

## **Life-Sharing Lesson 1 “We’ve Got Joy For You” —The Joy Of The Lord Luke 1:26-45**

1. What was an event in your life that brought you great joy?

Being alone with my first child a few hours after she was born brought great joy to me just looking at her who was barely the length of my arm.

Luke 1:26-45

**<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

**<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”**

**<sup>35</sup> 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<sup>[a]</sup> the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”**

**<sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me according to your word.” Then the angel left her.**

### **Mary Visits Elizabeth**

**<sup>39</sup> At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”**

## COMMENTARY

**1:26-27** In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.<sup>NLT</sup> Six months after Gabriel delivered God's message to Zechariah ([1:11-20](#)), God sent the angel with another message, this time to a virgin named Mary who lived in Nazareth, a village in Galilee. The angel Gabriel had also appeared to the prophet Daniel more than five hundred years earlier ([Daniel 8:15-17](#); [9:21](#)). Each time Gabriel appeared, he brought important messages from God. This time was no exception.

Nazareth in Galilee, Joseph's and Mary's hometown, was a long way from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life and worship. Located on a major trade route, Nazareth was frequently visited by Gentile merchants and Roman soldiers. Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. Nevertheless, the people of Nazareth would reject him as the Messiah ([4:22-30](#)).

Mary was not a prophet or a priest; she was not in God's temple performing acts of service. Instead, she was simply a young woman who was living at home and planning her wedding, for *she was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph*. In ancient Jewish marriages, the word "engaged" (or "betrothed") had a different meaning than today. First, the two families would agree to the union and negotiate the betrothal, including a price for the bride that would be paid to the bride's father. Next, a public announcement would be made. At this point, the couple was "pledged." This is similar to engagement today, except that it was much more binding. At this point, even though the couple was not officially married, their relationship could be broken only through death or divorce. Sexual relations were not yet permitted. This second step lasted for a year. During that time, the couple would live separately, with their parents.

This waiting period would demonstrate the bride's purity. If she were found to be pregnant during that time, the marriage could be annulled. After this waiting time, the couple would be married and begin living together.

In order that the body of Christ might be shown to be a real body, he was born of a woman; but in order that his Godhead might be made clear he was born of a virgin.

*Thomas Aquinas*

What Mary was about to hear from the angel would have significant impact on her engagement.

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## LIFE APPLICATION

### GOD'S CHOICES

Mary was young, poor, female—all characteristics that, to the people of her day, would make her seem unusable by God for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience he has ever demanded of anyone. You may feel that your ability, experience, or education makes you an unlikely candidate for God's service. Don't limit God's choices. He can use you if you trust him. Take him at his word.

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That Joseph was *a descendant of King David* is important for the movement of Joseph to Bethlehem ([2:1-4](#)) and for the fact that Jesus would be born into the royal line of David. (Although Joseph was not his father, Jesus would be considered in the royal line through the rights of adoption.)

**[1:28-29](#) Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.**<sup>NLT</sup> When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he called her a *favored woman*. She was favored because she would be a special recipient of God's grace. That the Lord was *with* Mary indicates that God would give her his help in the privilege and responsibility she was about to receive. While Zechariah had been terrified at Gabriel's very appearance ([1:12](#)), Mary was more fearful at the words Gabriel spoke. This young maiden from a small town was *confused and disturbed* as to why she was being greeted in such a way by this heavenly visitor.

**[1:30-33](#) Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest."**<sup>NKJV</sup> Gabriel repeated to

Mary that she had *found favor with God* (see "favored woman" in previous verse). The words meant that Mary had become the recipient of favor bestowed on her by a superior—in this case, by God himself. It did not point out any special virtue in Mary—she was not sinless. Some have suggested that Mary was favored because of what she was in herself, that she had grace to bestow on others, and that she remained a virgin forever. However Scripture gives the opposite understanding. God chose Mary, blessed her, and she humbly accepted his call to be the mother of Jesus. Then she went on to have other children ([8:19](#); [Matthew 13:55-56](#); [Mark 6:3](#)).

The result of this favor came in God's choice of Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Gabriel explained that this child would grow in her womb, be born as all human children are born, and be named Jesus. This son *will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest*. The word "Son" was a designation of the Messiah. God would miraculously create a human child who would actually be *his* Son, the long-awaited Savior ([Genesis 49:10](#); [2 Samuel 7:9-16](#); [Psalm 2:7](#); [Isaiah 7:14](#); [9:1-7](#); [11:1-3](#)).

*Jesus*, a Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, was a common name meaning "Yahweh saves." Just as Joshua had led Israel into the Promised Land (see [Joshua 1:1-2](#)), so Jesus would lead his people into eternal life. The symbolism of Jesus' name was not lost on the people of his day, who took names seriously and saw them as a source of power. In Jesus' name people would be healed, demons would be banished, and sins would be forgiven.

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## LIFE APPLICATION

### FAVOR WITH GOD

God's favor does not automatically bring instant success or fame. His blessing on Mary, the honor of being the mother of the Messiah, would lead to much pain: her peers would ridicule her; her fiancé would consider leaving her; her son would be rejected and murdered. But through her son would come the world's only hope, and this is why Mary has been praised by countless generations as the young girl who "found favor with God." Mary's submission was part of God's plan to bring about salvation. If sorrow weighs you

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down and dims your hope, think of Mary and wait patiently for God to finish working out his plan.

