

NAME: _____

life GROUPS

SCOTT LAKE BAPTIST STUDENT MINISTRY

advent



DEVOTIONS FOR DECEMBER 10-14

GETTING STARTED: Your end goal isn't to trust in Jesus, it's to learn how to follow Him daily. Satan has set up the system of this world to lead you towards sin and busyness. Like a toddler in a tantrum, the activities of daily life will demand your time. You will have to continually tell yourself—I AM A FOLLOWER OF JESUS FIRST. Before you are a student, or athlete, or employee, or musician, or in a relationship, or whatever, YOU ARE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS FIRST. Many of our daily demands are good, but they can never take priority over what is best—your relationship with God.

Mark out a time, place, and set a daily reminder to help you develop the habit of daily spending time with God.

WEEKLY PRAYER CALENDAR

| | OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS: | ANSWERED PRAYERS: |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| MONDAY - My family | | |
| TUESDAY - My friends | | |
| WEDNESDAY - My school, teachers, and administration | | |
| THURSDAY - Our nation and leaders | | |
| FRIDAY - My goals and my future | | |
| SATURDAY - Unsaved people and the spread of the Gospel | | |
| SUNDAY - My church, youth group, pastors, and missionaries around the world | | |

MONDAY

TRUST THE PLAN

READ ISAIAH 1:26-29

Read Luke 1:26-29. There are a few things that we can discover about Mary here. One, she was from Nazareth in Galilee. If we were first century readers, we would immediately know that Nazareth was what we might call a “one stoplight” town. It was kind of in the sticks. Not exactly a thriving metropolis. Two, she was a virgin engaged to be married to Joseph. In other words, she had never been with a man sexually. She was morally upright. What we might call a good girl. (She was also young. Most scholars believe Mary was only around 14 or 15 years old at the time.) But above all, Mary was confused.

And who could blame her? One day she’s minding her business. The next, an angel sent from the Lord was giving her a message. “Favored one”? What in the world was that all about? “A message from God to me”? Can you imagine how confused she must have been? Verse 29 says Mary was troubled, and was trying to figure all of this out.

We can relate to Mary can’t we? While God may not choose to have you parent His Son, God does have plans for your life. Very specific, very important plans. And sometimes these plans may confuse us. If they do, don’t worry. You’re in good company. Mary was confused, too. But Mary ultimately trusted God’s plan (more on this tomorrow). That’s our challenge as well.

When God leads you down a road you’re unsure of, know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it’s exactly where you’re supposed to be. Trust. Stay true. And keep your eyes open. You’re God’s plan to share His name with the world.

- Can you think of a time when you knew God was working in your life but you didn’t know exactly what He was doing? What emotions did you feel?

- If you aren’t aware of God working in or through you, what does that say about your faith? (Here’s a hint: God is always present and always at work. If you can’t feel it, the issue is not with God.)

- Take a moment to pray today that God would help you have clear vision to see what He is doing in your life.

TUESDAY

BIG NEWS

READ LUKE 1:30-33

Think about what it's like to wait for something you are really excited about. The days pass by like weeks. You go through about a million different emotions. Anxious. Apathetic. Frustrated. Resigned. And then . . . boom! The day you've waited for is here!

Read Luke 1:30-33. For us to understand the news Mary received, we need a little background info. Sometime around a thousand years before Mary's time, King David ruled Israel. Things were swell, for the most part. Then, David died and his son Solomon was king. And things were awesome. Really awesome. Israel was at the height of its time as a nation state. They had money. They had power. They had relative peace. Things were rocking. But then, Solomon had to go and mess everything up.

Solomon turned away from God. And as a result, Israel would be split into two kingdoms after his death: a northern and a southern kingdom. God sent the prophets to warn Israel to turn back to God. But they didn't listen. Within about 500 years, God allowed both the northern and southern kingdoms to be destroyed. But all during this time, God continued to send a message of hope. He continued to promise that a Messiah would come. God promised to send His Son to be the hope of Israel and the world.

So you see, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah for hundreds of years. Hundreds. And then one day . . . boom! An angel is telling Mary that the Messiah is here, and that SHE will be His mother! Unbelievable! Can you imagine what she must have felt like hearing the angel's words? Those words describe a powerful, miraculous ruler who would deliver people from their sins. Jesus would be the rescuer of the world. And He would be Mary's son. If that's not the most amazing birth announcement ever written, I don't know what is.

