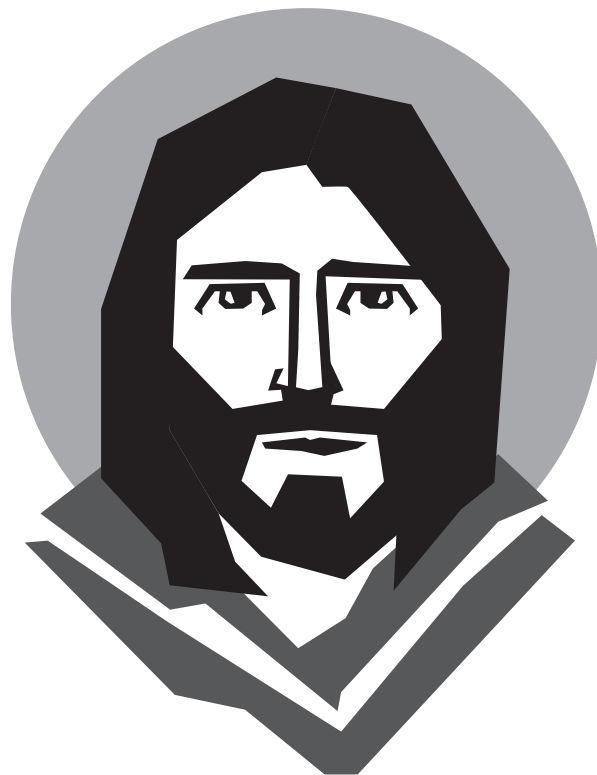
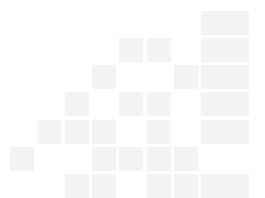
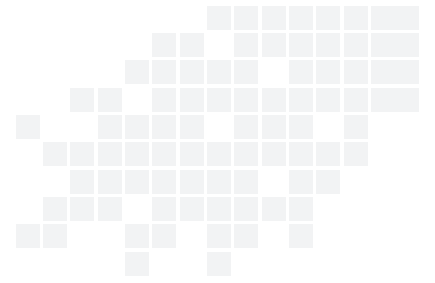


