

# 4 More Common Misconceptions About Jesus Becoming Human

*She [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son [Jesus]. (Luke 2:7)*

Today, we conclude answering some of the most common questions regarding God entering history as the man Jesus Christ.

## 4. Did Jesus cease to be God when he became a man?

No, he did not. Jesus proclaims his deity throughout the gospels, and Jesus' opponents admitted that they wanted to put him to death "because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:33, NIV). Jesus not only said he was God, but he also did things only God can do, like forgive sin (Mark 2:5). Unless he was God, Jesus had no business forgiving other people's sins. Jesus didn't lose his divinity, he added to it humanity. Jesus Christ is not God-minus; he's God-plus.

## 5. Is Jesus God or man?

Yes. He's the God-man. He's both.

Theological liberals often emphasize Jesus' humanity and describe him as an exemplary leader who helped the poor, fought for justice, and cared for the widow and orphan. They'll put him in a category similar to Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa.

Theological conservatives, on the other hand, often emphasize Jesus' divinity. His suffering and temptation weren't that big of a deal because Jesus was God and therefore impervious. Like Clark Kent, Jesus looked like a regular guy on the outside, but underneath the Galilean peasant garb he was a man of steel.

The truth is, Jesus was fully man and fully God. He lived life perfectly as a man, to serve as our example and a flawless substitute sacrifice in our place. He didn't "cheat" by using his divinity "but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). At the same time, Jesus never stopped being God. Jesus was one person with two natures: fully God, fully man. And he lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### 6. Did God have intimate relations with Mary?

Mormons believe that God the Father is a flesh-and-blood physical being who had actual intimate relations with Mary and impregnated her as a result. The Bible doesn't teach that at all. The angel Gabriel described the conception to Mary as a miracle of the Holy Spirit. Mary says repeatedly that she's a virgin. Joseph, a godly, honorable man, has been waiting to consummate his marriage with his wife, and it would be a horrendous thing to think that God himself violated Mary.

#### 7. Is the incarnation of Jesus a secondary issue?

Some churches and leaders throughout history, including the present day, have argued that the incarnation is not crucial; we can agree to disagree and it doesn't really matter if Mary was a virgin. There are many reasons, however, to consider the incarnation a primary, non-negotiable element of faithful Christian doctrine. If Mary was not actually a virgin, the implications would be numerous and vast. For example:

- If Mary was not a virgin, then the Bible is not true. Gabriel said that Mary was a virgin. Mary said that she was a virgin. If we don't trust God's word on this point, there is no reason to trust his word elsewhere.
- If Mary was not a virgin, then Scripture remains unfulfilled and our sins are not forgiven.
- If Mary was not a virgin, then Jesus' mother was an ungodly and deceptive woman. If Mary concocted a story

to hide the fact that she was cheating on Joseph or messing around with Joseph, then the entire story surrounding Jesus' birth is greatly altered.

- If Mary was not a virgin, it would mean that Jesus was just a normal guy.
- If Jesus was raised by a woman who made up preposterous religious lies to cover up her own bad behavior, why should we believe the extraordinary claims of her or her son?

Jesus is fully God and fully man. We cannot expect to fully understand this mystery here on earth, but thanks to the God-man we will join him in heaven someday, see him face to face, and know fully as Paul tells the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:12).

*Which do you tend to appreciate more: Jesus' humanity (his works and example), or Jesus' divinity (his power and perfection)? How would a more complete understanding of the incarnation change the way you serve, follow, and relate to God? {eoa}*

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# 3 Common Misconceptions About Jesus Becoming Human

*“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).*

When they describe the theological significance of Jesus’ birth, theologians like to use a particular word: incarnation. It comes from the Latin meaning, “in the flesh.” Incarnation refers to the Christian doctrine that God, who is Spirit, took upon himself human flesh and came as the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of John describes the incarnation well: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). The Word—the one who was eternally face to face with God the Father as the second member of the Trinity—became a man, the man Jesus Christ. That’s the incarnation. The second member of the Trinity entered into history. The Creator entered creation. God who is spiritual took upon himself the physical. That’s why we call him Immanuel, “God with us.”