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**"And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."**<sup>NKJV</sup> Centuries earlier, God had promised David that his kingdom would last forever: "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" ([2 Samuel 7:16](#) NKJV). This promise was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, a direct descendant of David ([1:27](#)). "His father David" also means "his ancestor David." Jesus was born in the line of David and thus could be a king to *reign over the house of Jacob* (referring to God's people—initially understood to be the twelve tribes, but later revealed to be much more). His will be an eternal kingdom, a kingdom with *no end*. God had promised to continue the house (or dynasty) of David forever. David's earthly dynasty ended four centuries after his reign, but Jesus Christ, a direct descendant of David, was the ultimate fulfillment of this promise ([Acts 2:22-36](#)). Christ will reign for eternity—now in his spiritual kingdom and in heaven, and later, on earth, in the new Jerusalem ([Luke 1:30-33](#); [Revelation 21](#)).

**1:34 Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin."**<sup>NLT</sup> Unlike Zechariah, who desired a sign as proof of the angel's words ([1:18](#)), Mary's question displayed her faith. She merely asked how this miraculous event could occur because she was a *virgin*. She was engaged to be married and probably planned on having children. Engagements usually occurred when girls were in their early teens. Mary may have been as young as thirteen when this event took place. Her question reveals spiritual sensitivity—Mary understood that Gabriel was referring to a miracle child to be born while she was still a virgin, prior to her marriage to Joseph. She naturally wondered how this was going to occur.

The birth of Jesus to a virgin is a miracle that many people find difficult to believe. Some have said that the concept of a virgin birth was picked up from other ancient sources. However, this concept has no precedent in either Jewish or pagan stories. That Jesus would be conceived without sexual activity between a man and a woman, that he would be conceived by God's power, was never imagined—until it happened. Even the often-quoted Old Testament prophecy in [Isaiah 7:14](#), referring to a virgin giving

birth, was interpreted as referring to a young woman of marriageable age who had never had children.

Others say that the reference to the Virgin Birth in Scripture is merely theological, not historical. But if the believers had intentionally made this up, they also caused all kinds of problems to go along with it, such as inviting the charge that Jesus was an illegitimate child.

Given such information, Luke would have been far better off *not* giving this information if he had been making it up. It would be too unbelievable. Luke reported it because it was true. Note these three facts: (1) Luke was a medical doctor, and he knew perfectly well how babies are made. It would have been just as hard for him to believe in a virgin birth as it is for people today, and yet he reported it as fact. (2) Luke was a painstaking researcher who based his Gospel on eyewitness accounts. Tradition holds that he talked with Mary about the events that he recorded in the first two chapters. This is Mary's story, not a fictional invention. (3) Christians and Jews, who worship God as the Creator of the universe, should believe that God has the power to create a child in a virgin's womb.

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### *LIFE APPLICATION*

#### JESUS UNDERSTANDS

Why is the Virgin Birth important to the Christian faith? Jesus Christ, God's Son, had to be free from the sinful nature passed on to all other human beings by Adam. Because Jesus was born of a woman, he was a human being; but as the Son of God, Jesus was born without any trace of human sin. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. Because Jesus lived as a man, human beings know that he fully understands their experiences and struggles ([Hebrews 4:15-16](#)). Because he is God, he has the power and authority to deliver people from sin ([Colossians 2:13-15](#)). People can tell Jesus all their thoughts, feelings, and needs. He has been where they are, and he has the ability to help.

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Jesus' miracles, transfiguration, and resurrection were all actual, historical events that defy explanation. They were acts of God in a human world. Jesus' birth was no exception. Christians' faith, however, rests not on

the Virgin Birth—indeed two of the four Gospels don't even mention it. Faith rests on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not on his virgin birth. Paul explained, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" ([1 Corinthians 15:14](#) NIV). However, the Virgin Birth reveals two important facts: (1) In Jesus, God began a "new creation," for through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, sin's power would be broken. In Jesus, people can come to God for a personal relationship and be freed from the power of sin. (2) Jesus was God's Son before he was even conceived in Mary's womb. He did not become God's Son at a later time. He was not accepted as God's Son because of good behavior or obedience. He was not a man promoted to that position. God's Son was born God's Son. In the birth of Jesus, God himself became human and entered the world—for fallen human beings! Therein lies the miracle! People are not meant to explain it, prove it, or ignore it—they are meant to believe it and worship God, who made it happen.

**[1:35](#) The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."**<sup>NLT</sup> Gabriel explained how Mary would become pregnant and yet remain a virgin. *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*—these words picture the powerful presence of God (the same word is used in the Transfiguration accounts to describe the overshadowing cloud, see [9:34](#); [Matthew 17:5](#); [Mark 9:7](#)). This would indeed be a special baby, for he *will be holy*. Jesus was born without the sin that had entered the world through Adam. He was born holy, just as Adam had been created sinless. Believers must be careful not to explain that Jesus was sinless simply because he did not have a human father. To do so would mean that Mary would have been sinless, which she was not.

Jesus' sinlessness rests not on his miraculous birth to a virgin girl but on the basis of his position with God. Through the birth of Jesus, God himself entered the world in human form. This is the miracle!

If Jesus Christ were not true God, how could he *help* us? If he is not true man, how could he help *us*?

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

In [1:32](#), the angel said Jesus would be called "the Son of the Highest"; here he adds that *he will be called the Son of God*. This passage is very key to the theology of who Jesus was. The title "Son of God" shows that he has a special role in God's purpose and that he is the true Son of David, the expected Messiah. The mention of the Holy Spirit gives the name greater significance, showing that God, through the Spirit, has a special role in creating this child. The connection of "Son of God" to Son of the Most High states Jesus' divinity. In contrast to Adam, who disobeyed God, Jesus would completely obey his Father, enabling him to face sin's consequences in sinners' place and make them acceptable to God ([Romans 5:14-19](#)). This Son would be born totally because of God's initiative and by his grace. Jesus came as a gift from God.

