

A Christmas Journey

25 Family Devotionals and Activities for Advent



1. A baby is coming

Read: Luke 1:5-25

I wonder how many impossible things you can think of. It is said to be impossible to lick your elbow, and it's impossible to hum while holding your nose (you just tried them didn't you!) It's impossible for us to go outside and to fly like birds can. It's also impossible to teach your pet goldfish how to play the clarinet, however that I would like to see!

In Luke 1:5-25 we meet a very old couple called Zechariah and Elizabeth who loved God. They had always wanted to have a baby but they were never able and now it looked impossible because they were very old. One day when Zechariah was in the temple serving an angel called Gabriel who was sent by God appeared and said that Zechariah and Elizabeth were going to have a son and they should call him John. But Zechariah was confused; he couldn't understand how something impossible could actually happen. Because of his disbelief in what Gabriel had said Zechariah would not be able to speak until John was born. Zechariah doubted that nothing is impossible with God but in verse 24-25 we see how this really is true as Elizabeth becomes pregnant and she gives thanks to God. As we begin the advent season let's start by remembering that nothing is impossible with God. We read in the Bible how Jesus reminds his about this time and time again, so it is important that we too try to remember this as we follow Jesus.

Discuss:

Can you think of other times in the Bible when God did something that seemed impossible?

How does it make you feel to know you follow a God who can do anything?

Activity:

Get a page and write down the things you are thankful to God for.

Read them together and spend time thanking God for these things in prayer.

2. What's John got to do with it?

Read: Malachi 3:1

When you think of the Christmas Story who do you think about? I'm sure you think about Jesus, Mary and Joseph. You probably think about the shepherds and the Wise Men. Maybe you even think about the Angels and Herod. But do you ever think about John? You probably don't and yet this is who we are thinking about at the start of Advent. So what on earth has John got to do with Christmas?

In Malachi 3:1 we see a prophecy from the prophet Malachi many years before the events of the first Christmas. Prophets are people who God used to speak to His people before Jesus came and before there was the Bible. Prophecy is the message from God that prophets told God's people and normally included things God said were going to happen. In this prophecy God tells his people, through Malachi, that he would send a messenger who would prepare the way for a Saviour. This is where John comes in! He is the one God sent to prepare a way for the promised rescuer and so we are first introduced to Him before he is born. We know this because in Luke 1:17 Gabriel tells Zechariah that John will prepare people for the coming of the Lord! This reminds us that God never breaks his promises. So, what has John got to do with Christmas? He came to prepare the way for the arrival of Jesus, our promised Saviour.

Discuss:

What is a prophet? What is prophecy?

What has John got to do with Jesus?

Activity:

Make paper people chains and use them to pray for others.

Write their names on the paper people and keep it somewhere so you can remember to pray for them throughout the week.

3. Mary, did you know?

Read: Luke 1:26-29

I wonder if you can think of a time something unexpected happened. There was one thing my sister and I always wanted and that was a dog. We asked our parents constantly for one for as long as I can remember and the answer was always no, usually because my Dad is scared of dogs. But this all changed in July 2014 when our parents told us we were going to get a tiny fluffy white Westie, who is called Oscar. My sister and I couldn't believe what we were hearing or seeing and we were a bit confused because we had been told no for so long. We definitely didn't expect it and 7 years later, we didn't expect to say that Oscar and Dad are best of friends. Maybe you can think of something you have heard or seen that was unexpected.

In Luke 1:26-29 we are introduced to a young woman named Mary who is engaged to Joseph. Mary lives in Nazareth and one day something very unexpected happened. The angel Gabriel appeared before Mary saying "greetings favoured woman! The Lord is with you!" Mary certainly wasn't expecting it and verse 29 tells us that she was confused; she didn't understand what Gabriel was telling her. Sometimes God can do things in our lives that we do not expect and that make us confused but, like we will learn from Mary, we can have faith that God's plans are better than our own and that He is always working for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Discuss:

Can you think of a time that something unexpected happened?
How do you think Mary would have been feeling in these verses?
What does it mean to have faith in God?

Activity:

Share with each other someone who helps you to know and love Jesus more. Write a thank you note for them and give it to them this week!



