

THE SON HAS COME

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

the **GOSPEL** PROJECT

SPRING | 2026



A SON WAS BORN FOR YOU

“A CHILD WILL BE BORN FOR US, A SON WILL BE GIVEN TO US.”
(ISAIAH 9:6)

A Son will be given—a gift, a present. Isaiah lived in days shadowed by gloom, but God granted a flicker of hope, a ray of light. A Son would be given, a descendant of King David would come, an eternal kingdom would be established—one marked by justice and righteousness.

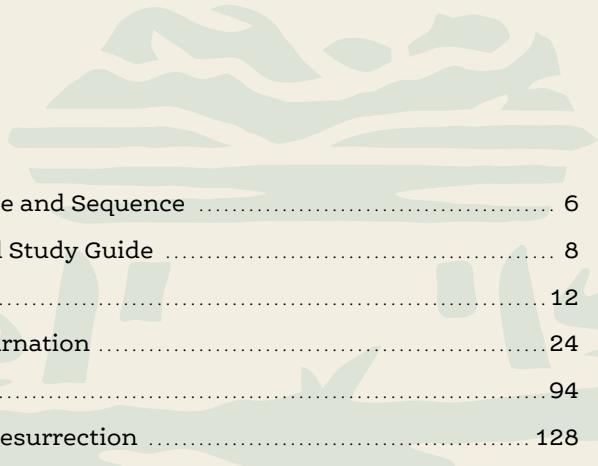
Yet God’s people were shrouded in gloom for their lack of justice and righteousness. Their idolatry, their sin, brought God’s judgment and exile to the nations. They were meant to be a light to the nations; instead, they were nearly snuffed out. Still, a flicker of hope, a ray of light—a Child would be born. Through many dark days and years of God’s silence, the flicker remained until the Son at last was given.

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). God presents His gift, the Son. And this Son answers the question, He solves the problem of their gloom: He will save His people from their sins. Their lack of justice and righteousness will be made up in His fullness. Their idolatry and sin will be done away with in His sacrifice. The flicker rages; the ray bursts forth; the Light has come to His people—and more.

“But the angel said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11).

The present, the gift, is for all the people. The Savior from sins is for all the people; the Messiah-King is for all the people. Repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, who died for sins and rose from the dead that you may have life. “See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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THE EDITOR

When Covid came and shut down societies, the world changed in many drastic ways. Society learned to work remotely, online ordering dramatically increased, worship services were livestreamed, and even taking communion was revolutionized.

And if we thought 2020 was a year that changed the world, how much more was the year Jesus came onto the scene? Though only a few knew at the time, Jesus entered the world fulfilling prophecies of old, and He came ushering in a new kingdom—one of peace, forgiveness, and salvation to those who believed.

The Messiah, the Anointed One, God Himself in human flesh, had come, not to set up a throne here on earth but to set Himself on the throne of our hearts. Humbly He was born and grew in wisdom. He was baptized, tempted, and began His ministry in a way like no other.

He brought forth a new kingdom, talked about a new birth, and commanded a new way of living. And when He called, people followed. And early on, He spoke of His crucifixion, but no one understood at the time. He was on a mission with the purpose of saving humanity through His own sacrifice.

Jesus, thus, is our everything. He is our Savior and Lord. And through Him, we are gifted life evermore. Without Jesus, we are in darkness. But because of Jesus, we are forever in the light. Because of God's love for us, He sent Jesus. And the world and our lives are forever changed.

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SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point people to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

GOSPEL STORY

Our aim is to help people understand the storyline of Scripture and to see the thread from the beginning to the end that weaves through it all—God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him and helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to encourage believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.

