

How You Can Face Foolish and Evil People With Spirit's Wisdom

We have all had the painful experience of someone wrongly judging us or not understanding us, and as a result, our relationship with them suffers or is severed. Additionally, we all have had the painful experience of thinking we knew someone and trusting them, only to find—much to our misery—that they were not the person we thought they were.

Jesus came to earth in large part for the sake of relationship, but even devout religious leaders were foolish or evil in dealing with Him. In John 7, they sought to kill Jesus rather than have a relationship with Him because they wrongly judged Him. Jesus then rebuked their poor relational wisdom, saying, “Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly” (v. 24, NLT).

In relationships, we rely on predictable patterns of behavior when deciding who we trust and who we don't. This method causes problems because we judge by what we can see outwardly, and to truly know someone and judge correctly, Jesus said we must “look beneath the surface” of the person to their inner world that only the Spirit sees.

Following this statement, John 7 records that a great debate arose over whether Jesus was a good man or a bad man. Some said He was demon-possessed, others said He was Spirit-filled. Then we read, “Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified”

(vv. 37-39, NIV).

Jesus' point is simple: Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for any of us to know anyone else's true nature on the inside. But with the Spirit, we can look beneath the surface of what we see in the visible world (the clothes they wear, words they say or actions they choose) and see a person's and see a person's true self in the invisible world (the state of their soul, condition of their heart and motive of their mind).

Jesus had wisdom for His relationships because the Holy Spirit helped Him look beneath the surface in order to judge people correctly. Isaiah 11:2 (MEV) promised this trait of Jesus, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

To properly deal with people and have any healthy relationships you must have the discerning wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and wisdom are closely connected in the Bible because the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom. Job 32:8 (ESV) links the Spirit to discerning wisdom, saying, "But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty that makes him understand." In Ephesians 1:17 (MEV), Paul prays that believers receive "the Spirit of wisdom."

The Spirit of God knows people better than anyone, and He will help you have healthy relationships. God wants you to be wise and seek wisdom so you can know how to handle foolish and evil people.

✘ *Adapted from Spirit-Filled Jesus by Mark Driscoll, copyright 2018, published by Charisma House. When Jesus walked on the earth as a man, He relied on the Holy Spirit to give Him discerning wisdom, knowledge and power. This book is a must-have to give you understanding on how Jesus lived His life in the Spirit and help you do the same. To order your*

copy, click on this link.

Prayer Power for the Week of May 12, 2019

This week, surrender yourself anew to the Holy Spirit and allow His power, wisdom and knowledge to fill you and exhibit His fruit as you journey through your Spirit-filled life. Continue to pray for our nation and its leaders. Pray that the spirit of love and unity would overcome the spirit of hate and division in our land. Pray that deception would lift off the eyes of the people so they can embrace what is good and profitable for all. Remember Israel and our allies. Read Job 32:8, Proverbs 9:8-9, John 7:37-39, Ephesians 1:17.

For more of Mark Driscoll's teaching, listen to the podcasts included with this article.

Want to Mature in Christ? Here's What Jesus Says Matters Most

Love.

It's a little word with big implications.

When we were kids in school, teachers taught us that we need food, water, air and shelter to live. But we also need love. Without love, we literally die.

Some years ago, beautiful medical facilities were built to

house newborn orphans. They provided the infants with a clean environment, sunlight, healthy food, fresh water, a comfortable bed and fun toys, but the children grew sick and died in staggering numbers. The doctors did research but could not figure out why the healthy children were dying. An outside group was brought in to investigate the crisis.

Can you guess what they concluded?

The children needed to be loved. They required human contact—to be held, cuddled and spoken to multiple times every day. Without love, the newborns failed to thrive and can actually die.

God made us for loving relationship and human connection. Knowing this, God who created us and knows what we need says over and over in the Bible, in places like 1 John 4:21, “Whoever loves God must also love.”

When you tell someone that you love them and mean it from the heart, something profound and priceless has happened in your relationship. Once Grace and I decided that we not only loved each other but that we would say, “I love you,” our relationship was never the same.

In the midst of Jesus’ ministry, a group of religious folk who were having a bit of a debate asked Him what the most significant section of the Bible is. They wanted Him to give them the boiled-down, bottom-line summary of the entire Old Testament. Since Jesus is the most significant person who has ever lived, and the Bible is the most significant book ever written, Jesus’ answer would be most significant. Mark 12:28-31 (ESV) records what I like to refer to as Jesus’ “tweet” of the Old Testament.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: ‘The Lord

our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ‘There is no other commandment greater than these.”

