

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.

**Christmas To Do-ers List, Day
8: Go Tell About Him**



Christmas To Do-ers List

Day 8: Go Tell About Him

“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” Luke 2:17-18

The night started out just like any other.

At dusk, the shepherds settled themselves and their sheep in for the night, on the alert to possible attacks.

[Extraordinary usurped ordinary when an angel and celestial choir burst upon the quiet night sky](#)



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Once the shepherds had gathered their wits about them and understood the angel’s message, they ran to Bethlehem to find

the Savior. And find Him they did.

The shepherds surely shared with Mary and Joseph about the angels' visit, and unable to contain themselves, they lost no time in sharing this hot-off-the-presses news about the baby King they found in a manger with anyone who would listen.

Jesus has that effect on people. He likes to stir things up. When the sacred intersects the ordinary, spectacular things happen. The lame walk. The blind see. Sinners are forgiven. Addictions are broken. And angels sing—and not just for Jesus' birth. Luke 15:10 tells us that whenever another soul is won to heaven, heaven celebrates.

What About Us?



Tell about Jesus this
Christmas

Perhaps your story isn't as flashy as a million-watt sky filled with angels. But the reality is, you're a different person than you were before Jesus, and that is a story that deserves to be told. In the way only you can tell it. Never underestimate the power of a changed life to reach others.

Like the shepherds, be alert to those God has primed for your story. **As a matter of fact, pray for God to send those who**

need a word from you. Let's look at a few ways to share:

1. Practice your story. Write down a 1-minute version of your story. Your life before Jesus, your conversion and your life after Jesus. And share it when God opens the door for you to do so.
2. Give tangible help. Bring a meal to a family with a new baby or to a family going through a hard time. Pray that God opens a way for you to share with them, either now or in the future.
3. Volunteer to teach a class at your church or lead a neighborhood Bible study. Both children and adults need to hear that Jesus loves them enough to have died for them.
4. Write out your story longhand or on your computer so that future generations of your family will have a copy. You never know when your story will be able to reach through time to influence others.

Mary and I appreciate you joining us over Advent for this series. Be looking for our New Year's podcast over the next week. **Merry Christmas to you and your family!**

Jane

**Christmas To Do-ers List:
Watch for Him, Part 3**



Remember to keep your eyes and heart open for Jesus today. He is constantly speaking to you through your circumstances, His word, others, radio preachers, music, His creation, etc. Keep your eyes on Him! Please read the scripture below and leave a comment on what you learned about watching for Jesus.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins

- 1 *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*
- 2 *Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*
- 3 *Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,*
- 4 *but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*
- 5 *But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*
- 6 *"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'*

7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed i' . ' .



8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

He is coming. Watch for Him.

Mary Kane

"Blue Letter Bible – Mat 25: Gospel of Matthew 25 (Blue Letter Bible: NKJV – New King James Version)." Blue Letter Bible. Web. 7 Dec, 2015. <http://www.blueletterbible.orghttps://www.blueletterbible.org/nkjv/mat/25/1/p1/s_954001>.

Christmas To Do-ers List



Welcome to Christmas To Do-ers List

Rush, rush, slush, slush. Sleigh bells ring, can you hear them? 'Tis the season to get busy, right? This year how about we exchange rushing, stressing, and fretting for believing, seeking, and watching for Jesus? This blessed season of Advent let's not just be *doers*, but *doers of the Word*.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."
James 1:22-25

How many times have you heard a portion of scripture, thought to yourself, *Wow, I really need to do that*, and then promptly forgot about the task at hand? The To Do-ers List Bible Study

will help you move from being a hearer of the Word, to becoming a doer of the Word. Let's work together to develop the godly habit of applying Scripture to our lives and circumstances by intensely focusing on one Scripture a day. It is our prayer you become a doer of the Word.

Some of the benefits of being doers of the Word.

1. Grow in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)
2. Walk in wisdom (Psalm 19:7)
3. Live in freedom (John 8:32)
4. Enjoy the abundant life (John 6:68)
5. Act in strength (Joel 2:11)
6. Strengthen your faith (Romans 10:17)
7. Receive comfort, revival, and peace (Psalm 119:7-16)
8. Plus many, many other benefits.