- Re-read verses 32-33. What description of Jesus most stands out to you?

- How has the good news of Jesus changed your life? Have you ever thought about the answer to that question?

- Is there someone in your life who needs to hear that Jesus is the king, come to redeem all people from their sins? What's keeping you from telling them?

WEDNESDAY

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

LUKE 1:34-38

Read 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.

- 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.

THURSDAY

REFOCUS ON MARY

READ LUKE 1:38

Today we're going to ReFocus on Mary. You're going to look at her again with fresh eyes. Re-read Luke 1:38. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. You're minding your business, doing whatever a 1st century Jewish girl would have done on any given day. Maybe you would've just returned from gathering firewood or fetching water. Maybe you would've been sewing or cooking a meal. Whatever Mary was doing, it got really unimportant, really quickly.

In the middle of what we can imagine might have been a normal day, an angel appeared. Let that sink in for a minute. You're Mary. You're doing what you do. And then, boom, Gabriel's in your living room! It's no wonder the first thing he said was basically, "Settle down! Don't freak out. We're cool!" We can only imagine how frightened we'd be if we were all of a sudden face-to-face with an angel.

But maybe the most unsettling thing was Gabriel's message.

Imagine being told you were going to be pregnant. Keep in mind you're not married, so this message has its problems. Oh, and one more thing: the baby won't be your fiancé's. And it won't be conceived by human means. It will be God's child, His Son, the long awaited Messiah, promised for centuries. How's that for an announcement?

Mary was confused, for sure. And not surprisingly. Can you imagine trying to grasp a message like this? What would her friends say? Who would believe her? What would her husband-to-be think? Would he believe her? And what did it mean that God's Son would live and grow inside here? The questions must have flooded Mary's mind.

But her response was pretty amazing. In verse 38, we see Mary do something powerful in its simplicity: she surrendered. "I'm the Lord's servant. I'm on board." Her obedience cleared the way for her to be one of the major players in the greatest story ever told.

- Why is it so difficult to surrender our lives to God's leading?

- What does our hesitation say about our level of trust in God?

- Do you ever think about what God has planned for you that you miss out on because you want to be in control of your life instead of surrendering it to God?

FRIDAY

EXPECTATIONS

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

We've all been there before: We have certain expectations about how something will go, except that it seems to go completely differently than how we envisioned it. And then we find ourselves dealing with the emotions of having our expectations go unmet. Maybe it's a date that went all wrong. Or a test that is much harder than you imagined. Or maybe you finally got your moment in the spotlight, only to blow your chance. Whatever the case, unmet expectations can really bum us out.

Read Matthew 1:18-25. Joseph found himself in the mother of all unmet expectations. He was engaged to the girl he loved, Mary. The couple had correctly chosen to wait until marriage to engage in sexual relations. And yet, Joseph was met with some news that must have sounded absolutely nuts to his ears: his sweet Mary was pregnant. And if that wasn't enough, she claimed it was God who had conceived the baby inside of her. As we'll look at more closely tomorrow, Joseph ultimately made the right call. He eventually believed Mary. All was well. But do you ever wonder if he still struggled a bit with unmet expectations?

Sure, Joseph was a miraculous, amazing part of God's plan to rescue humankind from their sins. But do you ever wonder how Joseph felt about this? Maybe he was shy and simple. Maybe he didn't want the pressure of being part of God's plan. His expectations of a "normal" marriage went away pretty quickly. But to Joseph's credit, he rolled with it. He adjusted his expectations, got used to his "new normal," and devoted himself to Mary and Jesus.

God will often do things differently than we want or expect. We can let this derail us, or, we can trust God and go with His flow. We know what Joseph chose. What would you choose?

- Think of a time when God did something for you, or through you, that was awesome, but that completely went against your expectations. How did it make you feel?

- How can our expectations sometimes be an excuse to do things the same old way we've always done them?

- Are you brave enough to pray and ask God to blow away your expectations of Him and how He wants to use you?



SERMON NOTES

DATE: ___/___/___

(use this sheet to help you think through the sermon)

PREACHER: _____

MAIN SCRIPTURE: _____

What is the main idea of the sermon?

What is the main idea of the verses?

What were the main points of the sermon? What did you learn?

What does God want you to do or believe after hearing this sermon?

Was there anything in the sermon you didn't understand?

Wednesdays 6:30-7:45pm (doors open at 6pm)

MERGE

games, food, and a message just for youth