4. Do not fear.

Read: Luke 1:30-33

Have you ever been in a situation that has made you feel afraid? One of the things that made me afraid when I was at school I was scared of two things; getting into trouble and the principal. Anytime the principal came into the classroom or spoke to us in assembly I would start to get a bit afraid. One day I was told that I had to go and see the principal in her office. I was very afraid because I thought I was in trouble and thought that I would get shouted at. I was so scared that I even cried (you can laugh at me it's ok!). But when I got to the principal's office, knocked her door and entered with tears running down my face she looked at me and asked why I was crying. I explained to her how I was scared and she said "you have no reason to be afraid" and it turned out I was not in trouble at all, she just wanted me to do a job for her. Looking back now I know it was a bit silly to be afraid of the principal, she wasn't scary at all!

In Luke 1:30-33 we see Gabriel saying "Don't be afraid" to Mary as he tells her how she is about to become a Mother to Jesus, the Saviour of the World and Son of God. Mary was only a young girl and so I am sure she was so afraid, yet Gabriel don't her she didn't need to fear. Why? Because God would be with her through it all. We are told in the Bible not to fear too (Philippians 4:6). This doesn't mean that we won't be afraid sometimes but it means that when we are we can ask God to help us with our fear and remember that He is so much bigger than anything we are afraid of.

Discuss:

What makes you feel afraid?
How can knowing that God is with you and is bigger than your fears help you when you feel afraid?

Activity:

Get a piece of paper and on it write down some of the things that make you feel afraid. When you have done this crumple them up and throw into a bin. When you do this, pray about those fears to God and ask Him to help you with and take away your fears. When you throw the fears into the bin remember that God is powerful and can bring peace to the fear within us.

5. But how?

Read: Luke 1:34-38

There are a lot of things I don't understand. I don't understand how Petrol or Diesel makes a car go. I don't understand the offside rule. I don't understand a lot about Maths. Most of all I don't understand how boats float or how planes fly. When I think about these things I get very confused and ask "But How?" I'm sure there are things you don't understand too.

In Luke 1:34-38, Mary asks Gabriel this same question "But How...?" She has just been told that she is going to give birth to the Son of God but it seems impossible for her to have a baby- it would be a miracle. So Mary asks how such a thing could happen. Gabriel explains that through God nothing is impossible and tells her that her cousin Elizabeth is also going to have a baby (remember her?) Mary could have said that she didn't believe that the impossible was possible but she didn't. Instead she said "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." Mary didn't understand how but she knew she didn't need to, she just had to trust God and follow His plan. Sometimes we don't understand what God is doing or why but we can always trust in His plan, just like Mary did.

Discuss:

How would you have reacted in Mary's situation?
Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who had to trust God's plan?

Activity:

Play charades together. When you are guessing and don't understand what someone is trying to act out remember how Mary didn't understand everything but she trusted God.



6. Mary's song.

Read: Luke 1:39-56

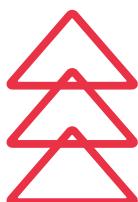
Have you ever watched a musical? I love musicals, but isn't it funny how the characters break out in song every time they want to express how they are feeling. We don't see that happening as we walk down the street do we? In Luke 1:39-56 however, we do get a glimpse of this as we read Mary's song of praise. This song comes after the news that she would give birth to Jesus and through this song she expresses feelings of thankfulness that God has chosen to use her for such an incredible task. In her song she thanks God and she sings of how amazing God is. We do this too when we sing songs of worship to God. The next time you are singing a song of Worship think about the words and see how, just like Mary, we use worship to thank God for all He has done for us and to sing of how incredible He is.

Discuss:

What is your favourite part of Mary's song?
What is your favourite worship song? Can you think of the parts in it where you thank God or sing of how great He is?

Activity:

Talk about the ways we can praise God! Listen and sing along to "What a Glorious Night" by Sidewalk Prophets.



7. His name is John!

Read: Luke 1:57-66

Did you know that names often have meanings? Usually there is a reason why you have been called the name you have been called. My name is Stephanie Elaine, and the reason I am called this is because Stephanie comes from my Dad's name, Stephen, and my middle name is my Mum's name, Elaine. My name has meaning! The name Stephanie also means Crown. I wonder do you know the meaning of your name?