According to Jesus, to mature we need to focus on five things:

1. Love God emotionally with all your heart.
2. Love God spiritually with all your soul.
3. Love God mentally with all your mind.
4. Love God physically with all your strength.
5. Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

Living a Spirit-filled life begins with love. That love changes your heart, saves your soul, renews your mind and refreshes your strength. It then spreads to those around you. When the Bible talks about love, it is talking about the very essence of God. The Holy Spirit for all eternity lives in perfect love with the Father and Son. While on the earth, this loving relationship continued as the Holy Spirit journeyed with Jesus like a friend through every moment of every day. Despite being hated by mobs, used by crowds, denied and betrayed by friends, Jesus still had one loving relationship He could always count on—His friend circle with the Father and Spirit. This loving friendship helped Jesus to live in love and have the grace to be loving toward others.

The church father Augustine says something that applies to Christ and the Christian, “Whoever loves already has the Holy Spirit, and by having Him, he becomes worthy of having even more of Him, and the more he has the Spirit, the more he loves.” Augustine rightly says that no one can love like God without the Spirit of love.

When we see God’s love, we know God’s Spirit is the source of that love. For this reason, when the Bible speaks of love, it points to the Holy Spirit as the source of love in Jesus’ life

and our lives. (See Rom. 15:30; Col. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:7-9.)
Learn to walk in love by walking in the Spirit.

✘ *Adapted from Spirit-Filled Jesus by Mark Driscoll, copyright 2018, published by Charisma House. As Jesus needed help when He was on earth in human form, so do we. This book explores the role of the Holy Spirit in and through His life, and you will receive insight on how this applies to you today. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the week of March 24, 2018

This week, as you seek God and pray in Jesus' name, thank Him for sending the Holy Spirit to be your helper, friend, enabler, love and power source. Surrender to His sovereignty and call on Him to indwell you, empower you and love through you. Continue to ask for more laborers and for world-wide revival. Lift up our nation and pray for its leaders, and for churches to unite in one accord to spread the love of God and bring healing our nation. Read: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Mark 12:28-31, 1 Thessalonians 4:7-9, 1 John 4:7-11.

2 Key Prophetic Words for Baby Jesus

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Led by the Spirit, he came into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he received Him in his arms and blessed God and said

(Luke 2:25-28).

Once in Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary met a man named Simeon who loved God. The Holy Spirit had confirmed to Simeon that he was alive during a strategic moment in history and “would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26b). Simeon was waiting to meet the anointed one, the Messiah.

A reading of Luke reveals that he is emphatic to repeatedly teach us about the Holy Spirit. Luke shows that Jesus was revealed by prophecy through the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was filled and led by the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in his baptism, enabling and empowering and encouraging his ministry. He is very keen to remind us continually of the work of the Holy Spirit, through what we would consider natural events, those providential moments where God brings people, circumstances and things together; and through more obvious, supernatural moments where miracles, prophecies, revelations, the combating with demons and those types of activities occur.

Simeon has this revelation from the Holy Spirit. He has a prophecy. “And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and he blessed God and said ‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel’” (Luke 2:27-32).

At last, the day Simeon waited for had arrived. He held the child, praised God, and prophesied. “[My] eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,” Simeon declared, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:30–32). God loves the Jews. God loves the Gentiles. Jesus came to save

“all peoples,” every language, tribe, tongue, nation, culture, background and sub-culture.

Simeon goes on to predict the more painful aspects of Jesus' ministry. Jesus would be a man at the center of extraordinary controversy, conflict, acrimony, and strife. History itself is divided into B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (anno Domini, the year of our Lord) around this man, Jesus, as he literally divides history and many in it. Just as Simeon said, to this day Jesus is still incredibly divisive. He remains a point of unity for those who love him, and disunity for those who do not.

Joseph and Mary encounter another prophecy during their trip to Jerusalem from Anna, a prophetess, who also praised God for the opportunity to witness “the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). After these powerful encounters with the Spirit of God, Joseph, Mary and Jesus completed their ceremonies and started home again for Nazareth.

Spend some time today praying with someone (even if it's on the phone), like Simeon did with Joseph and Mary. {eoa}

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The Spiritual Significance of Ancient Hebrew Baby Dedications

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived

with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. (Luke 2:22-39)

Have you ever sat in church and seen a beaming couple stand up front and dedicate their chubby little blessing to the Lord? Something like that happened to the baby Jesus.