THE REAL JESUS



A study through the Gospel of Luke

BOOK 6: HIS PREPARATION





BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

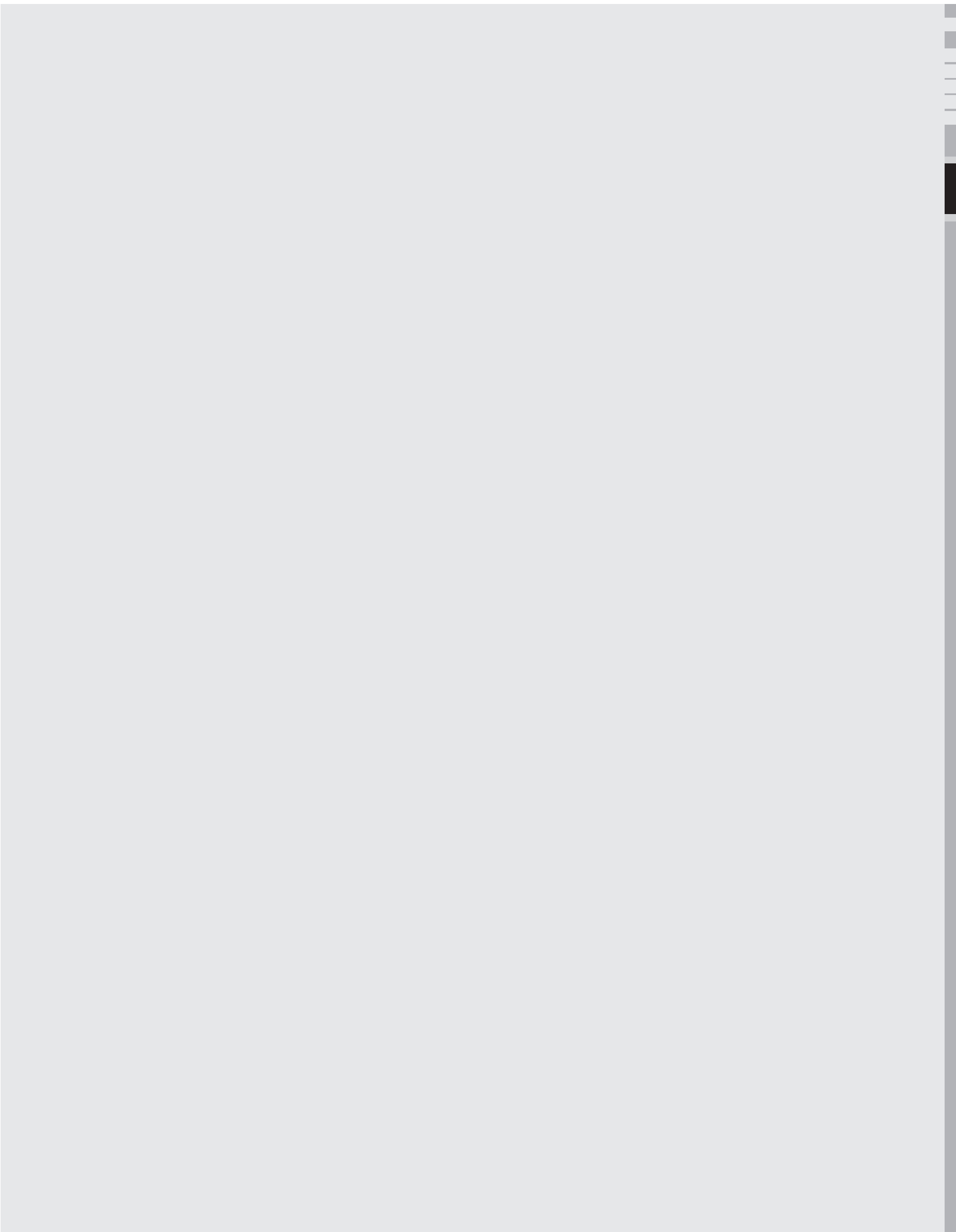
In the Bible, God reveals His truth about how to have eternal life by becoming a believer in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The believer is a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a true child of God, and one who has been saved by God according to God's grace (undeserved favor). *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How does one become a Christian?

- The Bible, God's word, says that eternal life (salvation) is a free gift of God which cannot be earned or deserved (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- However, we also find in God's word that all people are born sinners and cannot save themselves from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death and separation from God. God's requirement is perfection and no one is perfect (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:3-23; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- God tells us in His word that He is holy, meaning that He is perfect and that He is also just, meaning that He gives to sinners what is deserved, and because of His holiness and justice He must punish sinners. But thankfully, the Bible also says that God is loving and merciful and does not take pleasure in punishing sinners (Exodus 34:6-7; Ephesians 2:4-5).
- God has mercy on sinners by not giving them what they deserve. This is only possible because He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the God-man, to be the substitute for sinners bearing the penalty for their sin and satisfying God's justice (John 1:1,14; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:8).
- Jesus said that in order for anyone to have eternal life there must be repentance of sins and faith placed in His substitutionary death on the cross to pay for the penalty of one's sins. This faith must be in Jesus Christ alone not depending on anything else including "good works" (Mark 1:15b; Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9).

What then is the response to these things if one desires to have eternal life and become a Christian?

1. Pray and ask God to forgive you. The Bible says that you must repent of your sins, being ashamed of them, genuinely regretting and grieving over them, and firmly deciding to make an about-face and turn away from sin and your old lifestyle (Acts 3:19-20).
2. Pray and tell God that you place your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you. The Bible says that for you to become a Christian, you must place your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died on the cross to become your substitute and who took the penalty for your sin upon Himself once and for all (John 3:36).