In the Bible names were often very important. They could tell others something important about the person. We see this when God changed Abram's name to Abraham which means "father of a multitude." Abraham's name spoke of the promise God gave to Him. Often people were named after someone from their family and it was not uncommon for sons to be named after their Father. This is why people were confused when Elizabeth gave birth to her son and called him John, as God told her to. Those around tried to convince Elizabeth to call her son after his father Zechariah, reminding her that nobody in their family had the name John. In fact they are so convinced that Zechariah should be his name that they ask Zechariah, who still can't speak, what the child is to be called. So Zechariah signalled for something to write on and to everyone's surprise he wrote "His name is John!" and instantly God allowed Zechariah to speak again and Zechariah used his voice to praise God. Zechariah and Elizabeth obeyed God even when those around didn't understand what they were doing or why. John's name also told the people something important because John means "God has been gracious."

The people around tried to convince them to choose another name, but they didn't. They obeyed what God had told them to do. Sometimes in our lives as we try to live for Jesus people do not understand what we do or the decisions we make and will try to convince us that another way is better. We should try to be like Zechariah and Elizabeth in those moments and ask God to help us obey Him even when others don't understand.

Discuss:

Talk about your names! What do they mean? Why were you called what you are called? Can you think of any times where people may try to tell us that God's way is not the best way?

Activity:

Let's play the name game. The aim of the game is to guess the name of the person/animal stuck on your head. Get a few post-it notes and write the name of a person/animal on it and stick it to someone's head. They have to ask questions to try and guess who it is but you can only answer with a Yes or No answer. Have Fun!

Example: Are they Human? Yes/No Are they a singer? Yes/No

8. Zechariah speaks.

Read: Luke 1:67-80

What is Christmas about for you? Maybe it is about time spent with your family and friends. It could be about giving and receiving gifts? Maybe it is about the amazing food we get to eat at Christmas. It is fine for these things to be part of your Christmas celebrations but hopefully for you Christmas is also centred on celebrating the coming of Christ as a baby into this world as our promised saviour.

Through this prophecy of Zechariah we are reminded that Christmas is about promises. Zechariah here is speaking about God's people being redeemed and a strong rescuer from the line of David. This is the one who is sent to set all of God's people free. Christmas is about God sending Jesus to rescue us from sin. Christmas also reminds us that God keeps His promises. Christmas happened because God has promised it would. He didn't promise a Christmas dinner or time off school but He did promise to save His people, and through Jesus He did. Not only that but Christmas reminds us that God is still a promise keeper! So when we are told in the Bible that Jesus will come again and that those who trust in Jesus will have eternal life He means it! Our world is full of broken promises but this Christmas let the reminder that God is a promise keeper give you hope.

Discuss:

Can you think of any other examples in the Bible where God kept His promises?
How does God being a promise keeper make you feel?

Activity:

Have a look at pictures from previous Christmases and talk about your favourite Christmas memories and your favourite part of Christmas.



9. Joseph obeys.

Read: Matthew 1:18-24

What is the hardest decision you have ever made? As you grow up you will be faced with loads of decisions. Who to be friends with? What after school clubs to join? What school to go to? What subjects to study and whether to go to University or not? What job you want? The list goes on and on! We have loads of decisions to make in our lives and some are harder than others.

In Matthew 1:18-24 we meet Joseph, the man about to marry Mary, and he has a very hard decision to make- Should he leave Mary believing she was unfaithful to him or to still marry Mary and believe all she has to say about the angel and being chosen by God. This was a hard decision for him to make and I'm sure the thoughts and opinions of other people were running through his head, but something made his decision easier. While he was thinking about these things an Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and told him that God had chosen Mary for this task and that he should not be afraid to marry her. So Joseph obeyed and He married Mary. When we have hard decisions to make in our lives we can remember how Joseph's decision was made easier by God. God also helps us when we have decisions to make. He gives those who love Jesus the Holy Spirit who lives in us and guides us. He gives us His word which he speaks to us through and He gives us prayer where we can come before Him and ask for His help. We don't have to make hard decisions alone, we can remember that God helps us.

Discuss:

Can you think of any decisions you have had to make? Did you find it hard or easy to make your decision?

How does God help us when we are faced with hard decisions?

Activity:

Some people in our communities do not have as much as we do.

