

Friday

Read Luke 2:22-40. What an amazing story this is. Mary and Joseph must have had questions – they had just been entrusted with the Savior of the world. In the face of questions they chose simple obedience to God’s law. They did not over-think it – they just obeyed and in the process they were the answer to Simeon’s life-long prayer.

What about life is perplexing you right now?

Take some time to look up some Bible verses about that. (The back of your Bible probably has a concordance in it. You can also search the Bible online at www.biblegateway.com) What does God have to say about your struggles or concerns?

What is a step of simple obedience you can take today?

Thank God that He takes us one step at a time. Thank Him for His mercy and care in your life. Talk to Him about the things that are perplexing you right now. Ask Him to show the next step of obedience and pray for the faith and courage to take it!

Saturday

Please finish up any devotions you may have missed. Please pray for our services this weekend. Pray also for the upcoming Christmas concert and Christmas Eve services. Pray that God will use them to strengthen your faith and build up those who attend. Pray about who you could invite to the services. Pray for courage and the opportunity!

Prayer Updates

PRAYER UPDATES

Prayer Updates are available at the Info Desk. Please pick one up after the service.

THROUGH CANCER WITH CARE

Connect with others who understand, personal interaction & resources, encouragement & prayer. New times & place — first & third Thursday, begins with refreshments at 6:45, at TLC Gym, Rm. 104. Call Jan, 462-2271 or Gerry, 476-8735, or go to www.tlc.org/care

We want to provide pastoral support...

Please call 465-3395 when someone is hospitalized, scheduled for surgery, becomes a shut-in, or in special need. Prayer support is available through our pastors and numerous prayer groups — call 689-9400. Please pick up a Prayer Update at the Information Desk or Welcome Center.



“When You Hope for a Home but are Sent to a Stable”

Message by René Schlaepfer
December 2 & 3, 2006

Our dreams when we go “Home for the Holidays” are typically for a Norman Rockwell-cozy experience. But that’s not usually reality! Life is full of challenges and stress. It was true for Mary and Joseph too.

Four sources of holiday stress

- Inconvenient _____
- Family _____
- Difficult _____
- Unmet _____

The first Christmas had similar stresses:

Inconvenient problems: **Unplanned pregnancy**

“Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 1:19

Family strife: **Looming divorce**

*“Joseph, her fiancé, being a man of stern principle, had in mind to **divorce her** quietly.” Matthew 1:19 (LB)*

Difficult tasks: **Long dangerous road trip**

*“Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken... And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph went up from the town of **Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem**. He went there to register with Mary...” Luke 2:4,5a*

Unmet expectations: **A stable instead of a home**

*“While they were in Bethlehem the time came for the baby to be born. And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a **manger**, because there was no **room for them in the inn**.” Luke 2:6*

How did Mary and Joseph handle those stresses?

1. Surrender _____

“Mary said, ‘I am the Lord’s servant and am willing to do whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true.’” Luke 1:38 (LB)

Don’t try to _____ the _____ !

2. Seek _____

“Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.” Luke 1:56 (LB)

3. See

“Mary responded, ‘... Now generation after generation will call me blessed. His mercy goes on from generation to generation to all who reverence him . . . He has not forgotten his promise to be merciful. For he promised our fathers — Abraham and his children — to be merciful to them forever.” Luke 1:46-50; 54-55 (LB)

“Mary treasured all these things in her heart and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:19

4. Stay

“Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.” Luke 2:22 (LB)

Daily Meditations

Brief daily devotions based on this week’s topic

Monday

Read Matthew 1:18-19 & Luke 1:26-38. It’s hard to embrace an unplanned anything! Spend a few moments today in Mary’s shoes — a young woman with a story no one is going to believe!

How do you think Mary’s response of surrender to God impacted her attitude and actions?

The holidays are a prime time to feel out of control; throw in a few unplanned events or relatives and you can sense your joy fading. In what ways are you already feeling the pressure of the holidays?

What can Mary’s response teach you? How will you apply it to your attitude and actions in the face of the unplanned?

Thank God today that nothing takes Him by surprise. Think about the things that are troubling you today, the areas of your life where you are trying to keep control in your hands. Talk to God about your struggles. Bow your head before Him and pray Mary’s prayer of surrender. Thank God that your life is in His hands.

Tuesday

Read Luke 1:46-55. Note that God’s grace and acts of mercy to the lowly are the main themes of her song. Mary is noticing the “Big Picture” of the whole Bible that many people miss! What else does Mary’s prayer tell you about God’s “big picture”?

How does seeing the big picture help you when your expectations are not met?

Although Mary speaks of God’s promise to her specifically in the first verse of her song, you also are promised a great future! Read Jeremiah 29:11, 1 Corinthians 2:9 & Ephesians 2:10. What do these verses say about God’s big picture for your life?

Which of these promises is most encouraging for you today? Why?

How will you remind yourself of these truths and use them to impact your attitude this season?

Tuesday (continued)

Thank God today that He sees the whole picture — that nothing is hidden from Him. Thank Him for the big picture He has for your life. Pray that you will live graciously and faithfully knowing He is in control. Pray that your attitude of faith would be an encouragement to others during the holidays.

Wednesday

Read Luke 1:39-45, 56. God in His mercy gave Mary someone who understood her and someone who trusted God too. Wouldn’t it be great to know what they talked about those three months!

When is it most difficult for you to reach out for support? Why?

What are the advantages of surrounding yourself with godly people?

In what ways do you need support right now? What can you do to reach out? (If you don’t already have a support network in place check out a Ministries Brochure and find a place where you can plug in and surround yourself with people.)

Think about the people you interact with on a daily basis. How can you support them this holiday season?

Thank God today that He does not want us to go through our journey on earth alone. Pray that you will have the humility to reach out for support. Ask God to bring godly people into your life. Pray that you will be a support to the people around you. Ask God to give you the strength and courage to reach out.

Thursday

Read Luke 2:19, 51. Treasuring takes time — something we all seem to lack during the holidays! What do you think these two verses mean? How would treasuring the moments of Jesus’ life help Mary in the days ahead of her — particularly when she had to watch her son killed on a cross?

Write down four memories that you treasure.

Treasuring is a choice. How will you choose to treasure God’s work in your life and all around you during the holidays? What impact could that have on your attitude when the unplanned happens?

Thank God today for the memories you treasure. Thank God for the amazing beauty that surrounds you. Pray that God will open your eyes to all His abundance and blessing this season. Ask God to slow your heart down enough to focus on His goodness and mercy. Pray that you will be grateful.

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“I am the Lord’s servant,”
Mary answered.
“May it be to me as you have said.”
Luke 1:38