**[1:36-37](#) "Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."**<sup>NIV</sup> Mary did not ask for a sign, but it seems that Gabriel gave her one by explaining that Mary's relative Elizabeth was also pregnant as the result of God's grace. Gabriel gave Mary a person to whom she could go for support during what could prove to be a difficult time for Mary as she humbly fulfilled God's will. This also illustrated for Mary the fact that *nothing is impossible with God*. God took a barren woman who was past childbearing age and caused her to become pregnant. God took a virgin and caused a child to grow in her womb. With God, nothing is impossible (see [18:27](#); [Genesis 18:14](#); [Jeremiah 32:17, 27](#); [Matthew 17:20](#); [19:26](#); [Mark 10:27](#)).

**[1:38](#) Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.**<sup>NRSV</sup> God's announcement of a child to be born was met with various responses throughout Scripture. Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed ([Genesis 18:9-15](#)). Zechariah doubted ([1:18](#)). By contrast, Mary submitted, knowing that she was merely *the servant of the Lord*. She believed the angel's words and agreed to bear the child, even under humanly impossible circumstances, even with difficult social consequences. A young unmarried girl who became pregnant risked disaster. Unless the father of the child agreed to marry her, she would probably remain unmarried for life. If her own father rejected her, she could be forced into begging or prostitution in order to earn her living. She risked losing Joseph, her family, and her reputation. And her story



about being made pregnant by the Holy Spirit risked her being considered crazy as well. Still Mary said, despite the risks, *"Let it be with me according to your word."* When Mary said that, she didn't know about the tremendous opportunity she would have. She took the risk of faith; she didn't consult with anyone else; she didn't take time to weigh the pros and cons. She only knew that God was asking her to serve him, and she willingly obeyed. Believers need Mary's kind of trust and responsiveness. Too many wait to see the bottom line before offering themselves to God. God wants willing servants.

### *MARY VISITS ELIZABETH / [1:39-56](#) / [6](#)*

Mary is the type of woman who puts her faith into action. She not only says, "Lord, your will be done" (see [1:38](#)), but she also "hurries" to see God at work in the life of her relative Elizabeth. The journey to Judea that Mary undertook was not a simple drive to the next town; it was a difficult journey that would have taken at least three days at that time. Mary did not let that stop her from going to Elizabeth, rejoicing with her, and praising the Lord for fulfilling his promises.

In his description of the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, Luke continued to highlight the superiority of Jesus over John. Even in the womb, John leaped for joy, for he was already pointing to the Lord's Anointed—to Jesus.

Mary's response—a song of praise for God's mercy—echoes Hannah's song ([1 Samuel 2:1](#)) and models the way all believers should respond to God's work in their lives: with gratitude and praise. In the first half of her song ([1:46-49](#)), Mary acknowledged her humble position before the Almighty and praised him for working in her life. Although commentators have debated whether the last part of Mary's song ([1:50-55](#)) praises the Lord for his deliverance of the Israelites in the past or prophecies of the deliverance God would provide through Jesus Christ in the future, it is clear that Mary was praising God for showing mercy to his people in general. Today, believers can join Mary in singing God's praises, by recounting God's mercy to people today and to spiritual forebears—from Abraham and Sarah to the apostle Paul.

**[1:39-40](#)** A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth.<sup>NLT</sup> Elizabeth and Mary were related ([1:36](#)). Perhaps Mary felt the

need to take her news to someone who would understand. So Mary left Nazareth and *hurried to the hill country of Judea*, although *the town where Zechariah lived* is unknown. The trip from Nazareth to the hill country was probably fifty to seventy miles—a major trip for a young woman alone and on foot.

**1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.**<sup>NRSV</sup> Gabriel had told Mary of Elizabeth's pregnancy ([1:36](#)), which, at this time, was in its sixth month. Luke records that *when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting . . . Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit*. The visit from Mary no doubt came as a surprise, but the Holy Spirit made Elizabeth suddenly aware of both Mary's pregnancy and the identity of Mary's baby. (For more on the theme of the Holy Spirit in Luke, see [1:14-15](#).) The beautiful interweaving of the lives of Elizabeth and Mary before their children were born is a touching picture of God's grace upon his servants. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months ([1:56](#)). How they must have talked, wondering at what God was doing in their lives and what he was planning for their very special children.

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### LIFE APPLICATION

#### FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Christians are urged to be filled with the Spirit as part of normal growth in the Lord (see [Ephesians 5:18](#)), but the filling Elizabeth experienced was different, spontaneous, entirely God-given, much like that of Peter in [Acts 4:8](#). This filling captures the emotions with a God-centered joy and creates in the heart an excited sense of God's loving purpose in your life. This filling makes you want to sing, pray, shout, and dance. When God moves your heart this way, let it show.

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**1:42-45 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as**

**the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"**<sup>NIV</sup> Elizabeth had not even yet been told that Mary was pregnant. Elizabeth spoke words given to her by the Spirit ([1:41](#)) as she recognized Mary's *blessed* state, knowing that Mary was "blessed" because she had been specially chosen by God, much as Elizabeth had. As Mary had rushed off to visit her relative, she must have been wondering whether the events of the last few days were real. Elizabeth's greeting surely strengthened her faith. Mary's pregnancy may have seemed impossible, but her wise relative believed in the Lord's faithfulness and rejoiced in Mary's blessed condition. The Spirit also showed Elizabeth the identity of Mary's child, for she knew that this child was *blessed*—God's Son, the promised Messiah, with a unique identity and role to fulfill. Mary would be *the mother of [the] Lord*. As in [Psalm 110:1](#), the word "Lord" is an exalted title, used many times by Luke in his Gospel (twenty-five in the first two chapters in some versions). Only the Holy Spirit could have revealed this to Elizabeth. Mary and Elizabeth (and Zechariah—although he had been stricken deaf and mute, [1:20](#)) were the first people on earth to see God's hand moving to fulfill hundreds of years of promises.