I realize that this raises a number of questions.

## 1. Did a person become God?

No. There’s a difference between a person becoming God and God becoming a person. Satan lied to Adam and Eve by telling them that they could essentially become God. Any religion that claims people can become God is false. That includes Mormonism and also many Eastern religions and New Age spiritualities that teach oneness with the divine. We do not ascend toward God—through morality, reincarnation, good works, paying off

our karmic debt, trying harder, doing better—God descends to us. The doctrine of the incarnation is not about a person who became God in order to show us how we can be godlike. It's about how God became a human person because He loves us and came to rescue us.

## **2. Did Jesus come into existence at His birth?**

Some religions teach that Jesus is not eternally God, but that he is a created being who came into existence at a point in time. In Micah 5:2 and John 1, Jesus' origins extend to eternity past since before creation. Jesus did not come into existence at His birth. The second member of the eternal Trinity entered into human history as the God-man, Jesus Christ. The Bible is clear that Jesus is our Creator and was not created, saying of Jesus in Colossians 1:16, "For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him." Jesus' birth was not His creation but rather His entrance into His creation.

## **3. Is the incarnation borrowed from pagans?**

If you have taken a religion course in college, one of the things you probably were told is that Christianity borrows ideas like the virgin birth from pagan mythology. This is untrue. Scripture predates any of the mythologies in question. As we saw, Isaiah's prophecy takes place 700 years before the virgin birth, but the first allusion of the virgin birth of Jesus is all the way back in Genesis 3:15 when the earth had only two people on it. After our first parents sinned against God, He promises the coming of a Savior, born of a woman—no mention of a father. This is notable, because the rest of Genesis is a patriarchal book, tracing numerous family histories through the male line.

In addition, the concepts of pagan mythology were just that:

mythology. Even the ancient Greeks did not treat the exploits of Zeus, Athena, and the various gods and goddesses as fact. These stories were more like Spiderman than Nelson Mandela. The Bible, however, presents itself as historical fact evidenced by eyewitness testimony. If anything, the pagans stole their fiction from the facts of the Bible.

*What questions do you still have about the life of Jesus? Ask a friend, study the Bible, pick a good book to read. Above all, ask the Holy Spirit to help you know, love, obey and follow Jesus. {eoa}*

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## **Why It Matters That the Bible Mentions Augustus Caesar**

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the entire inhabited earth should be taxed” (Luke 2:1).

The opening sentences of Luke 2 demonstrate the author’s great attention to historical detail. Luke introduces us to Augustus Caesar, who was ruling at the time that Jesus was born. Augustus Caesar was a very significant political leader who ruled over the Roman Empire, one of the most prominent, longstanding, far-reaching empires in the history of the world. He was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. His title “Augustus” means “the majestic or highly revered.”

Historians say that during his rise to power, Augustus Caesar was ruthless, but once he assumed power, he became more benevolent. He was a fairly gracious ruler compared to others in his day, far more so than people like King Herod, who was a maniacal man throughout his life.

Working under Augustus Caesar was a governor named Quirinius, who enforced and executed policies and decisions from the emperor. Luke locates the birth of Jesus in a specific historical time frame by telling us that it occurred during a census ordered by these rulers.

Caesar Augustus reigned over the entire Roman Empire, and Quirinius served as a sort of cabinet member to the senior leader. Caesar would demand a certain action, and a man like Quirinius would execute the order. In this case, Luke tells us, a census was to be taken, which would have been a means for Caesar to assess his vast power and command maximum tax and military participation from the populace.

On the complete opposite of the spectrum, Luke draws our attention to Joseph and Mary. They are everything that Caesar and Quirinius are not: poor, powerless, rural, worshipping God rather than being worshipped like gods. Nevertheless, the two loved one another, they trusted in God, and they accepted God's call on their lives. Now, near the very end of Mary's pregnancy, the census requires the couple to travel to Bethlehem.