According to the customs prescribed in the Old Testament, Mary and Joseph brought their son, Jesus, to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated. The child was still very young at the time, perhaps about six weeks old or so.

As part of the journey, at the base of the temple there would have been places for ceremonial cleansing and washing, all foreshadowing work that Jesus would eventually accomplish on the cross, cleansing us from unrighteousness and washing away our sins. To show that they desired this atoning sacrifice, pilgrims to Jerusalem would wear white. They would not talk about "going" to the temple but "ascending" to the temple. As they were physically climbing the steps, spiritually they were to lift their soul in praise and adoration and thanksgiving to God. Often, they would even sing the Psalms of ascent in the Bible meant for pilgrims as they went to meet with God.

This is the process that Joseph and Mary undertook with their newborn child. They would have been traveling from Nazareth to Jerusalem, about 140 miles. This would have taken them roughly one week, so we know that this is a very serious, devout family that greatly loves God. Luke tells us that they did "according to what is said in the Law of the Lord" (Luke 2:24). When this phrase appears in Luke it emphasizes a deep

devotion to God.

Joseph and Mary took great pains to travel to Jerusalem, make a sacrifice, and dedicate Jesus at the temple. They did so out of loving obedience to God, not religious obligation. When it comes to giving, serving, and attending church, how is your heart? {eoa}

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The Good News of Jesus Is for Everybody

“And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid” (Luke 2:9).

“But the angel said to them, ‘Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy’ (Luke 2:10a). The Good News of Jesus is personal; in speaking to the shepherds, the angel addresses it to “you.”

Christianity is not only a world religion or a worldview; it's the life-changing, soul-saving, eternity-altering truth about Jesus Christ. The gospel is rooted in historical facts, but it's much more than interesting, inspiring information. The

birth of Jesus has huge, real implications for life—your life, my life and “all the people” (Luke 2:10b). Everyone needs to hear that a Savior has come, He is for them and He loves them.

What we think of Jesus determines how we live, how we suffer and ultimately how we die. Jesus does not guarantee that all will be well for us in this life. But what if we know that we belong to God, and we know that everything will be okay in the end? We’re here for God. We’re known by God. We’re loved by God. If we belong to Jesus, God is present with us. He changes us. He can identify and comfort us in our suffering because He has suffered. And when we die, He’ll be there. We’ll see him face to face, and He’ll wipe all the tears from our eyes.

The atheist must justify his or her existence within a cold, empty universe governed by the survival of the fittest. The deist must reconcile the fact that God exists but either doesn’t care or doesn’t have the power to address the suffering in our world. The panentheist and pantheist cannot rightly condemn evil, since everything is tied together as one. The imperfect theist must strive to do the impossible and please the perfect demands of God.

Christianity offers the hope of Good News: A Savior has been born, named Christ the Lord. We have a real need and a real Savior who *alone* can really save.

In hearing about the birth of Jesus, here’s what the angels do: “Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men’” (Luke 2:13-14).

Angels dwell eternally in the presence of God, singing of His goodness and grace. When they discover that the long-awaited promises have at last been fulfilled, they celebrate.

None of this jubilation is lost on Mary. She “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). She has

sung previously in this Gospel, but here, she's simply overwhelmed. Perhaps it dawned on her that the Savior, the rescuer, the hero, the deliverer, the dragon slayer, the kingdom giver is there in her presence. Immanuel is there with her, in her arms, and He is her Son. Her heart overflows with quiet joy.

The shepherds depart from the scene "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20b). The Savior is here, hope for the world has arrived, and they've looked upon His face. They sing and celebrate with gladness and joy because Jesus is Good News.

The Good News of Jesus is for all people, including us. And our response should be to ponder this gift in our hearts, like Mary, and sing with our mouths, like the angels and the shepherds. Glory to God in the highest!

In what very practical ways should you respond joyfully to the Good News about Jesus? {eoa}

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Why the 4 Other Non-Christian

Worldviews Fall Short

Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14).