One of the ways we can help them is by providing food for foodbanks who help those who struggle to feed their families.

Have a think about some things you can give to a foodbank this Christmas.

10. Off we go!

Read: Luke 2: 1-5

What is the longest journey you have been on? For me it is about 9hrs on an airplane to go to America. In 2019 the world's longest ever flight was recorded between New York and Australia. The flight lasted a massive 19 hours and 16 minutes, as the passengers journeyed 10,066 miles to reach their destination.

In our passage we see how Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem from Nazareth to be registered as part of a census that Caesar Augustus called, a journey which probably took them 4 or 5 days on foot because they had no planes, trains or cars in those days.

Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem because Joseph was from the line of David. The line of David? Have we heard that phrase before? What is important about the line of David?

While they were in Bethlehem something incredible happened, and we will think about that tomorrow.

Discuss:

Do you enjoy travelling?
Have you heard the phrase "the line of David" before?
Why is it important?

Activity:

Go for a walk together today and remember the journey that Mary and Joseph took to Bethlehem. While you are walking pray for those in the community around you.

11. A King is Born

Read: Luke 2:6-7 & Isaiah 7:14

If you have ever watched a royal wedding on TV you can imagine the crowds and excitement that surrounds the presence of royalty. When the Queen, or another member of the royal family, is about crowds flock toward them to get a glimpse of royalty. When a new baby is about to be born into the royal family loads of people, especially journalists and news presenters, gather outside the hospital in anticipation of an announcement that another royal child has been born.

Jesus is the King of Kings. He's the King of the entire world. So you would expect His birth to be a big deal. That He would be born in the best circumstances. But in Luke we read the opposite about Jesus' birth. When Jesus was born he was wrapped in swaddling cloths and placed into a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. A manger is an animal feeding trough. Jesus' birth certainly wasn't the most glamorous. The King of the world wasn't born in a palace and laid in a golden cot. No he was born and placed in a manger because there was no room. From the very moment of His birth we are reminded of Jesus' humility and how he became a poor outsider for us. Throughout his life Jesus remained humble and was rejected by many, even put to death on a cross, even though He was the Son of God. Why? So that we could be rich! That doesn't mean we have loads of money but something even better. We can be rich by gaining salvation and eternal life through Jesus. So next time you see a Nativity scene be reminded of how the King of Kings was born poor so that we could be rich in Him.

Discuss:

What do you expect the birth of a King to be like?

What surprises you about the birth if Jesus?

What does it mean to be rich in Christ?

Activity:

Find a cookie recipe and spend time baking some cookies together.

You could even make them in a shape of a crown to remember that Jesus is King. Why not bake a few extra to give to a neighbour or a friend.

12. O' Little town of Bethlehem.

Read: Micah 5:2-5a

What is your favourite Christmas Carol? My favourite is 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'. I asked some of my family what their favourites were too. My Granny loves 'Away in a Manger'. My Dad loves "once in Royal David's City." But my Mum loves "O' Little town of Bethlehem."

What is so special about Bethlehem? Bethlehem is significant because years before the journey that Mary and Joseph took to Bethlehem a prophet, called Micah, told of how the saviour would be born in Bethlehem. God's plan included Jesus being born in Bethlehem.

How incredible is it that hundreds of years before the first Christmas God had already planned where Jesus would be born. The Bible tells us that God knows every day of our lives before we are even born too (Psalm 139:16).

When we don't understand what is going on or why things are happening we can remember that God is in control and that nothing takes Him by surprise. When you think about Bethlehem you can remember that just as God was in control then, He is in control now, a fact that can fill us with hope!

Discuss:

What is your favourite Christmas Carol?

What is significant about Bethlehem?

How does it make you feel to know that God is in control?

Activity:

In Bethlehem on that first Christmas there would have been no technology so Mary, Joseph and Jesus would have spent time together as a family with no distractions. We get so distracted by technology so switch off technology for an evening together and find something to do together that you don't need technology for.

Why not play a board game or read together

13. While Shepherds their flocks by night.

Read: Luke 2:8-15

We talked yesterday about favourite Christmas carols and my Grandpa's is "While shepherds watched their flocks by night". I would love to have been there at this point of the Christmas story. I can't help but imagine the look on the shepherd's faces who were in a field expecting a typical night of looking after some sheep when all of a sudden an angel appeared before them bringing them 'Good news of great joy' and the glory of God shone around them. And if that wasn't unexpected and amazing enough, the angel was then joined by a host of angels singing "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill to all." What an amazing sight this would have been.