Joseph was of the family line of David, and David grew up around Bethlehem. For the census, everyone returned to the original hometown of their particular family. In order to obey the law, Joseph has to take pregnant Mary on a roughly hundred-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It's a terrifying prospect, when you think about it, with the very real possibility she could give birth to God on the side of the road far away from any doctor, medical care or help whatsoever. But God in His providential sovereignty orchestrated history to get this couple from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2 about the Savior's birthplace.

Despite a long journey and no place to stay but an animal stable, Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem safely, just in

time for Jesus to be born. The Creator and King of the universe's first throne on earth is a feeding trough for animals. In this humble gesture, however, we see God's sovereign power over governments and history. God arranged the details implemented by everyone from the powerful (Caesar Augustus and Quirinius) to the powerless (Joseph and Mary), not to mention the infinite number of lives and events leading up to that point, in order to fulfill his Word and demonstrate his lordship over all.

*Looking back, how has God worked through unexpected encounters and events to orchestrate his plan for your life? {eoa}*

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## **The Deeper Significance of the Name 'Immanuel'**

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with*

*Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)*

Immanuel.

Every Christmas, cards start arriving in the mailbox and songs echo at the mall with the word "Immanuel." But what does that mean?

About 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

Through Isaiah, we learn that God's answer to us walking away from him is Immanuel running toward us. Immanuel is a title that means, "God is with us." The promise was given that God would visit our planet by entering human history to lovingly pursue lost people. How would we know that Immanuel had come? When the virgin gives birth to a son.

The prophet Micah provided another clue, about 300 years after Isaiah. The special child would be born in Bethlehem: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2). In the original Hebrew, "from ancient days" can mean "from eternity."

Based on these and other promises, God's people were anticipating and awaiting this miraculous visitation from God to save and redeem them. Their expectations were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, which we read about in Luke 2:1-7.

*Do you earnestly believe that Jesus Christ is the only God? If*

*not, why not? {eoa}*

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## **Have You Raised Your Holy Spirit Sail?**

*And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:76-80).*

There's only one commandment in the New Testament that tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine, for that is reckless living. But be filled with the Spirit." John the Baptizer is the embodiment of that. He wasn't controlled by substances; he was controlled by the Spirit.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit regenerates you. You're born again, and He takes up residence in you and gives

you a new heart, a new mind, a new nature, new desires and a new life. The Bible calls that being baptized or sealed in the Spirit (Acts 1:5; Eph. 1:13).

In this sense, every true Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit. As we see with Zechariah, Elizabeth, John and other people in the Bible; however, there can be multiple, unique fillings of the Holy Spirit that occur throughout the course of life. These fillings are empowering experiences for the believer to experience more of God's power at work in and through them in love, power, service, healing, deliverance and victory.

Through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will take up residence in you so you can live a life under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, as John did and as Jesus did during His life on earth.

Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to the wind (John 3:8). Like the wind, the Holy Spirit is always flowing. To be filled with the Holy Spirit simply means we live our lives like a ship with a sail. When our sail is up, we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, direct our life and lead us where He wants us to go, to become who He wants us to be and to do what He wants us to do. Our sail comes down through unrepentant sin, unbelief, clinging to lies rather than truth, foolish doctrine and bad life decisions, all of which "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Put your sail up. Repent, believe, read your Bible, pray, submit and be in community with God's people. In this way, God will fill you, lead you, guide you and empower you. He is willing, and if we will avail ourselves to His presence and power, He will fill us.

Without the Holy Spirit, Christianity becomes nothing but a list of do's and don'ts. You either live a decent life and become proud as a result, or you fail to measure up and fall

into despair. Neither result leads to the kind of humble joy that comes from the Holy Spirit.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit; that's how He did it. There is no secret. God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). God's power enables us to be who we cannot be and do what we cannot do because it's His power, not ours. The Christian life is a supernatural life of God at work in us and through us.

