

ADVENT: REMEMBER TO ANTICIPATE

JESUS FOLLOWERS TRUST THE KING

BIBLE VERSE: LUKE 1:38

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

God's people listened to Him.

"And Mary said, 'Behold...'"

- Luke 1 tells the narrative of an angel of the Lord coming to Zechariah to foretell the birth of John the Baptist, and an angel of the Lord coming to Mary and Joseph to foretell the birth of Christ.
- In both examples, we see them respond with the uncertainty of how something that seemed so impossible could happen. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were both very old, and Mary was a virgin. Zechariah at first did not believe the words of the angel, and so he was unable to speak until the baby was born. The Lord gave him back his speech when he obeyed the word of the Lord to name him John.

Mary saw her identity as a servant of the Lord.

"I am the servant of the Lord"

- Even though Mary was afraid, and even though she did not fully understand what was happening or how it would happen, she knew that her identity was found in the Lord.
- Mary's example teaches us where our identity is found. God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, including our very lives. He gives us every breath that we take and keeps our heart beating. He is sovereign and in control, and we exist for Him.

Mary trusted the Lord with her life.

"let it be to me according to your word."

- Mary's response reveals that she trusts in the Lord. She submitted her life to the will of God. When we obey God's commands, we show the world around us that we believe Him. Just as Mary and Joseph took God at His Word and did all that God commanded them, we can do the same.
- We can always trust God and His plan even when it doesn't make sense to us or we are unsure of how it will all work out.

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BIG IDEA #1: WE TRUST THE KING'S PERFECT PLAN.¹

[THIS]

In Luke 1, we see an angel of the Lord come to visit the priest Zechariah to tell him that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child. This would be the child promised in Malachi who would go before the promised Messiah to prepare the people, to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to their children. This seemed impossible to them, because Elizabeth was very old. Zechariah doubted what the angel said, and as a result the angel told him that he would be unable to speak until the child was born and the word of the Lord was fulfilled. It seems natural to us to doubt when we don't understand how something will work out, but God is in control of the whole universe. He is able to do anything that He pleases, and we do well to trust in His power and plans.

[THEREFORE]

Read Malachi 4:4-5, Luke 1:5-25, and Luke 1:57-66. How can studying prophecies made and fulfilled in Scripture help us to trust God more?

Romans 4:19-21 teaches us about the faith of Abraham, who believed against all odds that God was going to do what He said He was going to do. As we see God's promises unfold through the generations of people in Jesus' lineage, we can grow in our trust of God, knowing that He keeps His promises. Psalm 106:7-8 reminds us that God is trustworthy because His faithfulness does not depend upon us. God does what He says He will for His purposes.

[THIS]

As followers of Christ, we can trust His perfect plan because He is always good and perfect. God never makes a bad decision or mistake. He is always right and good. His plans are higher and greater than ours because He is infinitely wiser than we could ever be. He knows all things, controls all things, and does all things according to His perfect will. He is the Creator of all things and the sustainer of life. Who else knows better how the world and the people in it should live than the One who made them? We do not have to understand His plan to trust it. We can trust His plan because we know that He is good and perfect; therefore, His plan is good and perfect always. Joseph was faced with trusting either God's plan or his circumstances. He chose to trust God's plan and obey His will rather than trust his circumstances.

[THEREFORE]

How does Zechariah's trust of God's plan help you trust God's plan for your own life?

Hebrews 10:23 reminds us that God can be trusted because He is always faithful. In 2 Timothy 2:13, we're reminded that God's faithfulness is inherent to His character, and 2 Thessalonians 3:3 promises God's faithfulness and protection of us. We can trust Him and His plan no matter what our circumstances seem to tell us.

What is a specific situation or circumstance that you are walking through where you can follow Joseph's example and choose to trust God's plan?

Often it is easier to say we trust God with our lives, but more difficult to do it in specific situations. Sometimes, when we suffer loss or we feel overwhelmed with things, we will trust in ourselves more than in God. Proverbs 3:3-5 is always a reminder to trust in God always and He will make our paths straight.

What thoughts or circumstances make it difficult to trust God?

Often fear can lead us to doubt God and cause us to focus on our circumstances instead of His faithfulness. Psalm 56:3 reminds us that God is always faithful and we do not have to fear. Philippians 4:6-7 teaches us the right response when we do have fear and doubts. As we seek God in prayer, we can grow our faith and trust in His faithfulness.

1. Luke 2:22-25: Simeon waited patiently for the coming of the Messiah and God's people wait for His return with patience.

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BIG IDEA #2: WE TRUST THE KING WITH OUR DOUBTS AND FEARS.²

[THIS]

The opening of the Gospel of Luke reveals the truth that though our human minds might doubt and fear, God can and will do what He says. He can be trusted in every way. After the angel of the Lord visits Zechariah to foretell the birth of John the Baptist, an angel also comes to visit Mary to foretell the birth of Jesus the Messiah. She responds in confusion, because she was not yet married and was a virgin. We do not need to doubt, because God's plans are not dependent on our ability or power. God is over all things and is in control. We can trust Him as our King because He does not change according to our actions, limitations, or circumstances. God is trustworthy and always will be.

