2:25-32

How would you describe Simeon from what is said in these verses?

What promise did God make to him in his life?

Put yourself in Simeon's shoes, that was an incredible promise. What kinds of things do you think went through his heart and mind after the Lord made that promise to him?

Then it happened. He met the Messiah, Jesus. Summarize in your own words what Simeon says in verses 29-32.

Based on his praise, what did Simeon believe about who the Messiah was?

Who do you believe Jesus was and is in your own words?

PRAYER – Take time to praise God for who Jesus Christ was and is.

Day 26

You need to take time to really think about this opening question. What gives you a sense of wonder, awe or marvel when you think about Jesus? Think about this question for a few minutes and then write down what comes to mind.

There are so many things that come to my mind when it comes to my Savior, Jesus Christ. There is one thing I will share here. It gives me a sense of marvel when I think that Jesus saved me not because of anything I had done but because he wanted to save me. Did he know I lied? Did he know I told dirty jokes? Did he know I was incredibly mean to my sisters? Did he know I thought about bad and inappropriate things? Why would he save me? Better yet, why can't I do anything to earn the right to be saved? Nobody gets something for nothing in our world and culture, right? But with Christ we do. By his grace and his mercy, He saves us. He doesn't wait for us to get it together and to start acting like worthy people of his salvation. No, he saves us despite the sin we are living in, the rebellion we going through. That fills me with wonder, marvel and awe. What does that do for you? Ask God to fill you with wonder and awe as you think about how he has saved you?

Read Luke 2:33-35

Mary and Joseph had seen some pretty incredible things in their young lives as a couple. They had seen angels, had dreams, seen elderly relatives give birth, shepherds visit their baby and now they encounter Simeon. What do you think they marveled at in what Simeon said in verses 29-32?

What does Simeon say about the power of Jesus in these verses?

What do you think that would look like to an individual? What do you think that would look like to a nation?

How would Mary's heart be pierced when it came to her son, Jesus?

Look at verse 35, what is the importance of Jesus suffering for other people?

When you think about Christ and His word, and how you are living your life, what do they show you believe about Jesus and his word?

PRAYER – Ask God to work in your heart, showing wrong beliefs and attitudes.

Day 27

Who are 3 people who have given their lives to serve Christ's church? Next to each one write down why you put them on this list.

1.

2.

3.

Christ's church in the past, present and future is full of people who have given their lives to serve Christ and see the church grow and mature. William Carey was a great missionary a couple hundred years ago when doing missions often meant that you would die on the mission field. They would die from disease, starvation or death at the hands of the natives of the mission field. Carey was turned down for going on the mission field by the board he appealed to. That did not stop him. He knew the Lord called him to the mission field and he went on the field and became known as the "Father of Modern Missions." His life was about serving the Lord. His whole life was given for that mission. Today we meet Anna, a prophetess, who committed her life to the Lord's service. Ask God to use Anna's example to challenge you in how you are living for Christ.

Read Luke 2:36-38

How would you describe Anna from these verses?

How do you know that Anna was committed to serving the Lord with her life?

What are some reasons that this commitment is lacking in Christ's church today?

What two things does Anna do in verse 38 to show that even after meeting Jesus, she was committed to continually serve the Lord?

To Anna, Jesus would save. To those of us who know Jesus, He saves. To non-Christians in our lives, we have the confidence to know Jesus can save. What are two things you can tell the non-Christians in your life about Jesus?

PRAYER – Pray specifically for lost people God has placed in your life.

Day 28

Okay, for this question I need you to think about you. I want you to write 10 ways in which you have grown physically, in wisdom or in deed.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now this question is something obvious because all we have to do is look at pictures or watch videos or talk to people who have known us since childhood to know we have grown in so many wonderful ways. Now when it comes to Jesus sometimes we have a hard time thinking about him as growing in wisdom and physically. He is God. He knows all and can do all so what do you mean he grew in those areas? Yet He was fully man so in his humanity He had some growing up to do. Let us look at that a little bit today. Ask God to challenge you in how you look at Christ and who He is as you read today.

Read Luke 2:39-40

What things are we told about Jesus in these two verses? Write next to each thing what that meant?

As we look at these verses, what hope can we have if we trust Christ and look to his example?

How was God's favor upon Jesus?

How does God show us favor as Christians?

What are three ways in which you have grown in your faith?

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Ask God to help you to continue to grow and mature in your faith.

Day 29

What is the best argument you have used with your parents that got you out of trouble with them? Was it a legitimate argument or were you just trying to avoid punishment?

None of us likes to be in trouble. When we are caught we enter into the fight or flight stage and for many of us we fight for our right to be right even when we are wrong. Many times it doesn't work but there are times when it does work and we avoid punishment. Then there are those times when we are falsely accused or the accuser (parents, teachers, other adults) don't have all the information and so we reason why what we did was okay given the situation. Our sentence is then in the hands of the person who has this new information. The fact is we like to do what we want to do and we will defend our actions as much as we can. Well today we come to one of the only stories we have of Jesus boyhood which involves him distressing his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph. Ask God to open your eyes to his truths and to encourage you in your faith.

Read Luke 2:41-52

Why were Jesus and his parents in Jerusalem?

What was the reason that Jesus was separated from his parents?

What do you think was going through Mary and Joseph's minds for those 5 days they were separated from Jesus?

What impact did the boy Jesus have on the people at the temple? What impact did this event have on his mother according to verse 51?

How do you know that Jesus from a young age knew he was the Son of God and not of Joseph?

How do we see Jesus modeling submission to God the Father? How does he model submission to his heavenly parents?

How are you doing in submitting to your parents? Explain.

PRAYER – That God would help you submit to Him and to those authorities (parents, teachers, leaders) over you.

Day 30

What encourages you most as you think about this part of the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke?

What are three ways in which God has challenged you in your faith through this study in the Gospel of Luke this month?

It is easy with a familiar story to take for granted the truths that we believe when it come to how God works in the lives of his people. If Jesus did not come and become a human being, then we are left dead in our sin, without a perfect sacrifice to take our sins away. We are accountable for those sins. We are in big trouble. But the fact of the matter is that God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to be that perfect sacrifice to take away our sins. That means we can have hope as we face our death one day because of that gift of faith we did not earn or that we do not deserve, but only if we have faith in Jesus. Ask God to encourage you today as you wrap up this study on Luke 1 and 2.

Read Romans 5:18-21

We are told about Adam in these verses. What did he do for us?

Why is that humbling to all of us in a man centered, we are in control world?

What are we told about Jesus and what he did for us in these verses?

Think about these verses, how do they show we don't save ourselves and we don't make ourselves righteous?

How is that humbling but also encouraging to you?

Now think about this Christmas story we read and know is true. How should it encourage you as you think about your faith and walk with Jesus?

PRAYER – Give thanks for Christ's obedience and work in saving us.