Under inspiration of the Spirit, Elizabeth interpreted the movement in her womb as the child's *joy* at hearing Mary's *greeting*. Even though she herself was pregnant with a long-awaited son, Elizabeth could have envied Mary, whose son would be even greater than her own. Instead she was filled with joy that the mother of her Lord would visit her. Elizabeth repeated that Mary was *blessed* because she *believed* that what God had said to her would *be accomplished*.

That Mary "believed" is really quite remarkable. Her pregnancy was unprecedented. Her pregnancy was controversial, not established by a long tradition in a particular supportive community. Her pregnancy needed to be a quasi-secret—if she told everyone all that had actually occurred, they would have put her away as being crazy. The facts that she was asked to believe required admirable trust, discernment, and patience. But as Gabriel told Mary, "The Lord is with you" ([1:28](#)). Mary believed *that*, and it made all the difference.

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## LIFE APPLICATION

### MOTHER OF MY LORD

The veneration of Mary has been a hallmark of Roman Catholic worship since the seventh century and a major dividing line with Protestants, who regard such veneration as tantamount to making Mary the Savior. Many stereotypes and caricatures have created costly misunderstandings and made genuine discussion difficult. Catholics are bewildered at Protestants' cold shoulder to such a warm biblical character. Protestants see Jesus' role threatened when Mary is idolized.

The Bible helps here. Jesus is the Savior, and no one else. Mary is the blessed mother of Jesus, and her unique blessing was a gift from God. With Elizabeth, believers can rejoice for God's work in Mary's life. With Elizabeth and Mary, believers can praise God for the salvation won by Jesus' death and guaranteed by his resurrection.

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Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Luke.

2. What joy do you think God may have felt in sending the angel Gabriel to Mary?

*God had made a promise to Adam and Eve that a Savior would come. He made a promise to Abraham and Sarah that their seed would bless the world. He made a promise to David that he would have a descendant that would rule the nations. He had promised Simeon, he would see the Messiah before he died. God must have felt great joy that the time had come for Him to complete promises that He had made to individuals and couples who lived thousands of years apart. God must have received great joy in getting the process of people being fully reconciled back to Him in motion. Through Jesus, anyone could have a personal relationship to God.*

3. Why does the passage describe Joseph in the way that it does?

*That Joseph was a descendant of King David is important for the movement of Joseph to Bethlehem ([2:1-4](#)) and for the fact that Jesus would be born into the royal line of David. (Although Joseph was not his father, Jesus would be considered in the royal line through the rights of adoption.) Jesus' birth had to fulfill numerous prophecies in the bible. That included having his heritage being traced back through*

*the line of King David. One of the names Jesus was called by was , “The Son Of David.”*

4. If an angel told you that you were highly favored by God, what would that mean to you and what would you expect to happen?

*I'd probably begin thinking that I had done something right that caught God's attention, and I think that I would probably think I was about to receive something from God along the lines of a special assignment or the Lord asking me, what is it that I would like to have as God did with Solomon.*

5. Why do you think Mary was troubled by the angel's words?

*Mary knew there were women who had dedicated their lives to living and serving at the temple in order to be chosen to give birth to the Messiah. She knew she had done nothing to deserve this high honor of which the angel spoke. She probably thought it incredible that an angel would actually appear to her. She's probably still in her teens. Since she is a relative of Elizabeth, she may also be aware of the angel that appeared to Zechariah and left him speechless for 9 months. (See Chapter 1 of Luke) She certainly did not want to lose her ability to speak.*

6. How do you think the angel felt as he was telling Mary about the birth of Jesus, and what kind of expression do you think was on the angel's face?

*I imagine the angel was excited to share the news. I think there was the expression of joy on his face.*

7. What is the importance of Mary declaring that she is a virgin?

*Since Jesus is born of a virgin, he does not have the sinful nature inside of him that the rest of us are born with.*

*. Christians' faith, however, rests not on the Virgin Birth—indeed two of the four Gospels don't even mention it. Faith rests on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not on his virgin birth. Paul explained, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" ([1 Corinthians 15:14](#) NIV). However, the Virgin Birth reveals two important facts: (1) In Jesus, God began a "new creation," for through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, sin's power would be broken. In Jesus, people can come to God for a personal relationship and be freed from the power of sin. (2) Jesus was God's Son before he was even conceived in Mary's womb. He did not become God's Son at a later time. He was not accepted as God's Son because of good behavior or obedience. He was not a man promoted to that position. God's Son was born God's Son. In the birth of Jesus, God himself became human and entered the world—for fallen human beings! Therein lies the miracle! People are not meant to explain it, prove it, or ignore it—they are meant to believe it and worship God, who made it happen.*

8. How convinced are you on a scale of 1 to 10 that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit?

*I am convinced on the level of 10. But keep in mind, it is not an absolute that a person believe in the virgin birth in order to be saved. It's believing in Jesus as the Son of God and his death and resurrection that saves us. Allow the Holy Spirit to convince people of some of the doctrines of the church. Our doctrine should not keep people from taking the initial step of faith.*

9. How convinced are you on a scale of 1 to 10 that verse 37, "For no word from God will ever fail." is actually true?

*I am convinced on the level of 10. The problem comes when we think it's God that has said something to us or to others when God really has not said anything of the sort. Simply having someone say, thus saith the Lord, does not mean that God is actually speaking. The bible warns us against false prophets in both the Old and New Testament.*

10. Have you ever had a word from God that seemed as though it failed?

*Yes, but I don't know how long it was suppose to take for the word to become a reality. If God actually spoke to me, God still has time to complete what I thought God had said.*

11. What will be some of the negative consequences of Mary's joy to be the Lord's servant in verse 38?

*Mary's fiancé is going to want to end the relationship. Mary is going to bring shame on herself and her family. Mary is going to be a huge disappointment to those who knew her. Mary is going to appear mentally unbalanced from telling the virgin birth story. God is not going to supernaturally intervene for months in order to confirm Mary's story. Elizabeth is the only person who knows the truth of Mary's story, and she lives miles away. But since she is a relative, many will probably think she is just trying to cover for Mary. Mary is going to experience some unjust accusations and taunting from an unbelieving world.*

12. Have you ever had great joy in saying yes to the Lord to use you, only to have some pain or heartache come out of your obedience?