VOL 01:
CREATION AND COVENANT

(Genesis; Job)

Fall 2024

VOL 02:
LAW AND LIFE

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)

Winter 2024–25

VOL 03:
LAND AND LOSS

(Joshua–1 Samuel)

Spring 2025

VOL 04:
FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

Summer 2025

VOL 05:
DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)

Fall 2025

VOL 06:
PROPHETS AND PROVISION

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)

Winter 2025–26

VOL 07:
THE SON HAS COME

(The Gospels)

Spring 2026

VOL 08:
THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

(The Gospels)

Summer 2026

VOL 09:
THE SON HAS TRUTH

(The Gospels)

Fall 2026

VOL 10:
THE SON HAS RISEN

(The Gospels; Acts)

Winter 2026–27

VOL 11:
THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION

(Acts; The Epistles)

Spring 2027

VOL 12:
THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE

(The Epistles; Revelation)

Summer 2027

HOW TO USE THE PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

The Personal Study Guide is a vital tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.



TIMELINE

The Angel Foretells the Birth of Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-56) SESSION STUDY: Mary and Joseph Take Baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:21-39) Young Jesus Remains in His Father's House (Luke 2:40-52)

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20) Wise Men from the East Search for the Promised King (Matthew 2:1-12)

Daily Readings

Day 1: Luke 2:21-24 **Day 4:** Luke 2:36-38
 Day 2: Luke 2:25-32 **Day 5:** Luke 2:39-40
 Day 3: Luke 2:33-35 **Day 6:** Psalm 27

Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

2) STUDY THE PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages you will examine and discuss with your Bible study group. As you read each Scripture passage, a Bible study prompt will help you highlight, underline, or jot notes to help you engage with the Scripture and to provoke discussion with your group on the following Sunday. A brief commentary with thought-provoking questions will help you dig deeper into the text and reflect on what the text teaches you about God and yourself. You have the full week to work on your personal preparation, so whether you prefer to break it up into parts or do it all in one day, the flexibility is there for your schedule.

• Scripture • Commentary • Questions

PERSONAL PREPARATION

LUKE 2:25-35

JESUS CAME TO BRING SALVATION TO JEWS AND GENTILES, BUT AT A COST.

Underline all the references to the Holy Spirit.

25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said, 29 "Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation. 31 You have prepared it in the presence of all peoples—32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel." 33 His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary, "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed—35 and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Key Concept: Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.

Simeon was a man who loved God very much. At some point in Simeon's life, the Holy Spirit told him that he would see the Messiah before he died. We do not know how long Simeon waited to see "Israel's consolation" with his own eyes (v. 25). Maybe a matter of days; maybe decades. Simeon had to wait to see the promised Messiah, and Israel would have to wait three decades more for their salvation to be fulfilled in Jesus's death and resurrection. Yet Jesus came to give light and hope to all men—Jew and Gentile alike.

What are you faithfully and prayerfully waiting for God to accomplish in this season of your life?

Simeon's reaction to seeing the Messiah is one of the most poignant moments we see in the early life of Jesus. Simeon was so satisfied that he said the Lord could "dismiss [him] in peace," meaning death, because his entire life had been leading up to that glorious moment (v. 29). Nothing could surpass the satisfaction Simeon received in seeing God incarnate, the consolation of Israel and hope for the Gentiles—in short, God's salvation for the whole world.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SALVATION: Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Yet along with the promise of Simeon's words came a dire warning. Up to this point, Mary had only heard of the salvation and hope that Jesus would bring. But Simeon warned of the opposition Jesus would face during His ministry, for which Mary too would suffer as His mother (vv. 34-35). Simeon's prophecy echoed Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant of the Lord: "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5).

How have you experienced suffering as a part of God's call on your life?

28 Unit 19 | Session 2 | The Dedication

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3) PARTICIPATE IN THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to make the most of your group experience. Depending on your leader, he or she may have you do the activity on your own before doing it together as a group, or your leader may want you to wait until group time. Either way, the personal prep you've put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during group time.

GROUP EXPERIENCE

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Read Luke 2:25-38. Record ways each person below showed their faith in God's promises and how faith was revealed in their obedience.

	FAITH	OBEDIENCE
SIMEON		
ANNA		

How might Simeon's and Anna's testimonies about the infant Jesus have encouraged Mary and Joseph?

How can we follow in the faithful and obedient steps of Simeon and Anna?

