

5 Days of Christmas: Devotions From The Christmas Story

The Christmas story is the turning point in all of history. But sometimes, if we admit it, we don't give it the importance it deserves in our lives. Maybe it's because we're too familiar with it. Maybe it's because we haven't taken the time to really look closely at it and what it has to teach us. Whatever the case, we seem to miss that the story has a ton of powerful application for our lives.

The purpose of these devotions is to help you re-capture the importance and power of the Christmas story.

Overview

Following are the themes of each of the five devotions:

- **Devotion 1:** The Bible shows God's eternal plan to save His children from the consequences of their sins.
- **Devotion 2:** There is nothing that can limit God's working in this world and in your life.
- **Devotion 3:** Jesus' birth proved that God's values aren't the same as the world's.
- **Devotion 4:** God sent Jesus into our world to break down any barriers between Him and His children.
- **Devotion 5:** Once we encounter Christ, we have a choice to make.

Day 1 || A God Of Action

The Big Idea: The Bible shows God's eternal plan to save His children from the consequences of their sins.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 1:26-33

- **6** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (*Isaiah 9:6-7*)
- **26** In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." **29** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. **31** You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. **32** 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, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (*Luke 1:26-33*)

This passage in Isaiah is probably pretty familiar, right? It's one of those passages we hear a lot at Christmas. And because of this, we can easily kind of pass over its importance.

Take a second, slow down, and let this awesome truth sink in.

Isaiah 9:6-7 was written by, you guessed it, Isaiah. Now, Isaiah was one of God's chosen messengers. We call these guys prophets. Isaiah was passing along God's words at a time when God's chosen people, the Israelites, had completely turned their backs on God. God's people had stopped counting on God and His promises. God had given them tons of warning, but they hadn't listened. So, Isaiah's message was one of coming judgment. (Which probably didn't make him very popular at parties.)

However, because God is who He is, even His message of judgment carried hope. **Isaiah 9:6-7 is all about hope.** It's about a hopeful future, one in which God once and for all provides a way out from under the weight of our sins.

Fast forward something like 700-800 years and you see this message of hope coming to life in Luke 1:26-33. *The little baby God was forming in Mary's stomach?* He was the same promised savior Isaiah was writing about in Isaiah 9:6-7.

Long before God sent Jesus to this earth, He knew the plan. In fact, God's sending His own Son to live and breathe and walk this earth was *always* the plan. God has always known that Jesus would be the answer to a perfect relationship between God and His children. Which is great news for you and me. But to see this plan come to life, Jesus had to come to earth. **And that's what Christmas is all about.**

THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

- **God has had a plan to redeem you from the consequences of your sins for all eternity. How does that help you trust Him with your worries, concerns, and future?**
- **Take a moment to pray to God, thanking Him for being a God of action who works in the world, the lives of His followers, and your own life!**

Day 2 || The God Of No Limits

The Big Idea: There is nothing that can limit God's working in this world and in your life.

Read Luke 1:34-38

- **34** “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” **35** The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon 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. **36** Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. **37** For nothing is impossible with God.” **38** “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her. *(Luke 1:34-38)*

You live in a world where logic rules. Where reality wins. **There are things you want that you can't have.** Some may be relatively fun, like wanting to be a TV star or a famous athlete. Some may be more serious, like wanting your parents to get back together or wanting someone's health to improve. Whatever the case may be, there are plenty of things in life that are simply impossible to have, achieve, or grasp.

And while this is a major bummer, it's just the way it is. There are some things that just aren't possible.

Except when they are. Except when God gets involved.

Have you ever prayed for something you thought could never happen only to see it happen? Have you ever seen God “open a door” you thought was closed? Have you ever watched God blow away your human-based understanding with a God-sized movement?

Mary did. Mary watched God do the impossible. She watched Him defy the laws of nature. *But before she saw the miracle, she doubted the Miracle Maker.*

Look back at verse 34. For a moment, even face-to-face with an angel, Mary had an attack of humanity. *“How can this happen?”* Mary knew how babies were made, and she knew for a fact she wasn't a candidate! But Mary forgot one thing. The rules that she knew governed the creation of life? The process she was sure she had not been a part of? Mary forgot that God actually set those rules in place. **God created the process!** Thus, He can work outside the process when He chooses.

It sounds a little oversimplified, but it's true: Nothing is impossible with God.

THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

- **Is your vision of God too small because you put limitations on Him? How might your relationship with God be different if you saw Him for who He was?**
- **Take a few minutes and praise God for His ability to constantly surprise us and keep us in awe. Ask for God to show you ways He has made the impossible “possible” in your life.**

Day 3 || Big News, Small Package

The Big Idea: Jesus' birth proved that God's values aren't the same as the world's.