[THEREFORE]

What are some doubts you've had about God and His faithfulness?

Often we doubt God when we turn our eyes to other people rather than focusing on Him. Romans 3:3 reminds us that the unfaithfulness of others doesn't make God unfaithful. Deuteronomy 7:9 reminds us that God is always faithful no matter what and Numbers 23:19 helps us remember that God is not like man. When we see God as the God of the universe and understand that He is always faithful, we can overcome the doubts we might have.

[THIS]

Fear is an anticipation or awareness of danger or alarm. Often fear causes us to react or not act in a certain way. We may fear that God will leave us. We may fear He will not be true to His Word or fear His wrath. It is easy to imagine that the Israelites would have doubted that God would fulfill His promises to send a Messiah in the 400 years between the final promise of Malachi and the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph faced the unknown in their situation and trusted God. We, too, can take God at His Word and believe that no matter what He is who He says He is. We can trust His promises in His Word and know that He will always take of His people. Just because we trust God with our doubts and fears doesn't mean our lives will always be great. Often, just like Mary and Joseph, we are faced with circumstances that can make us fearful or anxious, but we can always trust that God is near and working all things for our good and His glory.

[THEREFORE]

How has your fear kept you from trusting God?

Fear leads us to believe lies about God. When we fear, we believe that He is not good and will not take care of us. Matthew 6:34 serves as a reminder of what our response should be to fear and doubt. We should focus on God and who He is to dispel our fears. Psalm 94:19 also serves as a reminder that when we face fear, we can trust God and this helps us overcome it.

How can you trust God despite your fears and doubts this week?

In Psalm 27:1, the psalmist teaches us that when we trust in God we have no one or anything to fear. We can trust God despite our fears and doubts by choosing to think about God and who He is. We can remind ourselves of what is true of Him and hide these truths in our hearts.

2. Matthew 1:20: Joseph didn't let his fears keep him from trusting God's plan and will.

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BIG IDEA #3: WE TRUST THE KING BY OBEYING HIS WORD.³

[THIS]

In Luke 1, we see Zechariah deal with the consequences of doubting the word of the Lord. It wasn't just that he did not believe the angel. The angel's response was that he had been in the presence of the Lord and had been sent by Him to speak His Word. The angel's response reveals that Zechariah's doubt was that the Lord would be able to do what He said He would do. In response, the Lord makes Zechariah mute until His Word is fulfilled. When the baby is born, Zechariah and Elizabeth's family members want to know what the child will be named. Even though there is no one else in their family named John, Zechariah insists that the baby will be named John, in obedience to the word of the Lord that he had been given. Trusting God means obeying His Word. Zechariah lived this out through his actions and submission to God's plan for his life.

[THEREFORE]

What is the difference between trust and obedience?

In James 2:14-26, James teaches us that faith or trust without evidence of it in our actions is not true faith. We can say with our words that we trust God, but if our actions do not back up our words, we aren't really trusting God. In Ephesians 2:10 we learn that we are made for Christ and to serve Him by serving others. Our trust of God, if genuine, will be evident in the way we live our lives and make decisions.

[THIS]

The early chapters of the gospels show multiple examples of people who modeled trust in God through obedience. Zechariah and Elizabeth named their baby John. Mary said that she would obey whatever the Lord said. Joseph continued to pursue marrying Mary even though she was pregnant. It is plausible that these people didn't fully understand what was happening in their lives, but they modeled what it looks like to trust God no matter what. We can trust God with our lives, even when we have no clear idea of what God is doing or how His plan is going to be accomplished. We can show we trust Him by striving to walk in obedience to His Word no matter our circumstances or the consequences that obedience may bring to us from the world. Joseph didn't choose the easy way when he obeyed God, but he did choose the very best way.

[THEREFORE]

In what areas of your life do you need to trust God by obeying His Word?

James 4:17 teaches us that when we know the right thing to do but we do not do it, we sin. In our lives it can be easy to overlook sins, but God requires complete obedience from His people. We can think we have hidden sins, but God knows them all. Romans 8:27 reminds us that God does search our hearts and knows our minds. There is nothing hidden from Him. We can model trust in God by walking in total obedience to Him.

Why is obedience hard for us sometimes?

In Luke 10:27 we see that we are all called to love God with all of ourselves. When we do not do this, we will find obedience to His Word hard. We will find it difficult to trust Him and to choose obedience to Him over the easy way of this world. When we do love God with all of ourselves, obedience will be a delight and joy.

3. Matthew 1:24-25: Joseph believed God and obeyed His commands.