*Is your sail up or down? Do you have a relationship of trust and love with the Holy Spirit? If not, ask for prayer from other Christians. If so, thank the Holy Spirit for His specific work and guidance in your life. {eoa}*

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## **Why John the Baptist Is a Great Example of Biblical Masculinity**

*"And the child [John] grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to Israel" (Luke 1:80).*

Today, we continue to examine seven ways in which John the Baptizer was, as Jesus said in Luke 7:28, the greatest man who has ever walked the earth.

#### 5. John made the invisible kingdom visible.

Zechariah's prophecy mentions, "a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (Luke 1:69b). This is the ancient language of kingship.

King David was Israel's most famous ruler. He ushered in a golden age unprecedented in the ancient world that continued on through his son and successor, King Solomon. This kingdom was only meant to foreshadow God's true, perfect, forever kingdom where Jesus is the true, perfect, forever King.

King Jesus told his disciples, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus rules over all times, nations, places, cultures, languages, tribes and lifestyles of people. He rules over the angels and the demons. He rules over the rich and the poor, the living and the dead. The book of Revelation tells us that Jesus is already seated on the throne in heaven. His invisible kingdom will one day be established on the earth with his Second Coming, and the invisible kingdom will be made visible. In the meantime, what we see are the visible kingdoms of the earth.

In his prophecy, Zechariah describes God's kingdom as marked by redemption, salvation, mercy, deliverance, holiness, righteousness, light, and peace. In contrast, he describes the kingdoms of the earth as "those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79).

#### 6. John obeyed God's call on his life.

Zechariah's prophecy echoes Gabriel's words in Luke 1:17, saying John "will go before the Lord to prepare his ways (Luke 1:76).

John was a great man, but God gave him a difficult call. As a student of Scripture, John would have been keenly aware that most of God's prophets lived lonely lives that usually ended in exile, murder or both. That's precisely what happened to John. He was thrown in prison and beheaded after preaching against Herod ("Herod the Great," ironically). John went from known by some, to mega tour preacher, to imprisoned, to dead rather quickly. That's a man who humbly obeyed his difficult call.

#### 7. John avoided adolescence.

Following Zechariah's prophecy, the Bible speaks briefly of John's youth: "And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he remained in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to Israel" (Luke 1:80).

John's public ministry lasted roughly six months—shorter than an academic freshman year at a Bible college. He preached a lot of sermons, baptized perhaps thousands of people, handed his ministry to Jesus and got martyred—all by the age of about 30. Today, the average 30-year-old guy is getting married for the first time after years of playing video games, acting silly and wasting time.

John did not consume any alcohol; he did not waver on his mission; and He packed in a lifetime of man's work during his brief 30 years because He did not waste any of His time on earth. Like a soldier off to war, He did not pretend that life was an extended vacation at an all-inclusive resort.

Men, especially young men, who aspire to greatness can learn a lot from John's example. He is Jesus' definition of a great man.

*When you think of the greatest man you personally know, who comes to mind? How can you encourage him today? {eoa}*

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## **Why John the Baptist Was Like a Rock Star**

*"What then will this child [John] be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:66)*

Today, we continue to examine seven ways in which John the Baptizer was, as Jesus said in Luke 7:28, the greatest man who has ever walked the earth.

### 3. John humbly prepared the way for Jesus

After John was born, Zechariah prayed a prophecy over his newborn son: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (Luke 1:76).

John's role was to get people ready for Jesus. John humbly prepared the way for Jesus rather than using Jesus to build his own fame. He certainly could have exploited the opportunity. John was something like a rock star in his day once his public ministry began. There had not been a prophet for some 400 years until John opened his mouth and the Spirit anointed his preaching. He was a bit of a wild man who grew up in the wilderness and was not owned by the religious

establishment. He was young, charismatic, strong, eccentric and fearless. Crowds flocked to him.

