

Follow Along Advent Readings, Day 5



Welcome back to Day 5 of Only ByPrayer's thoughts on the [Painted Advent devotional](#). Thanks for joining us.

Sometimes I am tempted to gloss over Joseph's part in the Christmas story and focus on others. But that means I'm missing such an important part of Jesus' earthly life: His father.

Joseph was a man of amazing integrity. If you go back and read Matthew 1, we see that Joseph had been planning to quietly divorce Mary upon receiving the devastating news that she was pregnant. That all changes when an angel visits him in a dream and validates Mary's story.

Joseph Is the Man

Joseph never looks back. God knew that Mary would need a husband of strong character to stand by her. Joseph is the man. He marries Mary and raises Jesus as His own. Surely they were the subject of gossip. But Joseph stands as an immovable barrier of protection between his family and society.

Three more times in this chapter we read (who knows how many times in their lives?) God uses Joseph as the protector of his family by warning him in dreams of danger to Jesus' life on the part of Herod or his son Archelaus. Each time Joseph heeds the warning and whisks his family away to safety.

Joseph's sense of alertness is so heightened that in verse 22 it seems he senses danger before he was even warned.

He is the epitome of what a man, husband, and father should be. Men need to be protectors of their wives and children. We live in a society where a man's role is often belittled or worse yet deemed unnecessary. That is a lie that is doing unchecked damage to our families. Women need to let men be men and fulfill the role GOD gave them to fulfill without trying to manage them and make them more "like us."

There have been times in my life where my husband took an action to protect our family that I didn't like because it would "make waves" with others. I was wrong. When a man is being led by God and acts to protect his family, he is doing what God created him to do.

Men of Character Are a Blessing

Despite what society preaches, we need to celebrate the strong men in our lives and support them. Like Joseph, they are a blessing from God.

What do you think? Leave your thoughts below.

Follow Along Advent Readings, Day 4



Welcome back to Day 4 of our discussion about the [Painted Advent](#) devotional from the Bible app. Today's painting is called Good News.

You never know when it will happen.

You're going about your daily work all things appearing normal when BAM! A chorus of angels lights up the night sky and scares you to death! At least that's what happened to the shepherds in the Christmas story. What had been an ordinary day for them turned into an extraordinary one in a moment's notice.

I wonder if the shepherds noticed anything different that evening.

I imagine all of heaven on the brink of a holy explosion—the angels barely containing their excitement. Was the night sky especially bright? Maybe a shooting star or two streaking across the sky in anticipation of what was about to happen? Or perhaps the air was charged with electricity, the impending fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

All we know is that one minute all was normal and the next it was not—the world forever changed.

The same can be true for us.

Within each day lies the potential for a Richter-scale change, for the glory of God to burst upon our everydayness with a power that takes our breath away.

What will that look like? It could be an angelic visitation (those things still happen today). But it could also be an invisible but just as mighty display of God's power as evidenced by a changed heart, salvation for a loved one, a healed relationship, a new job, a sick person made well, a prodigal come home.

[As Christ-followers, each day we get to live in the hope and shadows of miracles.](#)



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We go about our lives always praying for what God lays on our heart while watching for His displays of power. Today could be the day!

What do you think about living in holy expectancy? Share your thoughts below.

Jane

**Follow Along Advent Reading,
Day 2**



Welcome back to Day 2 of the Painted Advent devotional reading with the Bible app. Here is [Day 1](#) if you missed it and want to catch up.

On to Day 2!

Day 2 Luke 1:39-80

My thoughts: I love how God brings together Mary and Elizabeth. I can imagine they were both reeling a bit from their secrets. How they would have been a support to each other during this time:

- Mary was figuring out how to handle her pregnancy in a time and culture when an unplanned pregnancy meant being ostracized from society. She also knew that there was a very real possibility that her fiancée Joseph would have every right to divorce her.

- On the other hand, Elizabeth was probably a bit stunned by her own late-in-life pregnancy, especially since she had been childless for her entire marriage.

I can imagine how these two must have enjoyed their months together, praying and dreaming and planning about their babies.