The shepherds are given a sign that the promised Messiah has been born. What is the sign? That they will find Him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. I'm sure they were surprised by this too because it isn't what people would have expected. People expected the Messiah to be someone who would come and lead them into battle against the Roman Rulers who did not treat them very well, and a baby is the complete opposite of that! Babies can't do anything for themselves let alone lead them into battle. Yet, even if it was unexpected, the Shepherds who have just heard and witnessed something incredible head into Bethlehem to visit this new born saviour.

Discuss:

How do you think the Shepherds would have felt in this moment?
What amazes you about God?

Activity:

Get some cotton wool and print out a sheep template.
Stick the cotton wool on the sheep to make the sheep's wool.
On the other side write a prayer to God thanking God for
bringing Jesus into the world!



14. Special visitors.

Read: Luke 2:15-20

What are the most valuable things you have? Maybe it's a gaming console? Maybe it is a gift someone gave you? Maybe it is a teddy or a piece of sports equipment? We all have something we think is very valuable.

The Shepherds probably would have said that their sheep were one of the most valuable things they had. Tending their sheep was how these shepherds made their living. Their sheep were very important and they watched their flocks at night to protect them from being stolen or being attacked by other animals. It would have taken something very important to take the shepherds away from their sheep and their livelihood. But here in v15 we see the Shepherds leave their sheep and hurry to Bethlehem in search of the Saviour. These shepherds must have recognised the importance of the message the angels brought to them to leave their sheep in search of the saviour and, if they didn't at this point, v20 shows us that they definitely did after seeing Jesus because they returned to their sheep glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard.

Do we take ourselves away from the things we think are important in order to spend time with God, getting to know Him more and spending time glorifying and praising him? When we read the story of how the shepherds left their valuable sheep in search of something much more valuable we can be challenged to spend more time with God because our relationship with Him is the most valuable thing we could ever have.

Discuss:

Why were the sheep so important to the Shepherds?
What distracts you from spending time with God?
Why is it important to spend time with God?

Activity:

Get a world map and look up the most persecuted countries.
You can find them on Open Door's world watch list online.
Spend time praying for countries where people are treated badly for following Jesus.

15. Star of wonder, star of light.

Read: Matthew 2:1-2

Have you ever been outside when it is really dark and seen loads of stars? Over the summer I was on the beach very late at night and there were no lights around which meant that I could see loads and loads of stars very clearly, even some shooting stars and they were beautiful.

In our passage today we meet some wise men from the East. These men were astrologists who studied the stars and tried to find meaning in them. One night they saw a special star and they believed that it told them that a new King had been born. So they journeyed to the place anyone would expect to find a King, to the palace where they meet King Herod and asked for a new King who has been born- we will hear more about Herod's reaction tomorrow.

What is incredible about this part of the Christmas Story is that God spoke to the Wise Men in a way they would understand. He sent angels to Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds but placed a star in the sky to speak to the Wise Men. The Wise Men probably didn't follow the one true God but instead tried to find the meaning of life in the stars but through this God was able to direct them to Jesus and in v10 we discover how they fell down and worshipped Jesus. Has God stopped speaking to His people today? No! God speaks to us too through His word and when we read it we too are called to worship Jesus. So when we see how God speaks to people in the Christmas story we are reminded that God still speaks to us today and we should be ready to listen to the things He wants to teach us.

Discuss:

Who were the wise men?
Can you think of anything God has taught you recently?

Activity:

Get creative and make a Christmas decoration inspired by the story today!
Talk about the meaning behind your decoration together.



16. Raging Royal.

Read: Matthew 2:3-8

I wonder if you have ever felt jealous of someone else? Maybe you feel jealous when someone in school gets a better mark on a test than you or maybe we see someone with something we really want and we get jealous. There have been times when we have been jealous too. Sometimes our jealous feelings lead us to bad actions like stealing or speaking badly about someone else.