Yet, John was not all about John. John was all about Jesus.

“After me comes he who is mightier than I,” John said, “the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie” (John 1:27, ESVUK). As his stock was at an all-time high and his first tour just starting, John said he was unworthy to do the work of a slave for Jesus Christ. Later, when his fame was hotter than ever and he could have cashed it all in for a huge ministry, he set it all aside, sent all his disciples to follow Jesus, and said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

#### 4. John was an evangelist

Zechariah proclaimed that John’s ministry would be “to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:77-78).

When you tell people about salvation through Jesus, that’s called evangelism. And salvation is this: You and I have sinned against a holy and righteous God; he has come into human history as the man Jesus Christ to reconcile men and women to God; he’s lived the life we have not lived, the life without sin; he’s died the death we should have died, the death for sin; and he has risen to give the gift we cannot earn, forgiveness of sin. This gift is ours through repentance and faith. We turn away from sin and toward Jesus, acknowledging our need for his forgiveness and righteousness.

John was an evangelist. He did not settle for just doing good deeds or giving good advice – as good as they are. He kept preaching the bad news of sin and the good news of salvation, even though he knew that by preaching repentance he would be despised, hated, and opposed. But he loved God and he loved people. John knew that people were bound for hell, and he

wanted them to go to heaven. He knew that people were enslaved by Satan and sin, and he wanted them to be liberated and children of God.

John never got tired of preaching repentance. The number is uncertain, but insofar as we can tell, most commentators agree that the Holy Spirit working through John converted thousands of people in a short period of time.

*Who do you need to talk to about Jesus and salvation? Be courageous today and look for the opportunities the Holy Spirit has provided to have that conversation. {eoa}*

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## Why John the Baptist Is the Second-Greatest Person to Ever Live

*"I [Jesus] say to you, among those who are born of women, there is no greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28).*

If we took a poll to name the greatest person history has ever known, it's highly unlikely that John the Baptizer would even

crack the top ten or top thousand. Jesus is in a category of his own: God incarnate. But the Bible is clear that John is preeminent among the rest of us who are not members of the Trinity.

First of all, we read in Luke 1:15a that John “will be great in the sight of the Lord.” Jesus makes it even clearer a few chapters later, saying, “I tell you, among those who are born of women, there is no greater prophet than John the Baptist” (Luke 7:28).

This is an incredible statement, especially when you consider the fact that John spent the majority of his life living in obscurity. He began his public ministry in his late 20s or early 30s, and although he drew a lot of attention, it only lasted a few months before Jesus showed up. John was thrown in prison shortly thereafter, where he was beheaded as a young man.

What was so great about this bug-eating, honey-chugging, gospel-preaching, sinner-baptizing eccentric? From Zechariah’s prophesy and elsewhere in the gospels, we can glean at least seven aspects of John’s greatness and true greatness in the sight of God. Below are two of them.

### **1. John came from Spirit-filled parents.**

Both John’s mother, Elizabeth, and his father, Zechariah, were filled with the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:41b, we read, “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” and then prophesies over Mary. In Luke 1:67a, “Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied” over his son at birth. Luke tells us on numerous occasions that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit throughout his gospel. Simply put, being Spirit-filled means to be like Jesus by God’s power.

### **2. John was filled with the Holy Spirit.**

John himself was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Before

John's birth, the angel Gabriel said, "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15b). The Bible also says, "The hand of the Lord was with him" (Luke 1:66b). That's another way of saying that the Holy Spirit was present with him, through him and in him through the course of his life.

John did not become the greatest man who ever lived through morality and good behavior, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we look at the life of John, the point is not to merely do what John did, but to be transformed through, filled with, and empowered by the same Holy Spirit who made John great and gave him great ministry. The Spirit will make you moral, but that's a byproduct and not the main thing. His goal is not to just make you better, but to make you new.