THE REAL JESUS: HIS PREPARATION

Week Four | December 2, 2018 | It's a Boy!

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's texts, Luke 2:1–20. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Jesus humbled Himself to bring His Father the highest glory.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

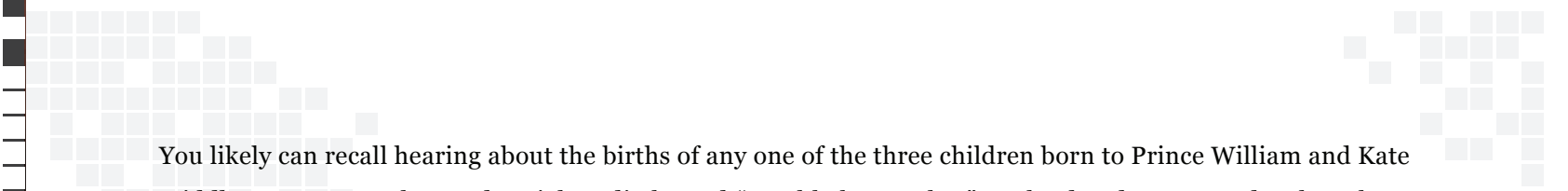
We should be known for our humility and for our exaltation of God.

MEDITATE

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!" (Luke 2:14).

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.



You likely can recall hearing about the births of any one of the three children born to Prince William and Kate Middleton. News outlets and social media hosted “royal baby watches” as the due dates neared. When these royal children finally arrived, media coverage was constant. Anyone even remotely connected to the royal family was interviewed about the blessed events. Millions of people celebrated and publicly sent well-wishes. Contrast this level of fanfare to the most significant birth of all time, the birth of Jesus. Despite His inherent glory and status, His birth was not met with cheering crowds and town criers. The humble circumstances of Jesus’ birth highlight the highest glory given to His Father.

Our text today is all about God’s glory. God opens the eyes of His people to see His glory revealed in His Son (2 Corinthians 4:6). There is a relationship between humility and glory. James 4:10 teaches that those who humble themselves before the Lord will be exalted. Nineteenth-century pastor Andrew Murray wrote in his book, *Humility*, that “humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God.” If we are to exalt God, we must dethrone ourselves. The prideful will never exalt another. Pride only seeks glory for itself. Contrast this with the humble, who gladly glorify the Father because they don’t seek the throne for themselves. The humble know the rightful occupant of the throne. They see the glory of God in the face of the Real Jesus. We become what we behold (2 Corinthians 3:18). Like Christ, we will be humble, and we will exalt our Father.

The humility of Jesus brought His Father the highest glory, but it also secured our rescue. Because He came, we can be adopted into the family of God. We are made heirs along with Christ, preparing to share in His glory (Romans 8:17). This knowledge inspires us to be humble and to bring glory to God through our praise and faithful witness of His great mercy shown to us. We gladly invest our all into spreading the message of a loving God who rescues sinners from His wrath through His Son. We bear witness to God’s presence in our life through the Real Jesus. We bring Him glory by obeying His good command to make disciples and teach them to obey our Father (Matthew 28:19–20). As we do this, we can be confident that one day we will share in His glory.

🕒: *We become what we behold. What are you beholding?*

🕒: *How should Jesus’ birth influence the way you live your ordinary life today?*



❏ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In today's lesson we will study the much anticipated birth of Christ and determine our role as witnesses.

1. GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED IN HUMBLE PLACES
 2. GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED TO HUMBLE PEOPLE
 3. GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED THROUGH HUMBLE WITNESSES
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GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED IN HUMBLE PLACES


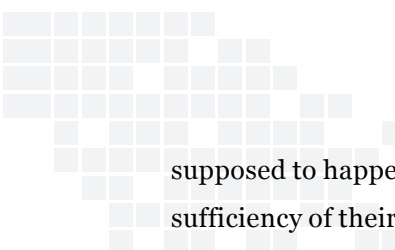
❏ LUKE 2:1-7

🗣️: *Why were Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem?*

🗣️: *Whose lineage is Joseph part of?*

Mary and Joseph have been traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They're weary from their journey. Mary is understandably uncomfortable after traveling in her condition. But the day is almost over, Bethlehem is in sight, and rest is imminent. Mary thinks, "If I can just last a little while longer, I'll be in bed soon." She waits for Joseph to finish his business with the innkeeper. Her anticipation of finding a place to sleep is quickly interrupted by the unmistakable pains of labor. Her panic only increases when Joseph returns with the news that she will give birth to the Savior of the world in a stable because all the rooms in the inn are taken.

Surely these new parents must have felt inadequate in their ability to welcome their Lord and care for Him properly. The weight on Joseph's shoulders must have been great as he battled feelings of failure to provide better for Mary in her time of need and for God's Son. Can you feel his anxiety? He must have thought, "It's not





supposed to happen like this. This is the Messiah, He can't be born here!" Their insufficiency contrasts with the sufficiency of their new son. But this unlikely, humble birthplace is exactly where God intended for His beloved Son to enter the world. God ordained all the events surrounding this blessed event.

The location of the manger is no coincidence, nor is the location of the city where Jesus was born. God did not get the address wrong. It was prophesied hundreds of years earlier that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). It appeared that Jesus' birthplace was determined by politics. Mary and Joseph left their home to travel to the town where Joseph was born because the Roman ruler, Caesar Augustus, decreed that everyone had to register in their home town for taxation purposes (v. 1). But political leaders and their policies are not outside the scope of God's sovereign control. Unbeknownst to Caesar, God was using him to fulfill His prophecy about the location of His Son's birth. This specific town was chosen by God to welcome His Son. This humble stable was the exact place God determined to reveal His glory.


We must have eyes to see beyond. We must look to the unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18). When we look into the unseen we see more than coincidences. We see the glory of God. Open your eyes and look beyond the humble stable and the lowly animals. Open your eyes and behold your God! He reveals His glory in humble places. This lowly stable is the backdrop to the miracle of the virgin birth. This humble space is the scene of God's glory revealed through the Real Jesus. Consider how this miracle occurs in the quiet night, unnoticed by all except for the ones to whom God chose to reveal this good news. Holy work is done in public spaces and in private ones. Don't devalue work done away from the spotlight. God declares His glory in humble places, easily overlooked and undesired by others. Look deeper. Let your gaze linger. See what is easily unseen by the world. Behold your God!

Consider your own circumstances. We can be tempted to believe our situation is unnoticed or undesired by others. Look beyond the obvious. Pray for God to open your eyes to His glory in your ordinary spaces. Don't be embarrassed by humble circumstances. Our God values humility, and so should we. His Word says He opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). We mustn't think our circumstances are too insignificant for God to work in. Like Mary and Joseph, our inadequacy displays God's glory. We mustn't feel overlooked or unnoticed because we are not experiencing success in the world's eyes. The Real Jesus sees what others miss. The Real Jesus met us in our poverty centuries ago, and He will meet us in our poverty again today. Know your neediness for Him. See the greatness of God's glory revealed in your humble places. See it when others around you can't. See the Real Jesus!