*Yes. Once we opened our homes to some relatives to help them, but the experience left us with strained relationships with each other. We didn't understand exactly what was going on.*

13. Why do you think Mary goes to Elizabeth with the news first, instead of going to tell Joseph?

*Maybe she wanted confirmation from someone who had been visited by an angel and became pregnant. Many people had to have known the story of Zechariah still being unable to speak and Elizabeth becoming pregnant in her old age. She may have wanted some guidance from her older relative. It would be difficult explaining this situation to Joseph without some good advice on the best way to do it.*

14. How important is it for us to share our joy with the right person?

*Sharing our joy with the wrong person could be like pouring cold water on a warm fire. Some people can convince us that what we have experienced was really just a figment of our imagination. They can cause us to doubt what God has said God would do in our lives.*



**Life-Sharing Lesson 2 “We’ve Got Joy For You” The Joy Of The Angels Luke 2:4-21**

1. When was the last time something really scared you?

*I think it was answering a phone call on my cell phone and almost crashing into a car by doing so. I knew I would have been in the wrong.*

**Luke 2:4-20 Today's New International Version (TNIV)**

**<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> 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.**

**<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”**

**<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**

**<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

**<sup>15</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what**

the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

## COMMENTARY

Luke 2:4-20

**2:4** Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>NRSV</sup>

Certainly Joseph would not have chosen to travel either with or without his pregnant wife just as she was ready to deliver, but he had no choice. Rome was far too powerful for anyone to resist. Most Jews hated taking part in a census because they viewed it as sacrilegious.

God alone was to number his people. When David attempted to number Israel, he brought great calamity on the nation because of his rash decision ([2 Samuel 24](#); [1 Chronicles 21](#)). So Joseph had two reasons to be angry about the census. Joseph *also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem*, a journey of about seventy or eighty miles (see map). In the Old Testament, the "city of David" generally referred to Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 5:7, 9](#)), but Bethlehem was where David grew up ([1 Samuel 16](#); [17:12](#); [20:6](#)).



### ***The Journey To Bethlehem***

*Caesar's decree for a census of the entire Roman Empire made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to leave their hometown, Nazareth, and journey the 70 or 80 miles to the Judean village of Bethlehem. This village was about 5 miles from Jerusalem.*

God controls all history. By the decree of Emperor Augustus, Jesus was born in the very town prophesied for his birth ([Micah 5:2](#)), even though his parents did not live there. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem because Joseph *was descended from the house and family of David*. In fact, both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David. Old Testament prophets predicted often that the Messiah would be born in David's royal line (see, for example, [Isaiah 11:1](#); [Jeremiah 33:15](#); [Ezekiel 37:24](#); [Hosea 3:5](#)).

**[2:5](#) He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.**<sup>NRSV</sup> Luke does not explain why Mary made this difficult trip with Joseph. Some suggest that she was needed for the census—unlike the policy in Egypt, women in Syria were subject to the poll tax. Certainly Joseph did not want to leave Mary alone. She probably had already faced painful gossip because of her premarriage pregnancy and preferred to stay with Joseph. Or perhaps they simply both saw the outworkings of God's plan and traveled to Bethlehem where the promised child was to be born ([Micah 5:2](#)). At this point, Joseph and Mary were *engaged*. The two were living together, but they abstained from sexual relations. [Matthew 1:24-25](#) explains that an angel spoke to Joseph in a dream about Mary's condition: "When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus" (NRSV).

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## LIFE APPLICATION

### COMFORT ZONES

The government forced Joseph to make a long trip just to pay his taxes. His fiancée, who had to go with him, was going to have a baby any moment. But when they arrived in Bethlehem, they couldn't even find a place to stay. Doing God's will often takes people out of their comfort zones. Jesus' life began in poverty. Later, Jesus would stress to his disciples what it meant to have no place to lay one's head ([9:58](#)). Those who do God's will are not guaranteed comfortable lives. But they are promised that

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everything, even their discomfort, has meaning in God's plan.

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**2:6-7** So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.<sup>NKJV</sup> In simple, direct language, Luke presented the Christmas story: no trees or lights, just a *manger* and animals and a too-crowded inn. It isn't surprising that there was *no room for them in the inn* considering the number of travelers flocking to various cities during the time of this census.

At some time during their visit in Bethlehem, *the days were completed* and the promised child was born.

Of course, he was *her firstborn Son*—Mary had had no previous children (indeed, she was a virgin), and the angel had promised that the child would be "Son of the Most High" ([1:32](#)). Mary wrapped the baby in *swaddling cloths*, bands of cloth that were used to keep a baby warm and give it a sense of security. These cloths were believed to protect its internal organs. This custom of wrapping infants is still practiced in many Mideastern countries. Apparently Mary and Joseph accomplished the delivery themselves; otherwise, a midwife would have wrapped the child.

The twist in the story is, of course, that it is the very pagan authorities who are responsible for bringing Jesus to Bethlehem. Caesar, like Cyrus before him, unknowingly becomes the servant of God's purpose. The promise is fulfilled through the actions of the unlikeliest of people. For God is Lord of all the earth and there is no power not under his authority, no poverty to which he turns a blind eye of indifference.

