

“A Fulfilling Christmas” Family Devotion
(For adults and students in 6th-12th grade)

WEEK 3 - December 17-23

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME ~ Tell of His Coming: The Shepherds and Angels

Set aside ten minutes one night this week to talk about how God showed His glory to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the candles from the first two weeks and a third candle.

BIBLE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

- ★ *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the 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 for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*
- ★ *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. [Luke 2:8-20](#)*
- ★ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” [Romans 10:14-15](#)*

Who is the first person you tell when you hear or experience something good?

TELL OF HIS COMING

We love hearing good news, especially when we're the first to know. There's a big difference between getting a phone call from your best friend about their pregnancy, engagement, or new job, and finding out about it on Facebook. We cherish being invited to participate in the lives of the people we love instead of simply being spectators.

Today, the ability to share exciting news with others is quick and easy. With one tweet, post, hashtag, or group text, we can communicate with the masses. But, things were obviously very different in the time Jesus was born. When something important happened, such as the birth of a child, heralds often spread that news. Families welcoming new babies, if they had the means to do so, would hire someone to go throughout the community and announce their happy news. Mary and Joseph, of humble means, did not have the ability to do this. But God Himself provided a company of heavenly heralds to proclaim the birth of His one and only Son.

Imagine the scene: shepherds on the midnight watch, ears and eyes open for signs of danger, sheep bleating in the background. And then, out of nowhere, an angel of the Lord bursts onto the scene with the news of the Savior's birth. It is amazing that God chose this group of men as the first to hear the good news. In the time of Jesus' birth, people regarded shepherds as liars and thieves. Because they were nomadic, moving from place to place to graze their flocks, people didn't readily trust them. Yet it was to men such as this that God announced the Messiah's coming. He told them first! Not royalty, not the religious leaders of the day, but shepherds—lowly and insignificant. He invited them into His story and then mobilized them as the very first evangelists.

As soon as they heard news of Jesus' birth, the shepherds felt compelled to act. They went with haste, leaving their flocks behind, to find Mary, Joseph, and the Savior Child lying in a manger. And once they beheld the One through whom salvation would come, they spread the word of all that had taken place.

We are like these men—unlikely recipients of an unbelievable reality. Just as God called the shepherds to witness and testify to Christ's birth, so we are called to herald the saving work of His death and resurrection. As believers, we have been invited into His story, sent out as heralds of both Jesus' first coming and His second. As we consider the shepherds, let us respond as they did to this good news of great joy—with amazement, belief, and action.

REFLECTION

How did you first hear the gospel? Who told you, and how did you respond?

God does not need messengers to communicate His gospel. Why do you think He charged the shepherds with sharing the good news of Jesus' birth? Why do you think He charges us with sharing the good news of salvation?

Did sharing the news of Jesus' birth feel like a burden or a joy to the shepherds? Why? How do you feel about sharing the gospel? What might help you consistently view it as a joyful calling?

What fears keep you from sharing the news that Jesus has come to save sinners? Look up [Colossians 1:3-6](#). How might the assurance in this passage increase your boldness?

Through the proclamation of the angels, God showed His greatness and worth to the shepherds. When do you remember first sensing the beauty of God's glory?

God reveals many things about His nature and character through the birth of His Son. What attributes of God do you see in this part of the Advent narrative?

RESPONSE

Write a letter to someone who was instrumental in your coming to faith. Regardless of whether or not you can actually send them that letter, communicate how the Lord used them to change your heart and life.

PRAYER

In prayer, praise God for loving the weak, despised, and lowly and showing them His glory. Thank Him for the person or means He used to share the gospel with you, and ask Him for the boldness and faith to do the same.

SONG

Sing or listen to "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

Chris Tomlin	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19w0IHPL4X0
Pentatonix	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tWkK22od7c