

***“Hidden Christmas” – An Advent Bible Study***  
*on the Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ,*  
**Chapters 5 and 6**

Chapter Five  
“Mary’s Faith”

*You and I have been trained by our culture to not believe in the supernatural. As we saw earlier, as a Jewish woman, Mary had been trained by her culture to not believe that God could ever become a human being. So, though they are different, the barriers she faced against belief in the Christmas message were every bit as big as the barriers you may be facing. And yet a combination of evidence and experience shattered those barriers and she came to faith. That is exactly the way it works now. She doubted, she questioned, she used her reason, and she asked questions—just as we must today if we are going to have faith. (82)*  
**What do you believe are the biggest barriers to having an authentic faith?**

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*Mary’s faith happens in stages. Christian faith requires the commitment of our whole life. Yet few go from be uncommitted to being fully committed in a single stroke. What does the process look like? It can look very different for different people. (83-84)*  
**On a continuum from being uncommitted to fully committed where would you place yourself? What has your “faith process” looked like?**

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*But if you have never stood and looked at the Gospel and found it ridiculous, impossible, inconceivable, I don’t think you have really understood it. (85)*  
**Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?**

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*If you think Christianity is mainly going to church, believing a certain creed, and living a certain kind of life, then there will be no note of wonder and surprise about the fact that you are a believer. If someone asks you “Are you a Christian?” you will say, “Of course I am! It’s hard work but I’m doing it. Why do you ask?” Christianity is, in this view, something done **by** you, and so there is no astonishment about being a Christian. However, if Christianity is something done **for** you, and to you and in you, then there is a constant note of surprise and wonder. (89)*  
**In full disclosure – in your Christian walk is there a constant note of surprise and wonder or has your walk become mundane and/or ritualistic?**

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*Christianity is not another vendor supplying spiritual services you engage as long as it meets your needs at a reasonable cost. Christian faith is not a negotiation but a surrender. It means to take your hands off your life. (93-94)*  
**Describe what it looks like to you to “take your hands off your life”?**

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Chapter Six  
“The Shepherds’ Faith”

*Remember that there is more than one way to express your hostility to God's rule. The irreligious person explicitly asserts his or her independence from God: "I want to live any way I want to live!" But the religious person much more covertly asserts his or her independence from God. The religious person says: "I am going to obey the Bible and do all these things, and now God has to bless me and give me a good life." This is an effort to control God, not trust him. When you obey God in order to earn God's blessing and heaven, then you are, as it were, seeking to be your own savior. Both of these strategies are hostile to God. They don't allow him to be either sovereign or your savior. (109-110)*

**Once again – in full disclosure – In your life do you think your default setting is an effort to control God (intentional or not) or to trust God?**

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*Christmas means that, through the grace of God and the incarnation, peace with God is available; and if you make peace with God, then you can go out and make peace with everybody else. And the more people who embrace the gospel and do that, the better off the world is. Christmas, therefore, means the increase of peace—both with God and between people—across the face of the world. (111)*

**Is it possible to make peace with others without first making peace with God?**

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*Now it all follows that, if you have a perfect relationship with the all-powerful, loving Lord of the world, you would have no fear at all. You would not be afraid of him or of anything else.*

*That was the original plan for the human race. Do you see why there would be no fear? We fear **rejection** and **failure**, but if you were completely filled with God's love, you would not care what people thought. We fear the **future** and **circumstances**, but if you knew God perfectly, and that he is good and in control, you would trust him. And you wouldn't be afraid of **death** because you would know you would be with him forever. (112)*

**There are 5 words above in *bold* – which of these do you fear the most? According to this passage if we are completely filled with God's love and knew God perfectly, we could be free of this fear. Do you think this is possible in your life?**

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*And what about the greatest fear we have- of surrendering control? How can we trust him with our lives? The answer is that the little baby in the manger is the mighty Christ the Lord. So think, perceive, ponder. If the omnipotent Son of God would radically lose control- all for you- then you can trust him. And that should undermine your fear. (114)*

**Do you agree with Keller that the greatest fear we have is surrendering control to the Lord? Why?**

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All texts in *italics* are taken directly from the book Hidden Christmas written by Timothy Keller. Copyright 2016

Class #1 - Saturday Nov 27, 2021 (1/2)

Class#2 - Saturday Dec 4, 2021 (3/4)

**Class #3 - Saturday Dec 11, 2021 (5/6)**

Class #4 - Saturday Dec 18, 2021 (7/8)