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Have you ever thought about the intricate details of the first Christmas? How Mary handled the startling message from the angel Gabriel? Why God sought fit to first appear to the lowly shepherds, and choose a manger in Bethlehem? Or what it would have been like to stand before a multitude of angels?

God was intentional in every detail of his plan to bring his son into the world. Through Mary, an everlasting hope would come to the nations. Through the little town of Bethlehem, the birth of our Savior would become a reality and be our prince of peace. Through shepherds, God would exalt the humble and show us that He is the sovereign shepherd of love. Through angels, God would send good tidings of great joy that would come to all people, everywhere.

The humble events surrounding Christ’s birth glorify all that our Savior is. From the stable to the cross, He redeemed us from sin to give us life. Just as his birth introduced grace and redemption for all people then, the invitation continues for us today. This undeserved gift is truly what the wonder of the first Christmas is all about!

And the angel answered and said to her [Mary], “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

- Luke 1:35
PETE
BRISCOE

youngest son of Stuart and Jill Briscoe, grew up under his father’s ministry in Milwaukee. Since 1992, Pete has served as the Senior Pastor of Bent Tree Bible Fellowship in Dallas, TX.

Pete joined his parents’ international radio ministry, “Telling the Truth,” in 2005, contributing his teaching on God’s Word to the program. Since 2007, he has served as the program’s host as well. Pete is also the author of Belief Matters: Grappling with the Essentials of the Christian Faith. Pete and his wife, Libby, have three children.
SESSION 1

HOPE
ICEBREAKER

Have you ever been asked to do something that seemed impossible or insurmountable?

Did you accomplish it? If so, what were your emotions? What were other people’s reactions?

VIDEO NOTES

God’s “Crazy Ask”

Mary’s Seed

Life’s Difficulties

Courageous Obedience

Sure thing vs. God’s thing
REFLECT & DISCUSS

What is your normal thought process when God asks you to do something that seems crazy?

What is the *proto-evangelium* and where is it first seen in Scripture?

“God has a history of asking his children to do things that don’t make tons of sense.”

Pete talked about the grand theological truth that nothing is impossible with God. Why do we often brush over this truth and doubt what He can do? Can you share an example of that in your own life?

When your world is shaken, how does knowing who God is (as revealed in his Word), help you better lean on Him?
Share a time when you were greatly troubled and greatly confused but you eventually became greatly encouraged.

Pete talked about obeying the Lord’s spirit and how God led him to say “no” to the sure thing while he waited for God’s thing. How can your choice, not to rely on the spirit’s leading or on God’s best, affect God’s plans for your life?

Did anything specific come to mind while listening to Pete’s teaching that God might be calling you to do today?
Search the Bible

Read Luke 1:26-56. Why is it important that Luke mentions Mary being a virgin when Jesus was conceived?

Explain how God’s favor towards Mary was unconditional and solely an act of grace.

“The Lord greatly encouraged Mary with truth about His character.”

What thoughts must have gone through Mary’s mind after the angel Gabriel visited her?
What does vs. 48 show about Mary’s humility in that God is going to use her to bless all generations?

“God tells us what we need to know and then he expects us to trust in him.”

What are the divine attributes that Mary gives to God in her song to him (Luke 1:46-55)? What do these names reveal about her devotion to Him?

Relying on the truth that God will do what he says takes faith—not feelings. **How has trusting in God even when you don’t understand stretched your faith?**

What inspires you most about Mary’s faith in the “impossible”?
BE CHALLENGED

Similar to Mary’s song of adoration, write your own song of praise to God for who He is to you. Consider writing in this workbook, your journal or blog. Meditate on those words and let them remind you of His goodness throughout the week.

FURTHER STUDY

Read the book of Ruth. Use a keyword study bible or online bible dictionary and look up the Hebrew definition for lovingkindness. Search out its significance in the book of Ruth. Be intentional about remembering this special word throughout your week.
A SAVIOR IS BORN
ICEBREAKER

What well-known people can you think of that came from humble beginnings and grew up to be world-famous?