*June Osborne*

After the birth and after the child had been cleaned and wrapped, Mary *laid Him in a manger*, an animal's feeding trough. She may have filled the manger with hay to make a soft bed. This mention of the manger is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs (mangers) carved into the rock walls. Despite popular Christmas card pictures, the surroundings were dark and dirty. Everything pointed to obscurity, poverty, and even rejection. Luke

showed the King of kings born into poor and humble circumstances—born as a human, born to serve.

### *SHEPHERDS VISIT JESUS / [2:8-20](#) / [10](#)*

The angel Gabriel had announced the coming births of John and Jesus ([1:5-20](#), [26-38](#)); here a host of angels announced the "good news" of Jesus' birth and broke out into exuberant praise. The angels called the baby Jesus the promised Messiah—the Savior. Such an announcement was a typical proclamation of the birth of a child to the royal family—for Augustus himself had been called a "savior" at his birth. But while the announcement of Augustus's birth would have been first delivered to the members of the Roman Senate and other dignitaries, the privilege of hearing about Jesus' birth *first* was given to ordinary shepherds.

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### *LIFE APPLICATION*

#### MANGER SCENE

Although our first picture of Jesus is as a baby in a manger, it must not be our last. The Christ child in the manger has been made into a beautiful Christmas scene, but we cannot leave him there. This tiny, helpless baby lived an amazing life, died for sinners, ascended to heaven, and will come back to this earth as King of kings. Christ will rule the world and judge all people according to their decisions about him. Do you still picture Jesus as a baby in a manger—or is he your Lord? Don't underestimate Jesus. Let him grow up in your life.

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The angels also gave the shepherds a sign. They would find their Savior in "a manger"—a sign of not only Jesus' identity but also his humble circumstances. By highlighting the modest character of Jesus' birth, Luke set the stage for the bulk of his narrative: a story describing how Jesus gathered twelve common Israelite men to help him minister to the ordinary people of Israel. The shepherds' response to the angels' announcement is similar to Mary's: they "hurried off" to see what God was accomplishing and returned, praising him ([1:39](#), [46-56](#); [2:16](#), [20](#) NIV). God still breaks into

ordinary lives, even yours. Follow his instructions, praising him for using you to accomplish his will.

**2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.**<sup>NIV</sup> From the dirty manger, Luke moved to *the fields nearby*, outside the village. It was *night*. *Shepherds* were there, *keeping watch over their flocks*. Among the occupations, shepherding had a lowly place. They were outcasts, not allowed in the city and not trusted by the general public, for often they were thieves. Luke gave this story about the shepherds for a reason. Jesus would come, not to the proud and powerful, but to the outcasts, the humble, those considered "last" on the social lists. To these men God brought the first news of his Son's arrival.

Shepherds also have other implications in this story of the Messiah's birth. King David, from whom this new king is descended, had been a shepherd most of his life. God had called him from that occupation to become a "shepherd" over the nation of Israel ([2 Samuel 7:8](#)). Scripture often uses shepherds to symbolize all who care for God's people, including God himself ([Psalm 23:1](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#); [Jeremiah 23:1-4](#); [Ezekiel 34:23](#); [Hebrews 13:20](#); [1 Peter 2:25](#); [5:2](#)).

**2:9-10 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."**<sup>NKJV</sup> As these shepherds were living in the fields under the sky, suddenly a bright light broke through the darkness. *An angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them*. They recognized that this was a supernatural being because of the dazzling light, "the glory of the Lord" that was shining all around them. "Glory" refers to the majesty and splendor accompanying God's presence (see also [Exodus 16:7](#); [24:17](#); [Psalm 63:2](#); [Isaiah 40:5](#)).

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### LIFE APPLICATION

JUST AS YOU ARE

The greatest event in history had just occurred! The Messiah had

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been born! For ages the Jews had waited for this, and when it finally happened, the announcement came to humble shepherds. The good news about Jesus is that he comes to all types of people, including the plain, the ordinary, and the outcasts of society. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept him. Whoever you are, whatever you do, you can have Jesus in your life. Don't think that you need extraordinary qualifications—Jesus accepts you as you are.

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The stunning display of God's glory and the appearance of the angel naturally terrified these shepherds. This may have been Gabriel, who had also appeared to Zechariah ([1:19](#)) and to Mary ([1:26](#)). Both Zechariah and Mary were encouraged when Gabriel said, "Do not be afraid" ([1:13](#); [1:30](#)); the angel here also encouraged the shepherds, *Do not be afraid*. He had come with *good tidings of great joy for all people*. "Good tidings" or "good news" became another way of describing the gospel message itself; Luke used this phrase as the name for the gospel throughout the book of Acts (for a sampling of verses, see [Acts 5:42](#); [8:12](#); [10:36](#); [14:15](#)). At the very hour of Jesus' birth, the good news was already being spread supernaturally by an angel. This good news would bring *great joy*, for it comprised everything for which the Jews had been hoping and waiting—the Savior had come. The "all people" to whom this news came was first the people of Israel (the Greek word used here, *laos*, referred to Israelites, not to people in general). While the "good tidings" would one day bring great joy to people of every land across the globe, it came first of all to God's covenant people.

The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable.  
*Ralph W. Sockman*

Some of the Jews were waiting for a savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped that the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual kingdom, delivered them from sin. His work is more far-reaching than anyone could imagine. Christ paid the price for sin and opened the way to peace with God. He offers us more than temporary political or physical changes—he offers us new hearts that will last for eternity.

## See Also:

[Chart: To Fear or Not to Fear](#)

**2:11** "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."<sup>NKJV</sup> The angel explained the substance of the "good news" that he brought: *There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* A child had just been born. The site of his birth was the "city of David," Bethlehem (see commentary on [2:4](#)).