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- ♀: *Are we guilty of devaluing humble places? What does the birthplace of Christ teach us about our circumstances? How might we transform the way we view humble places to align with the way God views them?*
 - ♀: *We can easily give in to the temptation to believe government rulers are in control of everything. How can we be encouraged by our text to affirm God's sovereignty? What other Scriptures help us affirm that God is ultimately in control?*
 - ♀: *When your plans are interrupted by God, do you respond with trust that His ways are better? What truths from Scripture can we use to remind us that His ways are best?*

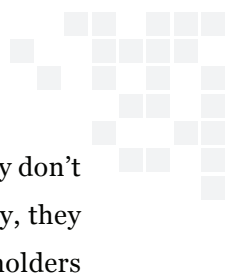
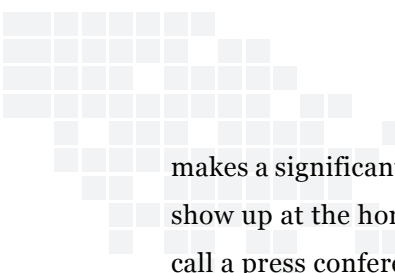
GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED TO HUMBLE PEOPLE

❏ LUKE 2:8-14

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- ♀: *Who did God choose to receive the announcement of Jesus' birth?*
 - ♀: *What sign did the angel tell them to look for?*

The most significant event in the history of the world has just occurred. The Word became flesh as God revealed His glory through His Son (John 1:14). Everything has changed. God is dwelling among His people. This is the biggest news there is. And God chose to share this world-changing information with lowly people—shepherds working the night shift (v. 8).

Consider how we share news. There is a worldly logic that suggests that the more important the information, the more important the person the information should be shared with. For example, when Procter and Gamble

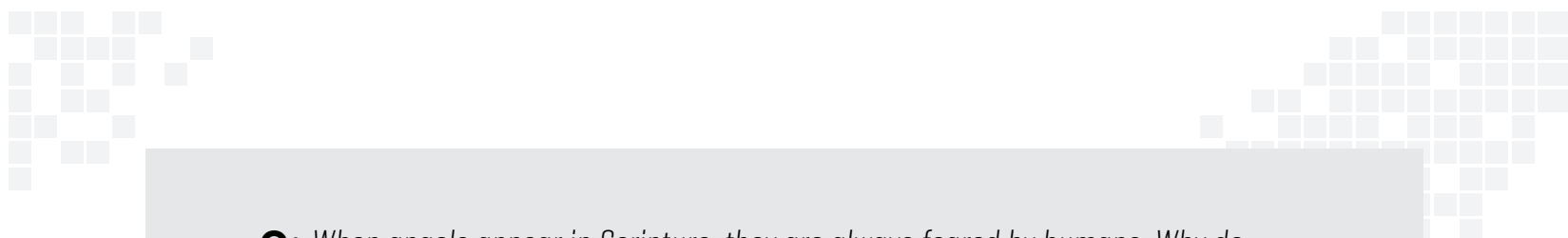


makes a significant breakthrough in research that greatly improves the quality of one of its products, they don't show up at the home of an average consumer to tell them how they've improved their product. Typically, they call a press conference or a board meeting and announce news of their product advancements to shareholders and corporate leaders. They share their news with those they consider significant enough to be worthy of the information.

This is not the way of our God. When God was ready to reveal His glory through His Son, He sent an angel to shepherds, those who were despised in their culture. These people were considered unreliable and also undesirable company. This particular group of shepherds had the added humiliation of working the least desired shift of the day. But these humble people were the chosen recipients of the birth announcement of Christ. This is no coincidence. God is revealing Himself to us in whom He chooses to reveal His glory to. Remember God first chose to reveal the news of the resurrection of Christ to the women who had come to prepare the body for burial (Luke 24:5–6). Repeatedly in Scripture, He works through people who are humble and often undervalued by their culture. This group of men who supported themselves through unesteemed work were blessed with the best news.