What impresses you most about their story?

VIDEO NOTES

Bethlehem’s significance

Widows in the ancient world

Naomi’s affliction

Ruth in Boaz’s field

Boaz’s kindness

Kinsman Redeemer
In the video, Pete Briscoe said, “God has a habit of communicating truth in multiple layers.” What did Pete say were some of the minute details behind the birthplace of Bethlehem?

Pete creatively introduced seven key thoughts woven throughout the book of Ruth: Desperation, Despondency, Dropping-in, Loving-kindness, Availability, Redeeming, and Including. Which one most reminds you of your own story of salvation and redemption?

“Jesus dropped in. He went the extra mile to provide for us.”

Just as Boaz dropped in to Ruth’s life, how have you seen God “drop in” your life unexpectedly?

In what ways do you see desperation in our culture or in the lives of those you know? How can we bring hope to them?
Pete mentioned how our circumstances can overwhelm us so much that we feel God has been mean or has abandoned us. **How can we choose to fill our mind and heart with truth that God is working, rather than rely on our ever-changing emotions?**

Pete also talked about Boaz’s mother, Rahab, who was a prostitute. Pete said, “This, my friends, is the story of Bethlehem and this is the story of Christmas played out over and over again in every day lives, even today.” **How could you remember the significance of Christmas in your life each day?**

Incredible redemption came to Pete’s friend, Bill. How do you think God used a motorcycle accident and a pool cleaner to get Bill’s attention? How has a moment of utter desperation helped turn you to Christ?

“Availability means saying, ‘Jesus you can save me’.”

God radically changed Bill’s life and gave him a healthy Christian marriage. **Why does God want to restore the lives of all people and give them abundant life?**
SEARCH THE BIBLE

Read Ruth 1:16-21. How did Ruth’s determination to stay with Naomi, and not return to her homeland, demonstrate love and devotion to the family she married into?

What does Ruth’s response, “Your God will be my God,” reveal about her conversion to the God of Israel?

What did the whole town notice about Naomi’s physical appearance? How does affliction and suffering affect your whole body?

Naomi replied, “I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty.” What does she mean by full and empty?

What name does Naomi give the Lord in verse 21? How is she acknowledging the Lord in her affliction?
Read Ruth 4. Boaz made a public profession that he was buying back the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon and acquiring Ruth as his wife. **What can you tell about his character in the fact that he desired to maintain the name of the dead (vs. 10)?**

How would Ruth’s son, Obed, restore Naomi’s family name? (vs. 14-17)

Boaz didn’t stop showing his “loving-kindness.” How is this a picture of Christ’s redeeming love for us?

God stepped in and miraculously worked in the lives of two average women. How does his faithfulness in their life encourage you today?
BE CHALLENGED

Think of a person you know who has a need (emotional, physical, or spiritual). Seek out a tangible way to help meet that need. Use that opportunity to share how God meets our needs and redeems what has been lost.

What happened?

FURTHER STUDY

Read Isaiah 40. How has Jesus been a “good Shepherd” in your life?

How does Satan, the flesh, the world, or your personal struggles, deter you from embracing the Shepherd?
SESSION 3

LOVE
ICEBREAKER

Name a time when you were given a boundary or rule and you broke it.

What did you learn about that rule being there to protect you?

VIDEO NOTES

Shepherds of Jesus’ day

Isaiah’s prediction

Our sovereign Shepherd

Hebrew names of God

Those who have young

God’s word guards us
REFLECT & DISCUSS

In the video, who did Pete relate to as “shepherds” today? How is the message of grace for them too?

How does God’s love for you encourage you to trust in His sovereign hand over your life?

“Jesus protects us. He guards us as he tends his sheep.”

What two Hebrew words did Pete say translated into “sovereign Lord?” (Adonai and Yahweh) What do those two words mean?