32 Unit 19 | Session 2 | The Dedication



- **Group Activity**
- **Interactive Questions**
- **Theological Applications**

4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of your group time, consider how to apply the day's Scripture lesson by walking through the Head, Heart, and Hands application questions. Share and discuss answers to the questions for the mutual benefit of everyone in the group. Then take time in your group, and during the week after, to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word. And finally, record prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week.

Key Concept: Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.

HEAD
What are some things we can do to help us patiently wait on the Lord?

HEART
How does the gift of Jesus for our salvation address the distractions and discouragement in your heart?

HANDS
How will you encourage an older or younger believer in their faith this week?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE
Read and pray through Psalm 27. Thank the Lord for the gift of Jesus—our light and our salvation (v. 1). Pray for boldness to share the gospel of Jesus in the world (vv. 2-3). And finally, pray for patience to wait on the Lord for the fulfillment of all His promises (vv. 13-14).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



33



- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

THE SON HAS COME

By Leslie Hudson

Did you ever play “Opposite Day” when you were a kid? We did. Growing up, the children of my elementary school declared Wednesdays to be Opposite Day. I would tell my best friend her shirt was blue when it was really green; we’d tell each other we loved the milk in the cafeteria when we’d rather have anything else to drink; and we’d say we wanted to be the chalkboard washer when we really wanted to be the line leader. Those were “crazy” days.

But it was easy to get messed up on Opposite Day. Some people wouldn’t play along, which made it confusing. And sometimes there wasn’t an opposite for what was going on. So Opposite Day fizzled out within a school year, never to be observed again. (Until my kids started playing Opposite Day. The rules haven’t changed much.)

If you never played Opposite Day, what if I told you there exists an entire world that is basically the opposite of the world we know here? I’m serious. It’s a world where the humble are honored, the children lead, and the simplest knowledge is the most profound. In it, the weak are made strong, the poor are rich, and the blind and lame will guide those who think they know it all. What’s the name of this world? The kingdom of God.

God’s kingdom is just what it sounds like—it’s the place where God is King. But because He makes the rules, and everyone obeys them there, His kingdom seems a bit like Opposite Day for those of us who have lived all our years on planet Earth. The King of this kingdom is God Himself, omnipotent, holy, and without rival in power or authority. When God decided the time had come to send His representative—His Son—into our oh-so-normal world to reveal His kingdom, He did it in a way nobody could have ever dreamed. He sent His only begotten Son into our sin-wrecked world as a human baby.

THE SON

The son of a king should come with adoration, honor, and glory. But Jesus came dismissively, born to two poor people, whom everyone believed had failed morally. But the heavens weren’t fooled by Jesus’s arrival. A multitude of angels praised God to some shepherds out watching their flocks, modeling for them the telling of the “good news of great joy” to “all the people” (Luke 2:10). We can only imagine how those shepherds’ lives were changed in a moment, but nothing in Scripture leads us to believe anyone else saw or heard the angels.

The spiritually aware in the temple didn't miss Him either. Simeon and Anna, both elderly, spotted the infant Jesus even as His parents brought Him to the temple just like every other family had done with their firstborn sons. Even though the wise men traveled from the East to worship Jesus, their royal caravan didn't lead the people in Jerusalem or Bethlehem to see Him any differently. Life just kept on going. When Jesus was twelve years old, even His earthly parents failed to make sure He was safely on the road home to Galilee with their caravan, and they had to search for Him for three days before finding Him in the temple.

THE SON HAS COME

But as Jesus stepped into His earthly ministry, He caused a stir that would follow Him for the next three years. It began with a messenger, John the Baptist, who called the local Jewish leaders a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7) and asked them who warned them to flee from God's wrath. This same John baptized Jesus. And after the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit visibly came down on Him, and the Father identified Him as His Son.

Jesus quickly garnered a following—calling disciples, performing miracles, and even flipping over tables in the temple. Suffice it to say, Jesus had not come to play along with the status quo that had been established and sustained by the Pharisees and Sadducees. He had come to reveal the kingdom of God, where God is King, Jesus is Lord over every power, and God's people live as joyful servants who seek the kingdom with their very lives.