Besides Christianity, there are four predominant worldviews that compete for allegiance:

1. Atheism declares that there is no God. The inevitable conclusion of atheism is that we're here for no purpose. When you die, there is nothing awaiting you. Atheism is emotionally deadly. If you come from no one, are here for no reason, and when you die you go nowhere, there is no hope for this life or eternal life.
2. Deism is the belief that God exists, but he is distant. He basically made the world and then left. Playing the devil in a movie, Al Pacino once said that God was an "absentee landlord." He doesn't pay any attention to you or the world, and he is certainly not becoming a man and entering into history to suffer or serve. You are on your own.
3. Pantheism and panentheism are similar. Pantheism is the belief that everything is God. Panentheism is the belief that God is in everything, like a force or energy. Good and evil essentially don't exist, because they are two sides of the same coin, yin and yang. The problem is that there is no justice. When we suffer and we see injustice or evil on the earth, where's the justice? The answer in pantheism and panentheism is—there isn't any justice. There's no judge outside of this system. All we have is what is, and good and evil are different sides of the same coin. It's all one. So if you're hurt, damaged, raped, abused, abandoned or betrayed, you can't really say that was wrong. All you can say is "That happened." You can't appeal to any sovereign God

separate from the world for help, because there's no one beyond creation. You have no hope of final judgment in the end.

4. Theism allows for the existence of God, but this existence can range from the one god of monotheism (Judaism, Islam) to the many gods of polytheism (Mormonism, Hinduism). Most theistic worldviews acknowledge the difference between the creator and the created, but there is no savior. Instead, we have to save ourselves through religion and good works. The result is that we either keep the rules and get very proud of ourselves and judgmental of others, or we fail to keep the rules and fall into despair. In this way, meager religious works seek to close the infinite gap between sinners and the divine.
5. Christianity is about the one true God who is separate from his creation but enters into his creation as the God-man Jesus Christ. This is where Christianity is different. There is a God, He has not abandoned us; He is separate from his creation; and He has come on a rescue mission for us in love. We come from God, we belong to God and we're here for God and find our joy in living for his glory. God is here with us to this day through the Holy Spirit, and one day, we will stand before God and experience a perfect eternity with Him, where sin and all of its effects are no more, if we turn from sin and trust in Him.

How would you describe your worldview? Where do you find hope in the face of great pain and suffering? {eoa}

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3 Things This Angelic Announcement Tells Us About Jesus' Identity

But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-11).

There's a lot for us to learn from this angelic announcement.

Jesus is the Savior. All religions and worldviews outside of Christianity have one thing in common: God is not the savior. Either you are your own savior, or there's no savior at all. In Christianity, God is the hero, the rescuer, the redeemer, the Savior. This is Good News because it gives us hope. If the only hope we have is in ourselves, that's a sad, futile existence. But if there's a Savior, there is hope for us that is beyond us coming to rescue us.

Jesus is the Christ—the anointed king. Like Jesus, King David started humbly. David was a shepherd boy, taking care of his family's flock, when a prophet showed up one day and anointed the boy as the future king of Israel. Before he could ascend to the throne, however, David endured great conflict with his predecessor, King Saul, and patiently prepared for his coronation day. Jesus is like that as a baby. He is the Christ—"anointed"—but until his kingdom is fully realized on

earth, there is great conflict between the kingdom of Satan (“the ruler of this world”) and Jesus, the true King. It’s only a matter of time before “the ruler of this world” is deposed and Jesus goes from anointed King to appointed King (John 14:30).

Jesus is Lord. The angel worships Jesus Christ as Lord. This is another kingly title that means Jesus is the ruler over all. This reality should lead us to a deeper appreciation, understanding and adoration of Jesus, the preeminent sovereign of all existence.

The three titles the angel used to describe Jesus each tell us something important about the identity of Jesus Christ. Savior: Jesus is the hero who saves us from our sin in his death and gives us new hope in his resurrection. Christ: Jesus is the anointed one, chosen for this special purpose. Lord: Jesus is supreme over all religions, all nations and all peoples.

This unique declaration clues us in to the unique identity and power of the baby in the manger. The rightful, exclusive position of Savior, Christ and Lord belongs to Jesus. This is the true meaning of Christmas.

Is Jesus your Savior? Is Jesus your Christ? Is Jesus your Lord? {eoa}

How to Approach the Bible’s Most Famous Story With New

Eyes

And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men."

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they came hurrying and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. When they had seen Him, they made widely known the word which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

When eight days had passed and the Child was circumcised, He was named JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb (Luke 2:8-21).

Luke 2:8–21 is perhaps the most familiar passage in all Scriptures. Linus reads it every Christmas for the Charlie

Brown television special. Almost every church in has a nativity scene stashed somewhere. Many non-Christians even set up a manger scene with the baby Jesus somewhere in their home every December. Almost everyone knows just enough of the Christmas story to project their own meaning into the whole event.

Whether we realize it or not, each one of us lives according to a worldview. It's how you perceive reality, understand God, find purpose in life—all of those big questions of existence. The Christmas story contains profound, life-changing biblical truth. Since it is such a common story, however, people are prone to change the meaning based on their personal worldview, rather than allow the real meaning to change their worldview.