How are shepherds in the holy land different than those in the British Isles?
Pete mentioned how Jesus leads and guards our lives by warning us of the dangers in His Word. **How is Jesus currently leading you and guarding your life from temptation or danger?**

How does being in God’s word regularly help us know of the warnings he wants to protect us from?

Name a time when God spoke to you through someone, his word, or a circumstance and you sensed God saying, “I love you.”

Pete talked about going through a storm and how he felt God’s hand tenderly guiding him and how it made him want to follow Jesus all the more. **How does God’s tenderness encourage us to keep persevering in our relationship with Him?**

“Not only was Jesus announced to the shepherds, Jesus is a Shepherd.”
SEARCH THE BIBLE

Read Isaiah 40. God rules with a strong hand (vs. 10) and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd (vs. 11). What does this description reveal about who God is?

What do the “Who” questions in some of these verses indicate about God’s power and greatness? (i.e. “Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor?”)

What is idolatry?

How does Isaiah mock idolatry?

What is the real problem with loving idols? How do they hinder us from delighting in and loving Christ?
How does the Lord give us strength to endure when we’re worn physically, spiritually, and emotionally? What is our reward when we wait on Him to give us strength?

Why do we often lose sight of Christ’s coming glory and replace that hope with doubt and impatience?

In vs. 27, why is Isaiah asking these questions to Jacob and Israel?

Jesus is a shepherd who guards our life and gathers us in. What comfort do you personally have knowing that you’ll never be left behind by the Shepherd?

Jesus is our sovereign Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. Why is his will that all people would have life and have it to its fullest?

“Because of Jesus’ gentleness and loving-kindness in our life, we want to follow along with Him.”
BE CHALLENGED

Go out of your way and encourage an unbeliever this week with a truth you learned in this lesson. Meet with that person, write an email, or mail a card. Share how God has helped you in your struggles with seeing God as the sovereign Shepherd in your life.

What happened?

FURTHER STUDY

Read Romans 5:1. What does it mean that you have been justified by faith?

How does this verse tie into the Christmas story?
ICEBREAKER

Share a time in your life when you heard news that gave you great peace and joy.

VIDEO NOTES

Angels - messengers of the living God

The story behind Silent Night

Brokenness for beauty

News to the shepherds

Amazing grace
REFLECT & DISCUSS

Why is it difficult to imagine angels as being terrifying? In our culture, where do you see angels taking more of the glory than God?

“The angels pointed broken people to Jesus.”

Pete also said, “God has the ability to take broken organs and make beautiful music out of them… God does use them to create beauty in life if you let him.”

How have some of your “broken organs” been repaired by God’s beauty?

What did Pete say was happening at Jesus’ birth?

Do you feel like you have come to own grace in your life? Why/why not?
If the non-believing world understood that Jesus came to bring “redeeming grace” to all people, how do you think their response to Christianity would be different?

Pete said that, “He (the king of Heaven) directed his angels to that freezing hilltop into the silence, disrupting the brokenness of those men to invite them into the most amazing moment in history.”

What areas in your life is God interrupting you and healing your sin and brokenness?

Where did Pete say God’s favor rests?

Pete mentioned how we need to start seeing ourselves as God does: a magnificent piece of art, not a broken organ. What makes it difficult for you to see that God views you as a saint, an heir in His kingdom? How can you start viewing yourself as his saint?
SEARCH THE BIBLE

Read Luke 2:8-20. God chose shepherds; not the chief priests or elders to hear the good news. Why is this so? What does this say about God honoring and exalting the humble and meek?

“God wanted to communicate to everyone, no matter how despised they might be.”

What sign did the angel give to the shepherds concerning the newborn baby? What is surprising about this detail?

What is this “good news of great joy” the angel talks about?

How did the shepherds coming to visit Mary further confirm the angel’s message that she would give birth to the Son of God?
What is a possible reason that the people easily believed the shepherds words?