Waiting on God

The other thing that stands out to me from his passage is that even though God sometimes seems to be silent in our lives, He uses this quiet waiting time to birth His plan.

Four hundred years had passed from the end of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament. During these years, God was completely quiet. No communication between God and the prophets. No messages for Israel.

Meanwhile, the culture had been changing. Greek and Roman influences were foisted upon the Jews. But during this time of God's silence, He was orchestrating His ultimate plan of the birth of His Son.

Finally, the book of Luke begins with a flurry of holy activity – the visits of angels, the return of prophecy (after that quiet 400 years!), and the births of two long-propheesied babies.

How Does This Apply to Us?

We can use this as encouragement in our own lives. When we have been praying and waiting and God seems silent, we need to remember that plans take time. God's time. During the waiting we continue to pray, to work, to seek, to watch – for our own flurry of holy activity.

Let me know your thoughts as you walk through this season of Advent.

Jane

Follow Along Advent Reading, Day 1



Shopping, wrapping, baking. Cooking, traveling, caroling.

Although Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year, I try to make it a priority to prepare my heart during the Advent season. This year in my search for an Advent devotional, I happened upon a free seven-day devotional on the Bible app that is based upon the paintings of artist Ron Dicianni called [A Painted Advent](#).

I've been enjoying this beautiful devotional, and each day as I read, I record my thoughts about that day's topic. I thought it might be interesting to share my writings each day. If you are also reading A Painted Advent, I'd love if you could add your thoughts in the comment section.

If you'd like, you can make reading your devotion a cozy time. Try lighting a [beeswax candle](#), playing soft Christmas music in the background, or adding whatever you'd like to make it special. Please share your ideas below.

Let's get started.

Day 1 Thoughts from Luke 1:1-38

Question: What can I learn from Luke 1?

Answer: With God I can expect the unexpected!

How amazing that the two women who bore the most important children in the Christmas story (John the Baptist and Jesus) were beyond the ability to be pregnant.

Elizabeth was an old woman beyond childbearing years and had been barren all her married life. Mary was an unmarried virgin.

Yet God didn't let these realities stop Him. He chose these two not

for their “fitness” for the job, but because of the fitness of their hearts.

Luke 1:6 tells us that both Zacharias and Elizabeth “were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” Gabriel also tells Zacharias in verse 13 that “your prayer is heard.”

And in Luke 1:28 the angel Gabriel tells Mary “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women.” When Mary became frightened in verse 30, he told her not to be afraid for “she has found favor with God.”

How this should give us hope in our own lives! God can do anything as He sees fit, and He saw fit to use an old woman and a virgin as moms in the Christmas story. Because of this, we too can expect the unexpected because God is always on the look for willing people ready to be used by Him. As Gabriel explained to Mary in verse 36, “For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Two words are so important there: *with God*. *With God* changes everything.

When we charge ahead in our own strength, we will miss the blessing God has for others and ourselves.

But when we make *with God* the basis of our lives, dreams, and plans, we greatly expand the effectiveness, the possibilities, the potential harvest because we open ourselves up to His power.

With God opens up the possibility of expecting the unexpected.

What do you think? Share your thoughts below.

Scripturegraphic: Christmas Grace



Bible Scripturegraphic: Christmas Grace

During the *“most wonderful time of the year”* the phrases *joy to the world* and *peace on earth* are ever on our lips. Joy and peace fill our hearts as we reflect upon Emmanuel *God with us*. But what about *amazing grace*? Usually this phrase is reserved for Easter and the **grace** of the cross. However, there would be no grace of the **cross** without the grace of the cradle. Jesus humbled Himself and took on flesh to tabernacle among us. From the cradle to the cross, it’s all about **grace, Christmas Grace!**

To do the Scripturegraphic Bible Study, *Christmas Grace*, please click on the link below.

[Bible Scripturegraphic: Christmas Grace](#)

Need a little more Christmas? Click on one of the links below!

[Day 1: Believe Him](#)

[Day 2: Make Room](#)

[Christmas Presence: The Collection](#)

Follow Him this Christmas.

Mary Kane

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