We can be listeners, hearers, watchers, thinkers, and gatherers of His word, but there must be a point in time when we become **doers of the Word**.

*Beginning Sunday, November 29th, and running through Wednesday, December 23, check our website every Sunday morning and Wednesday morning starting at 5:00 a.m. to get your **Christmas To Do-ers List Bible Study**. Two lessons a week will give us time to study and apply. Read your lesson and pray for wisdom on how "to do" it. Throughout the week, feel free to check in at our private Facebook Christmas To Do-ers page to share insights, request prayer, and encourage others. Community sharing is one way to grow in faith, and we'd love to hear what God is teaching and how you're being a do-er of His word.*

We pray this study will set the tone for an Advent and Christmas season that is focused on Jesus. May He inspire you

in ways you can't yet imagine to be a do-er of His word. We'll see you on the 29th! **Please sign up below** so we have an accurate list of the participants, and we can send you a list of resources. But remember to check our website for the posts every Sunday and Wednesday, as we won't be mailing the posts.

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas season!

Mary and Jane

Christmas To-doers List

Name:

Email:

SIGN UP NOW!

We respect your [email privacy](#)

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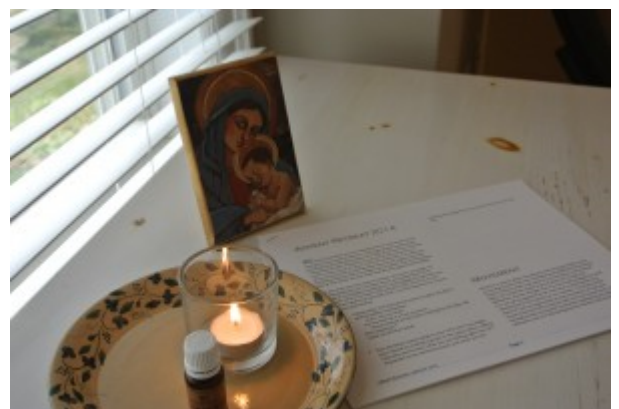
Journey Like the Magi



“We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” Matthew 2:2

Three mysterious Magi appear in King Herod’s court asking about a new king. I can just imagine that despite their road-weary condition, their entourage commands attention and awe. Don’t you want to know more about these three who journey the farthest to find Jesus? I’ve often wondered about their lives. How could they take so much time to go find this new king? Did they leave families behind? Who instilled the faith in their lives that they needed to drop everything and embark on this life-changing journey as soon as they saw the star in the sky?

Recently, I attended a beautiful Advent retreat at [Sustainable Faith Indy](#). During the “first movement” of the retreat, we were directed to reflect on the Magi and their part in the Christmas story:



First of all, I am struck by the Wise Men’s simple faith. They saw the star and they acted on it. Actually, they were *compelled* to follow it. An important point that I’ve often

overlooked in the past is that in order for them to see, they had to be looking. Their eyes were to the sky and they were alert, watching and waiting.

Even though I'm not a professional astronomer as the Magi probably were, I can be a professional follower of Jesus. I can lift my eyes off of myself and be watching for glimpses of [the sacred in the everyday](#) as I live my life. God will guide me, too, as I navigate the journey of my life.

What really stands out to me from their story, however, is that **the Magi are the perfect combination of humbleness and boldness**. If they were humble but not bold, they never would have found Jesus. If they were bold but not humble, they never would have worshipped him. They needed both attributes, and so do we.

God tells us in Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem he who is humble and contrite of spirit and trembles at my word." He also tells us in Proverbs 28:1 "The righteous are as bold as a lion."

God is constantly looking for those he can use to partner with Him in His work. To do that we need the boldness to step out and do what He is asking us to do. And we also need a humble spirit – one that is not filled with myself, but filled with the Holy Spirit. Don't, however, confuse humbleness with timidity. They are two different things. We can have a skewed sense of humbleness that tells us "I'm not good enough, smart enough, rich enough to do this." And then we do nothing, because we believe a lie. We need to have the boldness to take that step and know that God will come through and equip us to what He has called us to do.

This Christmas let's follow in the steps of the Magi. Let's look up, and act with a humble, bold spirit to follow God on the journey He has for us in the upcoming year. Where is He leading you?

Merry Christmas!

Jane