

What to Do if You Face Daunting Challenges This Christmas

One thing I love best about Christmas is how it reminds us that “nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

I grew up as a brokenhearted kid from an impoverished, uneducated family, living in a very dark neighborhood of a tiny town. How could I have imagined, even in my wildest dreams, that I would one day travel the world preaching the gospel and become the president of a major university? That outcome was utterly impossible for me.

The Christmas story is also utterly impossible. Scripture records 300 prophecies that point to Jesus. It's mathematically impossible for anyone to fulfill all 300, and yet Jesus did it. Consider just one of the prophecies, that a virgin would have a baby. It sounds absurd, yet that's exactly how Jesus was born. Nothing is impossible for God.

This Christmas many are facing mountains of impossibility such as addiction, financial hardship, broken relationships and more. But, the Holy Spirit is always at work. Even when we don't see him, we can be assured that the Holy Spirit is still working.

That's what happened to my family. My grandparents lived in deep poverty, barely able to put food on the table for my mom, their only child. But one Christmas, an assistant pastor from a local church knocked on their door. The pastor stood just inside the door and talked for a few moments about Jesus, then asked, “Would you mind if we have a prayer?” He held their hands and prayed.

I never heard what compelled that young man to knock on their

door. I just know that when he did, my grandparents felt the power and presence of the Holy Spirit possibly for the first time in their lives.

After Christmas, my grandparents visited that man's church and surrendered their hearts to Christ. My grandfather had almost no education, yet as he was faithful to God, God started giving him better jobs. Eventually, my grandparents bought a piece of land and built a small home in a corner of that tiny town.

My mom grew up, married and brought my two sisters and me into the world. But when I was 5 years old, my dad left us. So, my mom packed us up and moved us into my grandparents' tiny house. My grandfather built on an extension for us. He and my grandmother took us to church, taught us about Jesus and helped us overcome the bitterness and anger we felt about our situation.

Then, when I was 16 years old, a preacher I'd never seen before prophesied over me that I'd preach around the world. That was the first inkling I had that the Holy Spirit wanted to use me for God's glory. It didn't happen overnight, but over time, that's exactly what God did with me, taking me to 98 countries to preach His Word. And today, even though I've lived it, it still seems impossible. How did God even find me?

That little town still has more alcohol establishments than grocery stores or gas stations. The homes there are still filled with abuse, violence, drugs and alcohol addiction. But, out of that dark pit, God reached in and found this hopeless, helpless, heartbroken boy. Then he did something miraculous with my life. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is always at work. And nothing is impossible with God.

This year, let yourself be amazed when you hear the impossible story of Christmas. Into a dangerous and lost world, God sent a baby to save us. It's improbable. It's absurd. And yet with

God, nothing is impossible.

How, in your life, can impossibilities become possible? Look how it happened for Mary. First, Mary received a promise from God that she would have a baby. We all need to hear from God. Usually, for us, it is that “word” from Scripture that comes alive in our spirits when we read it.

Then, Mary responded with a believing prayer from her whole heart. Mary said to the angel, “I am the LORD’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38).

When we believe God’s Word, we move out of what is improbable into that which becomes probable. Consider Abraham and Sarah when they were promised a child even though they were in their nineties. The angel reminded Sarah, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:13).

The prophet Jeremiah out of obedience purchased property in a city that the Lord said was going to be torn down. Jeremiah explained why. “Ah, Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm, nothing is too hard for you” (Jeremiah 32:17).

All of God’s people—Mary, Abraham and Sarah, Jeremiah—had a period of waiting before they saw the visible manifestation of the promise.

When God gives us a promise, it’s like a seed in our heart. That His promise will not come a day early or a day late. God will bring it about right on time.

This Christmas, let God speak to you out of His Word with a promise. When he does, believe it. Then trust God’s timing. Remember the Holy Spirit is always at work.

Is there anything too hard for God? A God that can lead His Son to be born of a virgin, live a sinless life, die on a cross to pay for your sins, then raise him supernaturally from

the dead—is there anything too hard for that kind of God?

Maybe what you're facing this Christmas seems like just too much. I want to declare to you—nothing is too hard for God. Nothing is impossible with Him. Hold fast to God's Word. Continue to surrender to Him and trust Him.

Do I believe God could reach down into a speck of a town and find a lost little boy in the tacked-on extension of a tiny house and do something, anything, with him? I do believe. I hope you'll believe this season, too. Merry Christmas. {eoa}

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