In today's passage we see an example of this. When the Wise Men tell Herod about this new King he started to panic and plan. Herod told the Wise Men that they were to go and find this King and report back to Him because he wanted to worship the new born King too. This sounds great, but really Herod wanted to get rid of the new born king instead, why? Because he was jealous and didn't want this king to have more power or authority than him, so his jealous feelings were leading to bad actions. The Bible tells us in many places not to be jealous and warns of how jealousy can lead to destruction and actions that are unhelpful. We are not perfect and so sometimes we will feel jealous. In those moments we can pray to our loving God and ask Him to help us with our jealous feelings. We can thank God for everything He has blessed us with rather than being jealous for the things we do not have.

Discuss:

Can you think of a time you felt jealous?
Why was Herod jealous?
What can you do the next time you feel jealous?

Activity:

The Bible tells us not to be jealous of others but to encourage one another. Make a Christmas card and write a note of encouragement for someone inside.
Try to find time to give it to them this week!

17. Significant Gifts.

Read: Matthew 2:9-11

Have you ever received a gift and thought "what am I meant to do with this?" I always think about this when I read about the gifts the Wise Men brought for Jesus. When the Wise Men arrived to the place where Jesus and his family were they bowed down and worshipped Him. Then they presented him with gifts. When one of my family members or friends have a new baby I love going out to buy them a gift with useful supplies like baby grows and bibs. I wouldn't buy the young child a tool box or a car because those things would be of no use to them at all. But what do the Wise Men bring to Jesus and his family? Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh! What are they meant to do with that? The gifts are not an accident, they actually symbolise something very important about who Jesus is and what He would do.

Gold: Gold is a metal often given as a gift to a King. This symbolised how Jesus is our King.

Frankincense: This was a gift that was usually given to a priest and symbolised holiness. It symbolises how Jesus is fully God and the one who is able to unite us with God again after our sin separated us from Him.

Myrrh: This was an oil or perfume that was brought to a burial. It seems strange that a gift for death was brought to celebrate the birth of Jesus. However, this gift of myrrh symbolised that Jesus would die for the salvation of everyone who follows Him

The gifts that the Wise Men brought were so significant. So let them remind you this Christmas of who Jesus is and what He has done for you.

Discuss:

Can you remember what the gifts symbolise?
How would you describe who Jesus is to someone who has never heard of Him before?

Activity:

Put some Christmas music on and wrap presents for family and friends together as you remember the significance of the gifts given to Jesus by the Wise Men.

18. A Great Escape.

Read: Matthew 2:12-17, Hosea 11:1

There are so many movies out there where we see characters escaping something. Rapunzel escapes from her tower and the woman who kidnapped her. Simba escapes the pride lands when he thinks he is responsible for the death of Mufasa. Marlin and Dory have to escape when the sharks, who say fish are friends not food, smell Dory's blood. In Madagascar we see Marty escaping the zoo in search of freedom which results in Him, and a group of his friends, being stranded in Madagascar which they then try to escape from and end up in Africa. But did you know escape is also an important part of the Christmas story.

In Matthew 2:12-17 we see how the Wise Men and Jesus' family escape from Herod's jealous actions. The Wise Men were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod but to return to their own country by a different route, escaping the fury of Herod. Joseph is also warned by an Angel to take Jesus and Mary and escape to Egypt because Herod was starting to look for Jesus to kill Him. So Joseph got up and escaped to Egypt with Jesus and Mary where they stayed until Herod died.

This escape to Egypt and how they stayed there until Herod died was important as it fulfilled what God had promised many years before when speaking of the Saviour who would come. This shows us that Jesus really is the Saviour of the world promised to us!

Discuss:

Can you think of any other parts of the Bible where we hear about an escape? How does it make you feel knowing that God knew these things would happen long before they ever did?

Activity:

Get some snacks and watch a movie together!
It could be one that we mentioned today or another of your choice.



19. Simeon Says.

Read: Luke 2:25-35

I wonder how patient you are. Are you good at waiting or do you get impatient? For me, it depends on the circumstances. If I'm waiting for my dentist appointment I am very patient because I don't really want to go. However, if I am waiting for a parcel to arrive with a new book for me to read or if it's only a few days before Christmas Day I can be very impatient (and very excited!!) Usually if it is something I am looking forward to I can be impatient when waiting rather than patient.

