

appnotes

DAY 1

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

It doesn't matter if you are a super-planner or a spontaneous spirit; no one likes to have their plans disrupted. Disruption often leads to frustration. The thing is, we have a choice to make when our plans get knocked out of whack. As we see in today's reading, Joseph had a Plan A: marry Mary. When he found out she was pregnant before they were married, he came up with a compassionate Plan B: annul the engagement quietly. But God had other plans that disrupted all of Joseph's plans. Joseph had to choose whether he trusted God's plan to be better or to become bitter. Joseph chose to trust. When your plans get disrupted, will you get steamed or surrender?

DAY 2

READ LUKE 2:1-6

Even with the best planning, a baby can arrive at the worst time. Sometimes it's in a subway, during a big move, or even in the car on the way to the hospital! In today's passage, Mary goes into labor when Joseph and Mary are far from home and without a room for the night. What might look like terrible timing was God's perfect timing. In fact, God had been planning this birth, in this place, and in this way for a very long time (see Genesis 3:15, Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14). What first looked like a disaster was really God's design to change the course of human history. If God can do that, He can certainly turn your trial into something good.

DAY 3

READ LUKE 2:15-21

Have you ever received news that changed your life in a dramatic way? Maybe you made the team or you were accepted into the program. Perhaps, you got the job or you discovered that you were going to be a parent. The funny thing is, when you hear the news, nothing changes—and everything does. You have the same eye color and the same shoe size, but the news has opened up a world of hope. The shepherds had that experience the night Jesus was born. After all the fanfare of Jesus' arrival faded, the shepherds went back to their fields. Life was the same—but it wasn't. That's what happens when you meet Jesus for the first time and every time that follows. After the glow fades, hope stays. And hope has the power to propel you forward in life.

DAY READ LUKE 1:46-56

4

How would you respond if a famous person you highly admired asked you to join them on their next great endeavor? Today's reading is Mary's awe-filled response to being chosen to play a crucial role by the most important Person of all time. Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of His Son, Jesus Christ. She would teach God to speak and change the Creator's diapers. He would grow up to give His life to free people from the penalty of their sins. Mary was just a teenager from a backwater town. She writes this song to express how deeply moved she felt to be included in God's incredible plan. And you know what? God is still in the business of taking nobodies and making them somebodies. He enjoys taking the overlooked and leaving His mark on the world through them. He sees you and wants to do something incredible in and through you. Will you let Him?

DAY READ PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

5

Have you ever gone all out and it didn't work out? You decide to lose weight or change a bad habit only to find yourself right where you started months later. Maybe the only New Year's resolution you are making this year is to not make any resolutions! There is a powerful key to change in today's reading. Paul tells a group of believers to take change seriously. He reaffirms what you already know: change is hard work that we must take seriously. No one drifts into becoming the "Me I Want to Be." But don't miss what comes next, God is working in you to desire and do what is best. You don't work alone. The weight of heaven is at your back. The key to real change: Go where God is leading.

AppNotes are available on our Facebook page, Monday-Friday.

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