The Son didn't just make public connections though. He met privately with a seeking Pharisee, turned water into wine at a wedding, and brought a Samaritan woman to saving faith by telling her about living water. She'd heard a rumor of what worship would look like, but Jesus informed her that true worship in God's kingdom wouldn't look anything like she expected.

So as we walk through the earliest days of Jesus's earthly life over the coming weeks, imagine being a Jew living in Israel and hearing all the talk of His scandalous parents, His royal lineage, His mind for the scrolls, and His lack of decorum. God sent His Son, Jesus, to reveal His kingdom, and nobody who encountered Him would ever forget Him.

The Son has come! May we walk in His footsteps of faith, obedience, and hope in the kingdom of God.

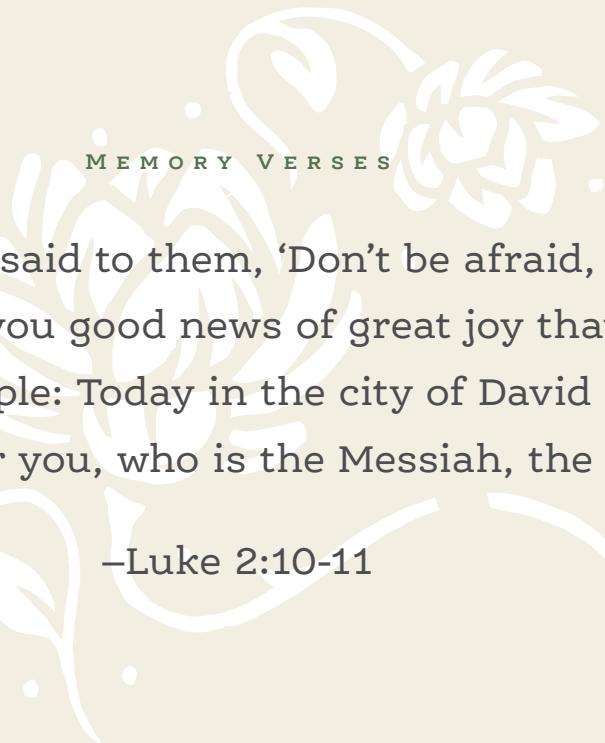
Leslie Hudson worships with her family at First Baptist in Dickson, Tennessee. She teaches high school youth Sunday School, plays in the praise band, and is active in women's ministry. She's studying the Minor Prophets in her quiet time this year, and she's loving the challenge.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 19

THE ARRIVAL

MATTHEW; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“But the angel said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”

—Luke 2:10-11

THE BIRTH

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 2:4-20

CONTEXT

After more than four hundred years of silence from God, an angel of the Lord appeared to the priest Zechariah, foretelling the miraculous birth of his son, John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner for the Lord's Messiah. Later, the angel appeared again to Mary, foretelling the virgin birth of her son, Jesus, who would be the promised Messiah. A Roman census forced Mary and her husband, Joseph, to travel to Bethlehem late into Mary's pregnancy. To fulfill Scripture the Lord had arranged all these things—for His Son to be born in flesh as the promised King and Savior of the world.

KEY CONCEPT

The good news is meant to be shared.

As you read Luke 2:4-20:

- Identify ways Luke made the connection between Jesus and the line of David.
- Recognize that the shepherds spread the news of Jesus's birth, and all who heard it were amazed.



TIMELINE

Malachi Prophesies the Messenger to Prepare the Way for the Lord (Malachi 3-4)

The Angel Foretells the Birth of John the Baptist to Prepare the Way for the Messiah (Luke 1:5-25)

SESSION STUDY: Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20)



The Intertestamental Period (400 Years of God's Silence)

The Angel Foretells the Birth of Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-56)

Mary and Joseph Take Baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:21-39)

Daily Readings

Day 1: Matthew 1:1-17

Day 4: Luke 2:8-14

Day 2: Matthew 1:18-25

Day 5: Luke 2:15-20

Day 3: Luke 2:1-7

Day 6: Psalm 132



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

LUKE 2:4-12

FROM THE LINE OF DAVID, AS PROPHESIED, A SAVIOR WAS BORN.