In our passage today we are introduced to Simeon. We are told that he is a man who loves God very much (v25) and as we read the passage we can see that he is very patient.

Throughout his life Simeon waited for God to fulfil his promise to send a rescuer. Even though this was something Simeon looked forward to, unlike me, he was patient in his waiting. Not only that but Simeon waited with hope and in faith that God would keep His promise. When Jesus was brought to the temple by Mary and Joseph, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and thanked God for him because he knew in that moment that Jesus was the saviour God had promised and he declared that in the temple. What an incredible end to His waiting! He was face to face with the saviour of the world.

Throughout our lives we will have to wait for things. When we pray sometimes God says "not yet" and we are to wait. Ultimately we wait for Jesus to return! That can be really hard to do but we can learn from the story of Simeon that we do not wait without hope but with hope and in the knowledge that God is a promise keeper and our waiting will be worth it.

Discuss:

Do you find it hard to wait?

How hard do you think it would have been for Simeon to wait? Why?

How can God help you as you wait?

Activity:

In the evening go for a drive or wrap up warm and go for a walk to see all of the Christmas lights and decorations.

When you see the lights remember that Jesus is the light of the world.

20. Anna's hope.

Read: Luke 2: 36-40

When something exciting happens to you what do you do? Do you keep the exciting thing to yourself or do you share it with anyone who will listen. When I was younger one of the things I really wanted was a sibling. So when my little sister was born I could not wait to tell everyone I knew. I went into school and told all my friends and teachers and I told all my family even though they already knew. I even had a badge that said "Best Big Sister" so even strangers knew about my exciting news. I couldn't wait to share this good news with everyone.

In Luke 2:36-40 we meet an old lady named Anna who was a prophetess. She spent a lot of time in the temple worshipping and praying to God. She was there when Simeon declared that Jesus was the Saviour the world was waiting for. But she doesn't keep the news to herself. No she thanked God and spoke about Jesus to everyone. Anna had good news and she shared it. We have good news to share too. Jesus is the Saviour of the world who died and rose again to set us free. Are you excited to share that news just like Anna did? We can tell people about Jesus in our words and also show them the love of Jesus in our actions. Let the story of Anna challenge you to share your good news just like she did.

Discuss:

Have you ever had exciting news to share?
Who could you share the good news of Jesus with?
How could you show the love of Jesus to others?

Activity:

Get a piece of paper and design a newspaper article about the Good News of Jesus!



21. A voice in the wilderness.

Read: Mark 1:1-11 & John 1:6-28

Have you ever been to a concert? Usually at the start of the concert there is a support act before the main performance. They are there to warm up the crowd and get them excited for what is about to come.

We've heard about John at the start of December. We know he was the child of Zechariah and Elizabeth and that he was to pave the way for Jesus. John 1:6-28 reminds us that

John was not the promised Saviour but that he would pave the way for the Saviour. In Mark 1:1-11 we are reminded that John is the one who was promised to prepare the way for Jesus hundreds of years before he was born. God's people were told he would be a voice in the wilderness and we see him here in the wilderness wearing clothes made of camel hair and eating locusts (yuck) and honey. We also see how John is doing exactly as God said he would. He is preparing the way for Jesus by baptising people, preaching and declaring that the Saviour was still to come. In v7-8 we see how he declares that "there is one coming after me who is greater than I; I am not good enough to kneel down and untie his sandals." John could have taken all the praise for himself but he didn't, he pointed

people to Jesus and prepared people for His coming.

When we serve God in our own lives it can be easy for us to take the credit or the praise. Through the story of John we can be challenged to point people to Jesus and give Him the praise and glory for working through our lives.

Discuss:

What do we know about John?

How did he prepare the way for Jesus?

How can you serve Jesus?

Activity:

Make dinner together. When you are eating the dinner you have all prepared, talk about the discussion questions. When you serve each other dinner remember that we are called to serve Jesus and His church!

22. Word on the street

Read: John 1:1-14

Do you ever walk down the street and bump into people that you know? It happens to me all the time. Imagine living in Biblical times and walking down the street and bumping into Jesus! Being face to face with the Saviour of the world- how incredible! I don't know about you but when I think about Jesus coming to earth I am amazed.