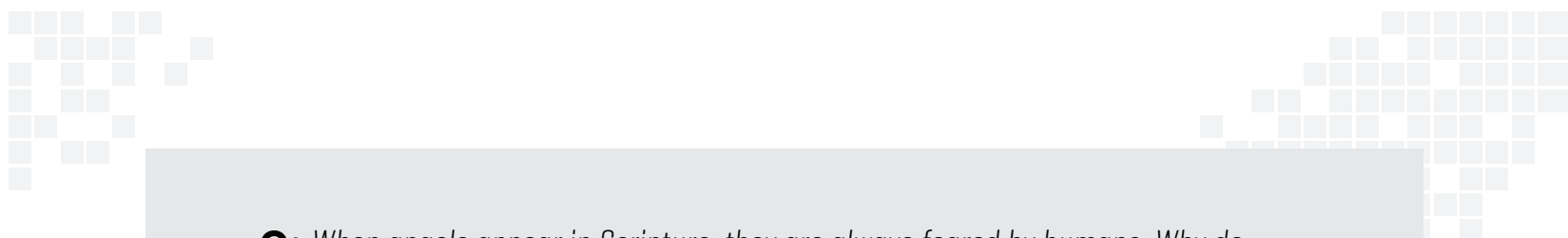
God values humility. Let's allow the Real Jesus, and not the world, to shape our ethic of value. Self-promotion is our default. Our capacity to glorify ourselves is limitless. We are naturally inclined to only esteem those viewed as worthy contributors to the cultural agenda of our time. But today's text shows us how the Real Jesus exalts the humble (James 4:6). The Real Jesus sees beyond worldly achievements and looks to the heart. He values those who exalt His kingdom and not their own.

The shepherds were frightened when the angel appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them (v. 9). The angel calms them and tells them the good news. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (v. 11). Thabiti Anyabwile suggests in *Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke)* that this announcement to the shepherds is God giving high theology to low people. High theology is not reserved for seminary students and pastors. The Real Jesus desires low people to have high theology. We should be cravers of high theology. A theologian is someone who studies God's Word. Followers of the Real Jesus will be theologians. God intends for His humble people to have the highest theology. Just as God revealed His glory through His Son to humble people in Bethlehem, He reveals His glory daily to us through His Word. As we see the glory of God revealed, we humbly join the multitude of heavenly hosts in worship by saying, "Glory to God in the highest!"

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- Q: *When angels appear in Scripture, they are always feared by humans. Why do you think fear is our natural reaction to the supernatural? How can we cultivate hearts that anticipate the supernatural to intervene in our natural lives? Do any verses come to mind that can help us anticipate God's glory in our ordinary?*
- Q: *The reaction of the heavenly host to the news of Jesus' birth is praising and glorifying God. Do you share their enthusiasm in worship for God sending His Son to our rescue? How can we encourage one another daily with this good news so our hearts are stirred to worship?*

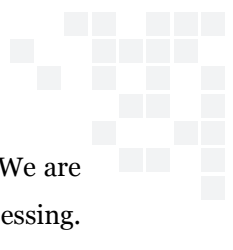
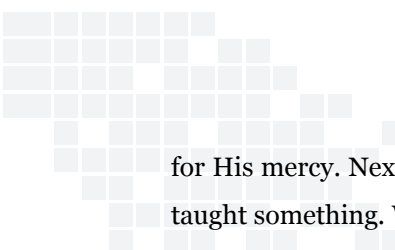
GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED THROUGH HUMBLE WITNESSES

☒ LUKE 2:15–20 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26–29

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- Q: *What did the shepherds do when they found Mary, Joseph, and Jesus?*
- Q: *What did the shepherds do when they returned home?*

Fresh from their worship event with the multitude of heavenly hosts, the shepherds hurry to find the newly born Savior. When they find Him, they begin sharing what the angel told them about Jesus (v. 17). “And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them” (v. 18). The angel told the shepherds about Jesus and His birth. They saw for themselves the Savior lying in a manger. Then, the shepherds tell others about what they witnessed. The shepherds witness God's glory, then serve as witnesses of it to others. God's glory is spread on the earth through the faithful witness of His people.

We see a pattern developing in Luke concerning the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. First comes the event, the birth. Then, people visit and bear witness to the event. They share the news with others. They praise and glorify God



for His mercy. Next, people are amazed and wonder at what God is doing. This is what witness looks like. We are taught something. We experience it for ourselves. We tell it to others. We don't need to overcomplicate witnessing. We simply tell others what we've been told. We show others what we've seen for ourselves.