Circle the locations mentioned in the passage..

4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, **5** to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. **6** While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. **8** In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. **9** Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: **11** Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD THE SON: Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin.



A Roman census caused Joseph and Mary to travel far away from home as Mary was late into her miraculous pregnancy (vv. 1-5). Likely the rush of people coming into Bethlehem for that same census put the couple in a bind for a place to spend the night. The best place available to them as Mary gave birth was where animals were kept. The Child who would be called Immanuel, truly “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23), was born in the most humble place imaginable. The promised King from the line of David was not placed in a cradle in a palace but in a manger.

What can we see about the character of Jesus from His birth in a lowly stable?

Continuing the humble circumstances of Jesus’s birth, the good news of His arrival was shared first with a lowly class of people. Shepherds were not viewed in a positive light in ancient Israel, yet some shepherds in the fields were the first to hear about the birth of Jesus, and that from an angel sent by the Lord.

What the angel said to the shepherds clues us in to the purpose of God in sending His Son to earth in this humble fashion. The news of the Messiah-King is “good news of great joy that will be for all the

people” (Luke 2:10). The Messiah did not come to save just the regal and powerful, nor did He come just to save the people of Israel. Rather, He came into this world to lowly parents in a lowly stable and visited by lowly shepherds to save all people—whether Jew or Gentile—who recognize their lowly status as sinners in need of a Savior. And the angel confirmed his words with a specific sign highlighting the Messiah’s humility: the shepherds would find the Savior lying in a manger.

How would you have reacted to the angel’s message if you were one of the shepherds?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“As the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar, who had been declared divine by the Roman senate, Augustus claimed to be the son of a god. He was worshipped and hailed as the bringer of peace to the empire. But while Augustus was being flattered, the true Son of God and bringer of peace was being born in poverty in a simple peasant home that was not his own.”¹

—Takatemjen

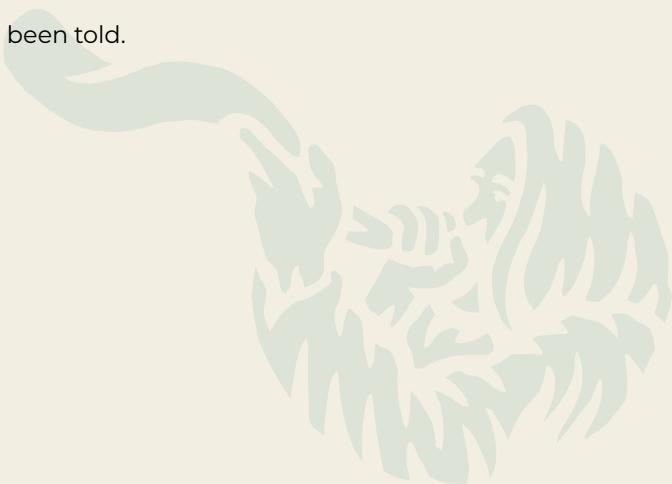
HEARING THE GOOD NEWS, WE RESPOND, SHARE IT WITH OTHERS, AND PRAISE GOD.

Highlight the ways the shepherds responded to the good news they heard and witnessed.

13 Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: **14** Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!

15 When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." **16** They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. **17** After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them.

20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.





This night for the shepherds went from one miraculous moment to the next. First, they heard from an angel while being surrounded by the glory of the Lord. Then the single angel was joined by a multitude of angels praising God for the birth of Christ. Finally, they would see with their own eyes the fulfillment of all God's promises in the Messiah, who came to bring peace between God and humanity.

Without hesitation, the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the baby exactly as the angel had said: wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. They heard the good news from the angel, but then they went to see firsthand what had been made known to them by the Lord, and they were not disappointed. Here we see the good news of Jesus requires a response from those who hear it.

