

## Day 1

December 17



Pray | *Thank God for using flawed people in his plans.*

### SIMPLY SCANDALOUS

Take just a moment to ponder these scandalous situations: There is an old barren couple suddenly and miraculously expecting their first child. There is the young engaged girl who is divinely pregnant and yet a virgin. And then there is the girl's fiancé. He's trying his hardest to come up with the best solution to an impossible situation, one he did not even get himself into-at least not in the way everyone is thinking. The fiancé, Joseph, is in quite a predicament.

These are not the only occurrences in the Bible. Look up Jesus' genealogies, and then find the Bible stories for the women whose names are mentioned there. God's ways are very much not our ways. Scandalous situations and flawed people are often what God chooses to allow into his plan of redemption for the world through his only son, Jesus.



Read | [Matthew 1:18-20](#)



Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

One thing the verses do not say is that Joseph sought God before resolving upon his course of action. Based on either your own experiences or other Bible stories, what reasons are there for why not seeking God first is a very risky plan of action?

An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. In what ways is the angel's saying "do not fear" here different than in the other angelic conversations with Zechariah and Mary?

Imagine an idyllic scenario with Joseph saying, "This baby is from the Holy Spirit," and everyone responding "Ahhhh, well yes, that explains it." What God, through the angel, has said to Joseph was to disregard the mumbling of others, embrace Mary as his wife, and accept the child to be born was God's plan of salvation. Are there times when you needed reassurance what you were doing was the right thing and all you get from God is that you need to trust him? Were you a Joseph doing what God asked?

## Day 2

December 18



Pray | *Thank God for thinking about even the little things.*

### ANGELS MAKE THE BEST BABY NAME RESOURCES

It's true, they do. On the internet or in a baby name book you'll find trendy or classic names, their meanings, and lots of ways to confuse the seemingly simple task of what to name your soon to be born baby. Anyone who is a parent, or is currently a parent to be, knows that deciding on a name can be anything but a simple and an instant agreement between husband and wife. It may in fact be the very reason God makes pregnancies last nine months. That way there is enough time to discuss, argue, cajole, compromise and hopefully decide on what to call the baby before it arrives! Now imagine Mary and Joseph having the same discussion. What do we name the baby? In unison they both say "JESUS"! Why? Because the angel gave them both the same instructions of course.



Read | [Matthew 1:21-23](#)



Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

The angelic messages Mary and Joseph received were full of extra details. Baby will...be a boy...be called Jesus...save people from their sins...fulfill prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). Those details were enough to convince Mary and Joseph. What ways do they convince you as well?

There are many true statements that become cliché like "God is always with you." Jesus' arrival as both God and man in human likeness was actually the physical manifestation of "GOD WITH US". Think of all the ways God's willingness to come as a baby impacts your faith.

Prophets come and prophets go usually because their prophecies do not come true. God's prophets spoke on his behalf, not their own. The Bible shows us these prophecies and their fulfillments-many of them through Jesus. How does knowing these already fulfilled prophecies grow your faith; reassuring you that those yet unfulfilled will be fulfilled by God?

## Day 3

December 19



Pray | *Thank God for the power to persuade.*

### PERSUADED TO CHANGE DIRECTION

Persuasion in our modern world is much more being induced by force to do something, as opposed to Biblical usage being a response to a well-reasoned discussion. Think responding to a persuasive speech rather than being persuaded to change opinions as a result of blackmail or threat of bodily harm. Zechariah was persuaded at the cost of his ability to speak until the angel's words came true. Mary was persuaded; she accepted God's miraculous assignment willingly and without duress after her angelic visit. Joseph woke up a changed man, very literally, after his encounter with an angel having been persuaded that his plan to quietly divorce Mary was not what God wanted him to do. God can easily force people to do his will but chooses instead to persuade them using other means-offering them a choice to believe and respond.



Read | [Matthew 1:24-25](#)



Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Think for a moment about the last time you promptly did something the Lord asked you to do, especially if it was headed in a different direction from your natural inclination or where you were already going. What was it and how were you persuaded to change direction?

What we see as history in the Biblical Christmas story in these verses was very much happening in the moment for those involved. They did not have the benefit we do of seeing it in context within the whole Story of God. Pray and thank God for letting you see the whole picture in the Bible.

How is repentance (acknowledging something is wrong, and then turning away from it) the pinnacle of having been persuaded. If you are feeling that you are missing out on the joy of Christmas perhaps God is trying to persuade you to change your life by accepting Jesus' gift of salvation today.

## Day 4

December 20



Pray | *That hearing God will lead to obeying God in your life.*

### JOSEPH: FROM MAN OF ACTION TO MISSING IN ACTION

The Bible does not share every detail of every story; just enough that it helps us to see what we need to get a better view of the bigger picture God is painting. Jesus' earthly father figure, Joseph, is one such example of this. He is mentioned by name, and referred to as one of Jesus' parents. Later on Joseph is referenced as a carpenter and that his son is Jesus. But then Joseph essentially disappears from the narrative. At his own crucifixion, Jesus asks John to care for his mother alluding that Mary is now a widow. It is not important why Joseph disappears from the story but rather what he did when he was in the story. On three occasions, which you will read about today, God gives Joseph an angelic message in a dream. Joseph does something particular in response each time this occurred.



Read | *Matthew 1:18-25, 2:13-15, 19-23*



Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Three times Joseph saw an angel bearing a message from God in his dreams. Three times Joseph woke up and followed the instructions he had been given. In what ways have you found that God chooses to speak to you, and is there a particular way you are more attuned that it spurs you to action?

When God speaks, do you hear and stay where you are pondering the subtleties of his message, or do you hear and obey promptly?

If you are unsure that God is speaking to you, compare what you think you hear with the Bible and to the character of God; or ask for wise counsel from a fellow believer or church leader. God is always speaking to his people. Are we listening and then acting?

## Day 5

December 21



Pray | *Thank God for the work of his angels.*

### ANGELS CAN BE CONFUSING

A Biblical search for angels returns many results, but clarity is not necessarily one of them. Angels can be messengers, warriors, guardians of believers, and are created servants of God. Some have names and specific jobs, others appear with their true nature disguised, some leave no doubt with those whom they appear to as to what they are. One or two angels may appear or even the host of heaven. Some angels, known as demons, are even in open rebellion against God and his loyal angels. Authors like Frank Peretti and Randy Alcorn through their fiction novels have captured Christian and secular readers' imaginations, and have drawn interest into not just angels but spiritual warfare as well. It is good to know of angels and their existence as they figure prominently in the Bible, but it also should be crystal clear that there is danger in worshiping and glorifying created angels rather than the creator God.



Read | *Judges 6:22, 13:21; Acts 12:7-10; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15;*

*Revelations 12:7-9*



Reflect | *Spend time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Think about the things you know about angels. Do you think you would recognize an angel if one were to ever appear to you? In what ways might you be able to discern if it was an angel of God or a demon?

Angels were created to glorify God; Satan chose to glorify himself instead. Satan's fall sounds eerily like our own rebellion against God. Deeply consider whom you are glorifying more in your life, God or yourself?

Angels and demons are very real. Job 1:7; James 4:7-10; Ephesians 6:10-18; and 1 Peter 5:8-9 all testify to the fact that Satan and his angels roam the earth. The only way to use God's powerful defense is to know what God's word says about angels both good and evil.

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