The child is the *Savior*. The word "Savior" is used to refer to Jesus only two times in the Gospels: here as the angels proclaimed his birth, and in [John 4:42](#) by the Samaritans who came to believe in Jesus as "the Savior of the world." In the Old Testament, the same word (sometimes translated "deliverer" in some versions) is used for certain individuals, as well as for God ([Judges 3:9, 15](#); [1 Samuel 10:19](#); [2 Samuel 22:2-3](#); [2 Kings 13:5](#); [Isaiah 19:20](#)). For the Greeks and Romans, the word "savior" could be applied to their gods as well as to great military or political leaders. Julius Caesar was called a "savior." The basic meaning of the word was readily understood by Jews as well as Gentiles.

The title *Christ the Lord* is found only here in the New Testament, although the understanding of Christ as the Lord appears elsewhere ([Acts 2:36](#); [2 Corinthians 4:5](#); [Philippians 2:11](#)). The word "Christ" is Greek for "Anointed One"; the word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew term with the same meaning. To be anointed meant to be set apart for some special purpose. Moses anointed Aaron and his sons as the first priests of Israel ([Exodus 28:41](#)); the prophet Samuel anointed both Saul and David as kings of Israel ([1 Samuel 10:1](#); [16:3](#)). The title was applied to that future one whom God would raise up. The Jews were awaiting this special deliverer, one who would be the Anointed One of God, the Messiah, the Christ.

The word "Lord" refers here to deity. That this tiny baby was the "Lord" means that God had arrived in human form. Thus the angel gave no doubt as to the identity of this child. He was the one for whom all Israel had been waiting.

**2:12** "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."<sup>NKJV</sup> The shepherds did not ask for a *sign* (as had Zechariah, [1:18](#)), but they received one. The angel apparently expected the shepherds to immediately go looking for this child, so he told



them what to look for. The baby would be *wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*

Not only would this sign help the shepherds find the right baby, it would also attest to the truth of the angel's words to the last detail. While there might be other newborn babies in Bethlehem wrapped in strips of cloth, there would be only one "lying in a manger."

A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling "darkness" on the walls of his cell.

C. S. Lewis

The shepherds were not told to look in a palace or in a wealthy home—indeed, they would not have gotten past the gates if they had. But they could go to the poor stable, receive acceptance from a poor couple, and discover the miracle baby.

**2:13-14 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors."**<sup>NLT</sup> After the angel gave the great news of God's arrival on earth, *suddenly* all heaven broke into praise, for *the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven.* John's vision of heaven recorded in Revelation reveals that there are innumerable angels in heaven: "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" ([Revelation 5:11](#) NIV). One of the angels' key roles is to offer continuous praise to God. The arrival of God's Son on earth caused the "armies of heaven" to join in an anthem of praise to God. Rarely did more than one angel come; at this great event, however, all the angels joined together, praising God. The "armies of heaven" or "heavenly host" refers to a select group of angels that serve God (see [1 Kings 22:19](#); [Daniel 7:10](#)). The story of Jesus' birth resounds with music that has inspired composers for two thousand years. The angels' song is an all-time favorite. Often called the "Gloria" after its first word in the Latin translation, it is the basis of modern choral works, traditional Christmas carols, and ancient liturgical chants. "Glory to God" focuses the praise on the one who set these events

in motion, the one who controls all events on earth. He is "in the highest heaven" and is sending *peace on earth to all whom [he] favors*. The peace referred to is the peace that only the Messiah can bring—not peace after war or conflict, but peace between sinful humanity and the holy God. Those whom God favors are those to whom he will graciously reveal his truth. The emphasis is on God—he is to be glorified, and he will bring peace to those whom he chooses. The entire "good news," brought to humanity through the birth of Jesus, came by God's decision and grace alone.

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### LIFE APPLICATION

#### SPREAD THE WORD

What a birth announcement! The shepherds were terrified, but their fear turned to joy as the angels announced the Messiah's birth.

First the shepherds ran to see the baby; then they spread the word. Jesus is *your* Messiah, *your* Savior. Praise for God and gratitude for what he has done should motivate you to witness to others. Have you discovered a Lord so wonderful that you can't help sharing your joy with your friends?

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**[2:15-16](#)** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.<sup>NRSV</sup> After their anthem of praise, the angels went back *into heaven* (see also [24:51](#); [Acts 1:11](#)), and the shepherds wanted to go and see *this thing that has taken place*. Obviously *the Lord* (through his angels) had given them a special message, so *they went with haste* into the village of Bethlehem to find a baby "wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" ([2:12](#)). They were not disappointed, for they *found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger*, just as the angel had said.

**[2:17-18](#)** Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the

**shepherds' story were astonished.**<sup>NLT</sup> The *shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said*—thus becoming the first witnesses of the gospel message. They told about the child and all that the angels had said about him, and *all who heard . . . were astonished*. Most likely, "everyone" and "all" refer to the people at the inn. Everyone was astonished at the shepherds' story.

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## LIFE APPLICATION

### TELLING ALL YOU KNOW

These shepherds told everyone who would listen all that they had heard and seen. Often people who try to tell all that they know are politely avoided. It can be boring to listen to someone who never stops to take a breath.

But in the shepherds' case, people listened, because:

I Shepherds were not supposed to know much, and these shepherds had startling information.

I The message was revolutionary, breathtaking, and transformative. It changed listeners' lives.

I The shepherds spoke from the heart, and their words connected to the deepest needs of others.

When you tell about Jesus, start with what you know best: your life experience. Tell the story of God in your life. You don't need to embellish, but don't hold back either. Your words will change many, and God will use you to change the world.