Read Luke 2:1-7

- **1** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to his own town to register. **4** So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

Over the last few years there have been some pretty cool stories of people finding near-priceless treasures in the least likely of places: yard sales. There's the story of the person who paid a few dollars for the painting that turned out to be worth millions. Then there's the guy who bought an old baseball card that was discovered to be one of the rarest cards in existence. *Can you imagine how cool it must have been to find out how valuable these relatively small purchases were?*

These stories illustrate a simple truth: the most valuable things can sometimes be found where you least expect it. But these stories don't hold a candle to the story you just read in Luke 1:2-7. Not even close.

You see, this is the ultimate case of something big, something amazing, showing up in the most unforeseen place.

Think about it . . . Jesus, the Son of God, the King of Kings, the promised Messiah came as a conquering ruler, displaying His power and might, appearing in a palace in front of throngs of crowds, in one of the leading cities in the world . . . *Huh?* Ummm . . . not so much.

Jesus didn't come in any of these ways. He came as a baby, vulnerable and small. He came to one of the most obscure cities you could find. And He was born in a glorified barn, surrounded by livestock. **Not exactly the way a King comes into this world, huh?**

But you see, this is exactly how God works. And it's exactly how God's Kingdom works. God values the low and the lost, the broken and the beat down. Jesus came not to lead the rich and powerful, but to heal the sick and sorrowful. Jesus' mission was and is about redemption. It's a rescue mission.

And it had to start where it started, with a little baby, in a little corner of the world.

THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

- **Do you ever feel pressure to be perfect, or good enough for God? How does it feel knowing that God values and loves you as you are? And that He loves you enough to send His son?**

Day 4 || Break Down The Wall

The Big Idea: God sent Jesus into our world to break down any barriers between Him and His children.

Read Luke 2:8-14

- **8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:8-14)

Have you ever been in a situation where suddenly your assumptions or thoughts about a specific person or thing were pretty much blown off the map? Maybe it was the moment you realized the little test you were “prepared” for was really an overwhelming obstacle you had no chance of conquering. Or the moment you realized that she really *does* like you, a lot! Or how about the moment you realized your team is completely overmatched. Or . . . Well, you get the point. There are moments of clarity where what you thought was the case may not necessarily be the case at all.

The shepherds who were in the fields outside of Bethlehem? They experienced one of those moments in a big, big way.

It’s safe to say that the shepherds knew God. Or they knew of Him as well as they could. They were Israelites. Their people had a rich history with God. **They were, after all, God’s people.** But, everything they thought they knew about God and His ways were pretty much overwhelmed that night. All of a sudden, the God who was a little distant and a lot mysterious, was right up in their world. In their faces!

Look at the description in verse 9: “the glory of the Lord shone around them.” *Can you imagine?* God was no longer an idea, He was real. He had broken the invisible barrier between His Kingdom and this world. And it’s entirely safe to say the world was never the same.

Isn’t that a pretty good way to think about the Christmas story in general? Isn’t it really as simple as God breaking the barrier and coming into our world? It is that simple. Yet, the power behind this simple truth is life changing.

You are who you are today because God chose to send His Son into this world.

THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

- **Answer this: How does Christ coming into our world change things? What would your relationship with God be like if God had not designed it this way?**
- **Consider thanking God for His love that compelled Him to send Jesus into our world.**

Day 5 || Choosing Well

The Big Idea: Once we encounter Christ, we have a choice to make.

Read Luke 2:15-20

15 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."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:15-20)

The shepherds saw something they weren't expecting. They had an encounter with God's Kingdom in an amazing way. And afterwards, they were left with a choice.

What were they to do with the information they just heard?

The truth is that once we encounter Christ, each of us, you included, has a choice to make. When people hear the Gospel, or have a chance to encounter Christ through the Bible, there is a choice to be made. People have to respond one way or another. They will either move on this information, or they will not. They will either be compelled to know more, or they will choose to walk away.

The shepherds had a choice. They made their choice and they made it well.

The shepherds acted and they retold. They acted on the angels' message. Look in verse 15. They heard and they moved. They could have sat and talked, or they could have gone home. But they didn't. They followed through and they were rewarded by coming face-to-face with the Son of God.

★ *But they didn't stop with simply acting.* They retold. Verse 17 says that once they were sure of the angels' message, they couldn't contain themselves. They started talking. They started spreading the word about Jesus. It was as if they couldn't keep quiet.

Today, over two thousand years later, we're still expected to do the same. If you know Christ, you should find yourself compelled to speak of His story. If you have encountered God and His Kingdom, you know that you will find it hard to keep your mouth shut.

You have to move. You have to act. And with God empowering you, you will. And you'll be awesome.

THINK ABOUT THIS . . .

- **What's keeping you from being a more powerful teller of Jesus' story? What can you do to be more committed to being someone who tells Jesus' story to others?**