John 1:1-14 talks about the Word. The passage tells us that the Word existed at the very beginning of time. It tells us that the Word was with God but that the Word was God. It tells us that the Word gave life and light to everything that was created. It tells us that the Word became flesh and lived among us, yet people did not recognise who He was or receive Him. I wonder can you tell who the Word is?

The Word is Jesus! This passage teaches us something very important about who Jesus is. Jesus was not just fully human but He was also fully God. Jesus was there at the very beginning and through Him all things were created. Jesus gives us life. Jesus came to the world in Human form and experienced life just like we do, except, unlike us, He remained sinless and perfect. When we find things in life hard or when we get to celebrate something great in our lives, how amazing is it to know that Jesus experienced life on earth too and understands how we feel! We follow a God who truly understands the way we feel.

Discuss:

What stands out about the passage? Does anything confuse you?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus is God?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus also experienced life like us?

Activity:

Think about people who do not have homes this Christmas.

Many of them live on the street with no shelter. Pray for them and their safety. Pray for charities who seek to help people who are homeless.

Can you think of any ways you can help them?

23. The greatest gift.

Read: John 3:16-17

What is the best gift you have ever received? When I was younger my parents bought me a ring and I think it is the best gift anyone has ever bought me. I still love my ring today, I treasure it and I am rarely without it.

We have all been given a free gift greater than any gift that could be bought for us here on earth. It's better than my ring. It's better than a PS5 with Fifa 22. It's better than that new toy you really wanted. It's better than that holiday you dreamed about. It's better than any gift you could possibly imagine. What is that gift? It's salvation and eternal life through Jesus. John 3:16-17 tells us that this was given to us because God loved the world so much. It tells us that it is a gift for all who believe in Jesus and reminds us that this is why Jesus came into the world that first Christmas. Jesus came to free us and forgive us from our sin. Have you accepted that free gift?

We have 2 days until we celebrate Christmas day. Why not spend time thanking God for the gift of Jesus and pray that others would accept that free gift by putting their trust in Jesus as their Saviour.

Discuss:

How does it make you feel to know Jesus was sent to save the world because of God's love for us?

Why do you love Jesus?

Who do you know that doesn't know Jesus that you could pray for?

Activity:

Spend time sharing your favourite moments in the Bible with each other and worshipping Christ together.



24. Following our Saviour.

Read: Romans 10:1-13

We work to earn a lot of things don't we? We work hard in school so that we can get a good mark, grow smarter and so that the teacher will like us. We work hard when we play sports or practice our hobbies so that we can increase our skills. When we grow up we work hard so that we are earn a living too.

Sometimes we can get confused and think that we have to do lots of good things in order to earn God's love for us or to earn his salvation. But Romans 10:1-13 reminds us that this is not the case. Verse 9 tells us that if we declare with our mouths that "Jesus is Lord" and if we believe in our hearts that Jesus died and rose again we can be forgiven from our sin, then we will be saved. We don't have to earn it, it is given freely to us because God is loving, merciful and full of grace. This doesn't mean we don't have to try our best to live in the way God wants us to. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't do nice things for other people. But it does mean that there is nothing we can do to earn God's love or our salvation except believing in Christ as our Saviour. Isn't that amazing news for us!

So let's remember this Christmas to thank God for this truth. We don't have to earn salvation; we only have to believe that Jesus is Lord.

Discuss:

What things do you work hard to gain?

How does it make you feel to know that you don't have to earn God's love or your salvation?

Activity:

It's Christmas Eve! Have your own carol service together.

Pick your favourite Christmas Carols and songs and sing them together to worship Jesus.

25. Let's Celebrate!

Read: Isaiah 9:6-7

**For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us.
The government will rest on His shoulders.**

**And He will be called:
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

His government and its peace will never end.

**He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David
for all eternity.**

**The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies
will make this happen!**

Jesus is the Saviour promised to us years before He came to earth. He is the Son of God, who is our hope today and always. He is our God, Our King, Our Saviour and Our Friend who deserves all of the glory, worship and praise today and always. Amid the excitement of today remember the true meaning behind your celebrations.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Activity:

Take time today to re-read the Christmas Story.
Sing songs of worship and spend time in prayer thanking God for sending Jesus on that first Christmas to save us.







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