What are different possible responses from those who hear the gospel?

The shepherds responded to the angel by going, by obeying the call of the Lord. They also responded by proclaiming to others what had been proclaimed to them. They relayed to Mary and Joseph and more the amazing things they had heard from the angel, and their testimony of God's good news amazed all who

heard them. In this, the shepherds were doing what they had already seen from the angels; this was the beginning of the proclamation of the good news to the world.

Following the angels in one more step, the shepherds responded with worship. The angels erupted with glory to God; the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the Messiah for themselves, and they left Bethlehem "glorifying and praising God" for all He had done for them on this night (Luke 2:20). No doubt their worship led to even more opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.

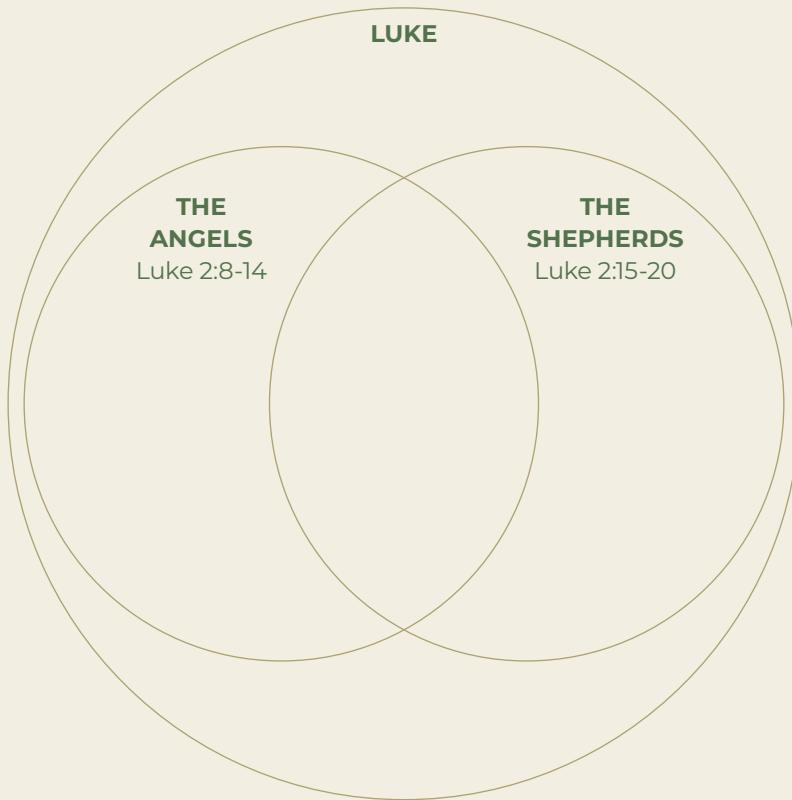
If we have received the gospel by faith, what should our following responsive actions be?

CHRIST CONNECTION

As prophesied in Scripture and proclaimed by an angel, Jesus, the Lord and the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem. The shepherds heard the gospel, shared it with others, and all were amazed.

DELIVERING THE NEWS

Read Luke 2:4-20. List similarities and differences in the delivery of the message of Jesus by the angels, the shepherds, and by Luke himself.



What were some emotions and motivations that surrounded the telling of Jesus's birth?

What does sharing the miraculous story of Jesus reveal about our faith?

What does a lack of sharing it reveal?



HEAD

What are some ways we might exhibit the humility of Jesus on display in the circumstances of His birth?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE



Read through Psalm 132. Thank God for keeping His word in sending His Anointed One to save His people (vv. 10-12), and praise the Lord with joy for the gift of righteousness we receive through faith in Jesus (vv. 9,16).



HEART

How can we love others, both inside and outside the church, who seem lowly by worldly standards?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How will you share the good news of Jesus with someone this week?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

By Mike Leake

Even if you don't know much about Jesus, you've probably heard that He walked on water. It's an amazing story included in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. You also should know that it wasn't a peaceful little pool on which Jesus did His water-walking. It was in the middle of a storm that had seasoned fishermen worried for their lives.