What does it mean that, "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart"?

What does verse 20 indicate about the reliability of God's word and the people he sent to bring his message?

Read Romans 5:1. How does this verse parallel with Luke 2:14?
BE CHALLENGED

Download the song *Silent Night* from one of your favorite musicians or search the Internet for the lyrics. Reflect on the meaning of the words and journal about their significance to you today.

FURTHER STUDY

Read Matthew’s account of the first Christmas (Matthew 1:18-2:23). Keep in mind the details Matthew accounts of Jesus’ birth. Then re-read Luke’s account. How are these two accounts unique from one another?
A SAVIOR IS BORN
I believe that small groups can be an instrumental part in deepening our relationship with God and with others. My family has formed our deepest and most inspirational relationships within our small group as we meet and pray together. But there’s more to a small group than just gathering together every 1 or 2 weeks.

We have to learn how to get off the couch.

For over 20 years, Bluefish TV has been creating video resources that are used in small groups because our ministry believes strongly that there’s a time and place for gathering together for prayer and study. But we also believe that small groups should be a place where we stand shoulder to shoulder and serve others in the name of Christ.

If you are looking for opportunities where you or your group can put your faith into action, search our ministry website rightnow.org. We have posted thousands of local and international service opportunities and we have a team of coaches who are available to provide further help.

Take the step — any step — towards getting off the couch and making a difference in the world around you.

Brian Mosley
Sr. Producer – Bluefish TV
Director – The RightNow Campaign
FATHERING THE FATHERLESS
Looking for 1,000 churches to raise up mentors for fatherless boys in your community

WATER FOR ALL OF LIBERIA, AFRICA
Looking for people to give money and raise awareness to solve the water crisis for an entire country

EVANGELISM FROM YOUR LIVING ROOM
Respond to phone calls and email from those already looking to learn more about Jesus

JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS
Build caregiver medical kits that will go to the frontline battle against AIDS

Just a few things to check out at RightNow.org
For over 25 years, Bluefish TV has been creating video resources to engage audiences with spiritual truths. As a non-profit ministry, our goal is to create videos to help you teach. Over 90,000 churches have turned to Bluefish TV for their video teaching needs. It’s our privilege to serve God and serve the church by creating these video resources.

Here are some additional resources from Bluefish TV. Check out [www.bluefish.tv](http://www.bluefish.tv) for video previews and to order these for your ministry.

**SMALL GROUPS RESOURCES**

**No Plan B**
with Todd Phillips
Your Part in God’s Remarkable Plan to Rescue the World
Filmed in Africa

**What if ...**
...our small group made a difference in our lives?
with Alan Danielson
4 Questions Every Small Group Should Ask Themselves

**Facing the Unknown**
with Mark Batterson
A Modern Look at the Life of Abraham

**Paul the Apostle**
with David Nasser
What Culture Doesn’t Want You to Hear

**Free Market Jesus**
with Donald Miller
How Our View of Culture Shapes Our View of the Gospel

**The Sacred Echo**
with Margaret Feinberg
Why is Prayer so Mysterious?

**Marriage Built to Last**
with Chip Ingram and featuring Kurt Warner and Dave Ramsey
Biblical Principles to a Life of Love and Respect

**Parenting: The Early Years**
with Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott
10 Biblical Traits Your Kids Will Remember You For

**Uprising**
with Erwin McManus
A Revolution of the Soul
YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

**Why Jesus**
with David Nasser
Answering Tough Question About Our Savior

**Conflict**
with Doug Fields
Overcoming Stress In Your Relationships

**Am I Happy?**
with Sean McDowell
The Search for Something More

**Choose**
with Marcus Goodloe

**Friends**
with Sean McDowell

**Paul in Rome**
with David Nasser

**I AM Getting to Know God**
with David Nasser

**Sex. Dating.**
with Hayley and Michael DiMarco

**Teens vs. Parents**
with Mark Matlock

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