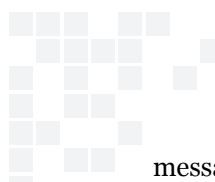
As we testify to the good news of the Real Jesus, others will wonder. We can't make anyone believe; that's the work of the Holy Spirit. But we can speak up about what is true. We can witness to God's glory in our own lives and share it with others. We have humbly received Him, and in humility we share with others how to receive Him. We don't need to give in to fear or intimidation when it comes to sharing the good news with others. Remember, the shepherds weren't seminary-trained scholars. They were humble people with high theology. They listened. They pursued. They saw. And then they told others the good news. God's glory is revealed through humble people.

We exist for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7). If we are in Christ, it's because God has revealed His glory to us through His Son. It's our joy and privilege to share His glory with others so they might know Him too. It's the humble who receive the Real Jesus, because He can only be received when we accept what He gives as undeserved and reject our attempts at self-righteousness.

He's given us the good news to share. We are His humble witnesses. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are like clay pots, weak and unimpressive. But God chooses to use the weak and foolish to shame the strong and wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). You don't have to be well-bred, well-known, wealthy, or impressive to be used by God. The Real Jesus sees beyond what we easily get distracted by.

Contrast His priorities with ours. "For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth" (1 Corinthians 1:26). The Real Jesus chooses what is low and despised in the world to glorify Himself so that our only boast is in Him. Don't listen to the devil when he attempts to convince you that you're useless to God. Don't believe him when he says your lack of importance or impressiveness makes you irrelevant. Our enemy wants us sidelined from our mission. He will accuse us of being unintelligent, unimportant, unconnected, and weak. When he attacks, we can confidently respond, "Yes, I am all those things and much more. But God. He is my boast. He gives me an identity as His child. He gives me wisdom. He makes me strong. He is all the things I'm not, and yet He uses me and my insufficiency to display His sufficiency."

Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that God's grace is sufficient and His power is made perfect in our weakness. He says we can gladly boast of our weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on us. The world doesn't need an impressive messenger; it needs an impressive message. We are humble witnesses to this message of a Savior who humbled Himself by coming to our rescue to glorify His Father. When the shepherds returned home, they glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen (v. 20). These lowly people were entrusted with the highest



message. So it is with us.

Q: *Are you intimidated by witnessing? How can you cherish the good news you've been entrusted with more? How can we encourage one another to boldness in our witness?*

Q: *We are called to boast in our weakness. This goes against our natural tendencies. What verses can encourage us in the freedom we have to let go of our world-driven desire to be impressive and rest in the impressiveness of Christ?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

Q: *We exist to bring God glory. Share examples of how your group is specifically doing this. Take some time to encourage one another in this kingdom work as well as considering ways to improve.*

Q: *Our enemy wants us sidelined from our mission. What truths can we preach to ourselves and others to combat the devil's attempts to render us ineffective? What verses assure us of the devil's defeat?*

Q: *The good news should inspire worship in our hearts. Does your heart feel dry and cold towards God's mercy? How can you cultivate a heart that worships the Lord? What help can we find in the Bible?*



PRAY

+ Use this prayer point to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- Father, thank You for sending Your Son to rescue me. Help me share with others what You've taught me. Help me to tell others of Your glory. May I not get distracted by what the world values. I pray for the grace to value what You value, in my life and in the lives of others. Stir my heart to worship You. You alone are worthy. You provided the way for me to be at peace with You. Thank You, Father. Make me a bold witness for You.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 2:15 "...the Lord has made known." The Lord himself, not the angelic intermediary (v. 9), is the ultimate source of the revelation.

LUKE 2:20 Having seen the infant Jesus, the shepherds began glorifying and praising God just as the angels had done (vv. 13–14).

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, Christ-Centered Exposition (Luke), and Preaching the Word (Luke).*