Mark, in his Gospel, included a neat little phrase that likely came from Exodus 33 or Job 9. He said that Jesus "wanted to pass by them" (Mark 6:48). Mark was clueing us into the fact that this was a display of Christ's deity. We're supposed to see the almighty power of Jesus all throughout this story.

As amazing as it is that Jesus walked on the water, I actually think there is another verse that is even more awe-inspiring. It's a little phrase in Mark 6:51: "Then he got into the boat with them." Do you realize what Mark was telling us there? He was telling us that the eternal I AM, the One who can calm the winds and the waves, was now climbing into a boat with common fishermen.

This is the wonder of the incarnation. God became flesh. I'm not shocked that God can walk on water. But I am shocked that He'd stoop so low to get in a boat with humanity.

GOD BECAME FLESH

We really shouldn't be that shocked by the story though. God has always been moving toward His people. You see it first in the garden of Eden—even after the first couple rebelled. God moved toward His people in the tabernacle in the wilderness. All throughout the Scriptures, God was making Himself known. But the most breathtaking revelation of them all was when God the Son took on human flesh and entered our world.

It's theologically true that in order to redeem humanity—in order to make a fitting sacrifice—God the Son had to take on human flesh. He had to be a fitting representative (Hebrews 2:17). But did He have to get into boats? Did He have to touch lepers? Did it require Him to laugh with us or weep with us? Did He have to get this close?

This is the mystery and mercy of the gospel: the God who made us became like us so as to rescue us.

FOR A PURPOSE

This wasn't a backup plan. According to Ephesians 1:4-7, this was God's Plan A. Before the foundation of the world, the triune God purposed to redeem humanity

through the Son. The Father sent, the Son came, and the Spirit empowered.

We shouldn't think here of the incarnation like the show *Undercover Boss*. In that show the person in charge becomes like one of the employees to see what it's like to work there. Along the way they make a few friends, bless some of their more faithful employees, and then go back to being the CEO of the company.¹ Jesus didn't become a man just to observe our condition. He shared in it fully. He took on our human nature. Jesus hungered, wept, grew tired, and was tempted, though He was without sin (*Hebrews 4:15*). In every respect, He entered into the reality of life in a broken world. But unlike an undercover boss, He became human for the very purpose of dying in our place.

GOD'S SYMPATHY

Because Jesus lived as one of us, He understands us. He knows what it's like to grieve a loss, to feel lonely, and to face rejection. The Bible says, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin" (*Hebrews 4:15*).

The incarnation means that when we pray, Jesus truly understands our situation. When we face temptation, and even when we fall, we go to a Savior who understands the weight of living in this broken world as a dependent human being. And because He never fell to sin, He understands the full force of temptation. We have an advocate who gets it because He lived it (*1 John 2:1*).

GOD'S IMAGE

When Jesus took on flesh, He didn't become something less. He didn't cease being God. Rather, He revealed something more. He is "the image of the invisible God" (*Colossians 1:15*). What sin has distorted in us, Christ displays in fullness. When we look at Jesus, we see humanity as it was meant to be—and God as He truly is.

The incarnation shows us the value of human life. Every person is made in the image of God. And Jesus becoming one of us reinforces our conviction about the dignity of all people, from the least to the greatest, from the womb to the deathbed. Every person reflects the beauty of what Jesus came to redeem.

THE SON HAS COME NEAR

The miracle of the incarnation isn't only that God came near—it's that He came near on purpose, and that purpose was to rescue us. The Son of God not only took upon Himself human flesh, He carried our sorrows and our sins. Jesus, fully God and fully man, getting in the boat with His disciples illustrates His mission to fully enter our world and redeem us.

The Son of God has come near.

Mike Leake is husband to Nikki and father to Isaiah and Hannah. He is also the lead pastor at Calvary of Neosho, Missouri. His writing home is mikeleake.net and on Substack at *Proverbs 4 Today*, a daily devotional.