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**[2:19](#) But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.**<sup>NRSV</sup> Surely the shepherds told Mary and Joseph what the angels had said in order to explain why they were intruding on the couple with their baby. When they left they spread the story, and those who heard it were "astonished" ([2:18](#)). In contrast, *Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart*. "Treasured" means deep reflection, keeping in mind or safely storing up; "pondering in the heart" refers to mulling over, seeking to understand and interpret. Mary had a lot to think about as she gazed into the face of her tiny child. Gabriel had told her that the little boy

would reign forever ([1:31-33](#)); the shepherds reported the angel's words—he is the Savior, Christ the Lord ([2:11](#)). As Mary held this tiny baby, she must have wondered at all that God was doing, and who her son would grow up to become.

**[2:20](#) The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.**<sup>NRSV</sup> The shepherds had to get back to the fields before their sheep wandered off into the night. So they *returned*, but as they did so, they were *glorifying and praising God*. They knew that they had received a special message and had been privileged to be the first to see the promised child.

### MARY AND JOSEPH BRING JESUS TO THE TEMPLE / [2:21-40](#) / [11](#)

Just as the story of John the Baptist's birth began in the temple ([1:5-25](#)), so the story of Jesus' birth culminates in the temple. In obedience to the dictates of Jewish law, Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to God (see [Exodus 13:2-16](#)) and offered a sacrifice for the ritual purification of Mary (see [Leviticus 12:2-6](#)).

In the temple, Simeon approached Jesus and delivered a prophecy, describing Jesus as "the Savior" ([2:30](#) NLT). Anna joined in, praising God for the baby Jesus. Their testimony confirmed at least seven different prophecies surrounding Jesus' birth ([1:17](#), [31-33](#), [42-45](#), [68-76](#); [2:10-14](#), [28-32](#), [38](#)). These prophecies, one after another, proclaim Jesus their Savior, Deliverer, and Lord. Like Anna, believers should join their voices with these witnesses, praising God for providing salvation through his beloved Son, Jesus.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Luke.

2. Why do you think God sends the angels to the shepherds, instead of to the people who had filled the inn?

*God wanted everyone to know that this Savior would include the outcasts of the world as well as the rest of the world. Although others had forgotten the shepherds in society, God knew exactly where they were, and God used them to share the announcement of the angels with the rest of the world. The Savior puts the lowly of society on the same level as the high and mighty. The people in the inn had one of the greatest events in history happen in their midst. They were not aware of it, and would*

*not have known about it, if the shepherds had not come with the message. Many of them probably would not have had any dealings with the shepherds otherwise.*

3. What do you think the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds actually looked like?

*I see the sky being lit up with flashes of gold streaking in the sky. I also envision something like a cloud surrounding the shepherd in the form of some kind of a fog.*

4. If you had of been a rough, cussing, shepherd that night, what do you think would have been going through your mind when the angel showed up?

*I think I would have thought, we're really in trouble now. I sure wish I had paid more attention to serving God this past week. I would have been certain that God's judgment was about to appear in some form or another.*

5. What do you think was the tone of the angel's voice when he made the announcement to the shepherds?

*I think there was excitement and an element of joy. I don't think there was the tone of a command of what to do, but rather an invitation to go and see.*

6. If you had of been there, would the appearance of the great company of the heavenly host made you more afraid or more relaxed?

*I think after the initial announcement of what was going on, I would have been relieved of enough fear to get excited in a positive way.*

7. Do you think any of the shepherds were more tempted to go and tell others about their experience than they were to go and first see the baby?

*With human nature being what it was, I'm sure that somebody was tempted to take the focus off of the birth of Jesus, to "look what I just experienced. I saw some angels!" The emphasis of the story would have drifted to the person himself being the main attraction.*

8. Are we ever tempted to be satisfied with just a religious experience as opposed to taking the time to really go and get to know Jesus? If so why?

*We are often much more excited by the religious experience, emotion or event than we are taking the time to simply find Jesus in the Scriptures or even in our everyday life. We like to be able to point to events as milestones in our walk with God or as places to give a dynamic testimony. Sometimes we are invited to see Jesus in some very unlikely places. We miss Him because we don't expect Him to show up.*

9. Why is the arrival of Jesus on earth, such a big deal in heaven?

*The beings in heaven know of God's desire to be reunited with human beings. They know that God's defeat of Satan is that much closer and that the birth of Christ signifies the end of death and sin in this fallen world. It also brings us closer to the new heavens and new earth that is going to be completed. Angels have been anxiously awaiting God's unfolding plan for humanity.*

10. What price were the shepherds willing to pay to go and see Jesus?

*They were willing to risk losing some of the flock that they were watching over which would have meant financial loss. They were willing to risk being turned away, after all they were shepherds. They were willing to risk being laughed at and made fun of. Who was going to believe that God would go to shepherds instead of the religious leaders?*

11. What are the things that will keep us from getting to see Jesus this Christmas?

*We can become so busy getting ready for the commercial Christmas, that we miss out on God coming into the world to change our lives. God wants to live in and through us at Christmas. The world wants us to go crazy over making a perfect Christmas event.*

12. The joy of the angels, was transferred to the joy of the shepherds. The shepherds, after seeing Jesus, went and became evangelists. What is an evangelist. Why should a run in with Jesus, produce a desire within us to become evangelist?

*An evangelist is someone telling someone else some good news. If we know what Jesus can do for us, we should want to help others find answers to the problems they face in life. We all have a problem of needing to be in a right relationship with God whether we recognize it or not. God wants us to go and tell the reason for Christmas, not just celebrate the occasion.*

13. How can we avoid losing our joy over the birth of our Savior during the holiday season?

*By trying to put Jesus in the manger rather than allowing him to live his life through us. Our goal is to live our lives so that others at least get a glimpse of what Jesus does to a life surrendered to him.*

14. What one thing will you do this holiday season to make it joyful for those with whom you live, will visit, or will come into contact with through the end of this year.

*I will seek to offer more encouragement than criticism this holiday season.*