



**Christmas at the Movies:
The Christmas Story
Luke 1:26-38**

Dec 20 & 24th, 2023

DAILY DEVOTION

Find a rhythm in God's word this week! Follow this 5 day plan on your own or with your group!

<https://my.bible.com/reading-plans/29941>

INSPIRATION

"I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six.
Mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph."
– Shirley Temple

"Aren't we forgetting the true meaning of Christmas.
You know, the birth of Santa?"
– Matt Groening

"Christmas sweaters are only acceptable as a cry for help."
– Andy Borowitz

ICE BREAKER

Patience:

- a) Movies: What's your preference? To see them in a theater, at home on your TV, on your phone, (or I'm really not a movie person). Explain why that's your preference.
- b) If you like movies, what types appeal to you? i.e. Comedy, Drama, Sci-Fi, Action, Adventure, Faith Based, Mystery, Pixar, Disney, Rom-Com or scary movies?

DEEP DIVE

Read this out loud



An excerpt from the message this week:

"Maybe you relate more with the Grinch than anyone else – Christmas is bothersome – the noise, noise, noise, noise...

I'm probably in the Grinch category – I try not to be – I am not a mean one – but I do think that the birth of Jesus has been forgotten – or at least an afterthought – there are some things I like about it – I do like that people are generous – and they are trying to be good – I like the wonder of Christmas morning when there are little faces that light up over the gifts they get.

But I get a little bothered about how much is being spent – how much debt people get into – how intense things are at home – and maybe I need a little Christmas – not a lot but a little Christmas right this very minute"

Read Luke 1:26-38 (Gabriel appears to Mary) and then answer the following questions:

26) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

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

- 1) Mary's character: Like most betrothed Jewish girls of that time, Mary was probably still a teenager. What can we glean from this passage about Mary's personality and character?

- 2) Scandal: Most small towns have a rabid appetite for scandal. What's going to happen to Mary for the next 30 years and why can't she do anything about it?



- 3) Jesus: How is this going to impact the way people see Jesus growing up in his hometown?

Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

Joseph needs more convincing – Mary tried – she tried to tell him – but he didn’t believe her – she was pregnant, and it was not his kid. He has a choice – the best thing he could think of was to divorce her – it could have been worse for Mary – but he loved her – so divorce was his choice – in their day – once you were engaged you would have to get a divorce if you decided to end the relationship.

Read Matthew 1:18-25 and answer the following questions:

18) 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. 19) 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.

20) 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. 21) 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.”

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

- 4) Joseph: List several things we learn about Joseph and his character from this passage?
- 5) Nazareth: What conclusions might the people in his hometown come to about Joseph and his role in this scandal?
- 6) The Child’s Name: The angel commanded both Mary and Joseph to name the child ‘Jesus’. In that culture why would that be unusual and unexpected?



Read this out loud

An excerpt from the message this week:

Fear not. Over and over and over again – the message is for us this Christmas – fear not. We do live lives that are dominated by fear. I am not talking about phobias, we probably all have those, some of those: fear of flying, fear of spiders, fear of tight spaces, fear of heights.

I am sure Mary had to recall those words a lot – we are all alone – don't be afraid – this stable is smelly – don't be afraid – I've never given birth before – don't be afraid – how are we going to do this – don't be afraid – And Mary and Joseph decide to live by faith – and trust the outcome to God. Their statement – we will make it work – was clear – we will trust God and we will obey.

Read Luke 2:4-16 and answer the following questions:

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. 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 guest room available for them.

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 there were terrified. 10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, 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 heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." 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.

- 7) No Vacancy: You know both Mary and Joseph were praying for God to help them. She's about to give birth – and it was God's son, and they had just both walked 90 miles on foot (there's no donkey in the Bible, and the 2 turtle dove offering to dedicate Jesus later instead of a lamb indicates they were too poor to afford a donkey). God could have provided a suite at the Bethlehem Hilton, or at least a ground floor room at the Motel 6, but nothing. They have to take shelter with the animals. Why do you think



God did not rescue Jesus family from such a hard life? Didn't they deserve for God to answer their prayers?

- 8) What lessons can we take from this for ourselves when we feel like God isn't listening to us and answering our prayers and changing our situation?

Additional Study

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about the Christmas story read and consider the following passages:

- Luke 1:39-56 (Mary visits Elizabeth)
- Luke 2:22-25 (Jesus dedicated at the temple)
- Matthew 2:1-12 (The Wise Men find Jesus)
- Matthew 2:13-18 (Joseph escapes to Egypt before Herod kills the babies)

NEXT STEPS

- 9) Christmas Carols: As you hear Christmas songs being played this week, sometimes they slip in a song that is actually about Jesus. When that happens try to listen to the words and take a moment to connect with God and thank him for what the song reminds you about who Jesus really is.

PRAYER

In your group pray and thank God for becoming a man and living a human life in our shoes and for the salvation he provided for this life and for an eternity in heaven.

SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.

- BENSON - Serve with us at ABIDE every 2nd Saturday.
- MILLARD - Serve with us at Heartland Hope every 4th Saturday.
- FREMONT - Serve with us at LifeHouse every 3rd Saturday.
- OMAHA - Serve with us at Open Door Mission every 4th Saturday.
- Or get to know your community, are there any needs/volunteer opportunities?