In other words, the true meaning of Christmas could not be more important. The angel's declaration to the shepherds on that night long ago included a number of key statements that clue us in to the significance of what had just happened. Today, to prepare your heart for the holiday season, go back and read this section of Scripture yet again after praying to the Holy Spirit for fresh eyes to see the birth of Jesus.

No matter how many times you have heard it, there is always something to appreciate about the Christmas story. What is the Holy Spirit teaching you this time around? {eoa}

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A Glorious Angelic Announcement for an Unlikely Audience

And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, and good will toward men."*

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:8-15).

Have you ever wondered what people thought of shepherds in Jesus' day?

People thought shepherds were odd. They lived by themselves, outside of town, sleeping in the open, and surrounded by animals all the time. Their reputation was less than stellar. Shepherds were stereotyped as crooks and thieves, and they

couldn't even testify in court. It didn't help that they couldn't leave their flock without risking their livelihood, which means they couldn't make it to the temple for sacrifices and feasts and maintain the same religious devotion as the rest of God's people. In short, the shepherds were not highly regarded in their society.

When an army of angels lit up the sky to announce God's birth into history, no one would have ever expected them to break the news to a bunch of shepherds. Upon hearing the big announcement, however, the shepherds outside of Bethlehem hurry off to find the baby boy. Besides Mary and Joseph, these anonymous outcasts are the first people in the world to enjoy an audience with Jesus Christ.

It's curious how God arrives in a humble way to a humble family and announces the event to the humble shepherds. God works with them for His glory, by His grace. Years later, Jesus even described himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (see John 10:11). God redeems an unpopular profession, showing that He is humble and willing to look after us like sheep.

If you were God, would you have entered history in a humble way as Jesus did? If not, how would you have entered history?
{eoa}

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3 Ways Jesus Is Like Us But Unlike Us

But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly there was with the angel a company of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:10-14).

Jesus' birth is historical: Christianity is based on fact. It is theological: God entered humanity in order to save us. Finally, it is biographical: What does Jesus' birth mean for you and me? What does this possibly have to do with our life?

1. Jesus is like us.

Since Jesus is like us, the Bible says, "we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was in every sense tempted like we are, yet without sin. Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

In other religions, the concept of God is that He is transcendent, far removed from the messy lives of sin and sinners on the earth. But Jesus knows what it's like to have your family turn their back on you. He knows what it's like to have friends betray you. He knows what it's like to be homeless, poor, mocked, lied to and beaten. He knows what it's like to die. Our God is like us, especially in His suffering.

When you're suffering, hurting and tempted, you can talk to Jesus and He can sympathize. Our God gets it, because we have a real God with a name and a face: Jesus. He understands us.

2. Jesus is unlike us.

If Jesus were completely like us, He would not be very helpful in our suffering. But Jesus can actually do something about it because He's different from us. Unlike us, Jesus never sinned. He was tempted. He suffered. He died. But he did not sin. He said yes to the Father and no to sin every time.

When we're tempted, we can run to Jesus, and He can identify with our struggle. In that moment, He can say, "I faced that temptation, too." When we sin, we can also run to Jesus. In that moment, He can say, "I said no to that sin, but I died for it anyway. I forgive you. I will save you from the mess you're in, and I will change your whole life." Because He is unlike us and never got into the sinful messes we do, He knows how to keep us out of trouble and get us out of trouble when we have wandered into harm's way.

3. Jesus came to make us like Him.

History: Jesus was born in Bethlehem to the Virgin Mary. Theology: Incarnation, God is with us. Biography: Jesus changes us and gives us a new life. If we believe the truth about Jesus by faith, we're reconciled to God from now through eternity.

This changes everything, and it culminates in doxology: Life as worship in response to Jesus. Part of this worship is the adoration of Jesus, but it's also being empowered by the Holy Spirit to follow the actions of Jesus. Like Jesus, we're not to separate ourselves from the world, and we're not to enter into the world to participate in its sin and folly. We enter into the world to be a redemptive agent for the world on behalf of the kingdom of God. That is the ministry of Jesus and the mission of Jesus.

God became a man and got His hands dirty. The incarnation compels us to do the same, through His life at work in ours. He is Immanuel, God with us, and also He is Immanuel, God in us at work through us for His glory, others' good and our gladness.

In what five very practical ways has Jesus changed you to make you more like him? {eoa}

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