*How is your personal relationship with the Holy Spirit? How can your personal relationship with the Holy Spirit improve?*  
{eoa}

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# Meet the Greatest Man Who

# Ever Lived—Besides Jesus

*Now Elizabeth's time had come to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and cousins heard how the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they were calling him Zechariah, after the name of his father. But his mother answered, "Not so! He shall be called John." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." They made signs to his father, asking what he would have him called. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he spoke and praised God. Fear came on all who lived around them. And all these facts were talked about throughout all the hill country of Judea. All those who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will he be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.*

*His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets of long ago, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and in*

*the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

*And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he remained in the wilderness until the day of his appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:57-80)*

At the age of 26 my wife and I welcomed our first child into the world. I can still remember how excited and overwhelmed I felt awaiting her arrival.

Would we have a boy or a girl? Would she be healthy? Would mom be okay through the delivery? I cannot express in words what it felt like to hold our child, but every parent knows what I'm talking about.

Have you ever waited expectantly for the birth of a child you loved and could not wait to meet? That is the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

This barren and broken elderly couple had been waiting for decades to be graced with the gift of a baby. Additionally, the world had been awaiting the arrival of their son for hundreds of years since the prophets promised his coming.

Now, John's birth has finally arrived, and we get to share in Zechariah and Elizabeth's joy as they celebrate the birth of their son. Everyone was clamoring to name the child; it's amazing how some things never change. All of the relatives pressured the couple to stick with tradition and name the boy Zechariah, after his father.

Elizabeth tried to explain that the angel Gabriel had already instructed them to name the child John. The people looked to Zechariah for confirmation, but he was still unable to speak, ever since his initial unbelief that he would ever be a father. He can still communicate, however, so Zechariah takes up a pen and paper and writes, "His name is John."

“And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed,” Luke tells us, “and he spoke, blessing God” (Luke 1:64). The first words out of Zechariah’s mouth in nine long months are words of prophetic praise to the Lord.

All of this provoked wonder in the people of this quiet little town. The Bible tells us that they thought, “What then will this child be?” (Luke 1:66) We learn from Gabriel, Zechariah’s prophesy, and Jesus’ word later on that, other than Jesus, this child John will be no less than the greatest man who ever lived.

*When you think of godly parents, who comes to mind that you know? How can you encourage them today? {eoa}*

**Mark Driscoll** is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, which you can order [here](#). He currently pastors *The Trinity Church* in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of pastor Mark Driscoll’s Bible teaching, please visit or download the app. You can download a free devotional e-book from pastor Mark [here](#).

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## **How to Win Your Spiritual Battle With Anxiety**

*He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty (Luke 1:51-53),*

Mary has two options in light of all that has happened in her life. She can either give in to anxiety, or she can focus on history: What has God done?

In moments of crisis and doubt, choosing anxiety will lead to paralyzing fear about the future. Instead, Mary remembers God's grace toward Abraham and the nation of Israel. She recognizes that the culmination of God's promises is to be fulfilled in her son, the Savior of the world. She trusts that God has been working on this for thousands of years, and she believes He is good on His word.

Trust that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Cling to it like a drowning victim adrift at sea clings to a life ring. It doesn't mean that everything will be fixed, but you will keep your head on straight, and you will be able to worship your way through it. Find a way to glorify God so that you might have joy and a reason to sing. Read Scripture, read church history and read biography. Get to know people and hear the story of God's work in their lives, so you can replace anxiety with history. God has been good, and He will be good, because He is the same God yesterday, today and forever.

If you struggle with despair and discouragement, or maybe even depression, let me submit to you one thing that may be very helpful: Record evidences of God's grace toward you. Like Mary, it will help you to say, "He has done good things for me."

What has God forgiven you of? What is He teaching you? How is He changing you? Who has He put in front of you? What circumstances has He delivered you from? What opportunities is He calling you to? Your whole life might change if you could readily look back and know with confidence, *He's done great things for me.*

*Today, write or type out at least five specific ways that God has done great things for you in your past. {eoa}*

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