

## Daily Prayer:

Begin each day by praying the Christmas prayer from this week's message outline. Take time to declare what you believe about Jesus and ask yourself, "Am I willing to receive God's love today and live with the confidence of that ridiculous love?"

## DAY ONE

**Read** Luke 1:29-38. This culture wasn't known for extending forgiveness and grace to a young woman found pregnant before marriage. Undoubtedly, she faced ridicule, disgrace, shame and possibly stoning. She couldn't have known the unseen magnitude of what she so readily agreed to experience. Why did Mary agree to this ridiculous plan? When standing in the presence of God, even Moses (*Exodus 3-4*) tried to negotiate his way out of the deal! A young, ordinary Jewish girl, Mary simply responded to God with faith and open-ended obedience. How do we get that kind of faith? Look at verse 30. What do you suppose Mary had done to find favor with God?

**Read** Psalm 119:55-56 and Luke 11:28.

*The tiniest detail in which I obey has all the omnipotent power of the grace of God behind it.* Oswald Chambers

With each act of obedience, we strengthen our own faith and bring pleasure to the heart of God. He doesn't always call us to do those illogical, seemingly impossible things. But when He does, will we obey? The answer lies in whether or not we're following Him in the simple every day things... today. Is there something God has impressed upon you that maybe you've disregarded? Will you do it?

We learn to walk in obedience by practicing walking in obedience. What has God asked of you? Is it to forgive someone? To serve someone? Is He asking you to give your time, your focus, sacrificial gifts? As we daily obey His word and His promptings, we learn to trust Him enough to obey the stuff beyond our understanding. Then when He calls us to something above our intellect, the character traits of trust and obedience we've developed will allow us, like Mary, to readily obey. Pray for courage, trust, and faith to follow Him today, whatever that may look like.

## DAY TWO

**Read** Matthew 1:18-25, and Luke 1:39,56. **YOUNG WOMAN PLEDGED TO WED, HASTILY FLEES TO HILL COUNTRY. RETURNS PREGNANT THREE MONTHS LATER, YET CLAIMS HER VIRGINITY AND TELLS HUSBAND "I CAN EXPLAIN!" LOOK ON HUSBAND'S FACE? PRICELESS!** Imagine the headlines when he chooses to stay with the young woman carrying someone else's child, because an angel appeared to him in a dream! Everything was ready for a great tabloid story, except it was really true... How foolish Joseph looked to take Mary as his wife. How foolish he felt to base his actions on something so intangible! Joseph chose to obey despite how foolish it seemed. Have you had times when it seemed foolish to follow God? Have there been times when reason and logic deemed it all foolishness? Did you nevertheless believe and follow God? The evidence that demonstrates we're relating to God is shown when we continue to follow Him whether we feel inspired to do so or not. Are you currently struggling to obey God in some area? Or are you just growing weary and maybe even feeling foolish? Take some time to talk to God about it. He understands what it's like.



*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* Galatians 6:9

## DAY THREE - What do we believe when things look dark?

Do you think Joseph or Mary struggled with confusion and doubt when Jesus was born in a stable with no particular "God-ness" about him? Do you think they wondered if something had gone horribly wrong? There's a TV commercial in which someone is asked if his brand of plastic bag is secure. Then he's shown the strength and seal of another bag. "Just how sure are you?" Of course he decides to abandon his own bag and use the one advertised. It's just a commercial, but are you apt to give up on God too easily at times? When doubt is raised, or when things get harder, what will you believe? **Read** Luke 2:19 and 2 Timothy 1:12.

Mary remembered and reflected on what God had said and done. Paul stood firm in the knowledge of Christ and His power to deliver on His word. Memorizing scripture is a great way to remember and hold on to God's truth. Keeping record of how God speaks and moves in our lives by prayer journaling is another great way. Consider using one of these tools to deepen your own faith. If you have a prayer journal, take time this week to look back at what God has done. God's truth and His word are secure. Whether we feel like it is or isn't, hold tightly to both.

## DAY FOUR - What do we do when things get darker?

We've had faith, we've obeyed, we've held firmly to His truth and it's getting worse. Now what? **Read** John 19:25. Standing at the bottom of the cross, watching Jesus die, what would they do now? **Read** Matthew 27:55-56 and Mark 15:40-47. It's interesting what they didn't do. They didn't storm the temple demanding justice. They didn't turn on one another, abandon the one they knew as Lord or curse the God who seemingly forsook their Lord on the cross. They did what they knew to do. They moved forward. Are you facing a seemingly dark and hopeless situation? What do you know to do? Do those things. Take nourishment even if you aren't hungry. Get enough rest. Continue praying and reading God's word, even if it seems empty. Continue meeting together as His Church. Know without fully understanding, believe without seeing, obey and trust God.

## DAY FIVE

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.* Isaiah 9:2

**Read** John 20:10-18. As she sat sobbing at the empty tomb, He called her name. She grabbed hold of Him. Do you blame her? How confused (*again!*) His followers must have been the day Jesus ascended to heaven! Will anything ever make sense? Once again, our ridiculous God had more unbelievable things to do.

**Read** Isaiah 43:1, Romans 8:15-16 and Ephesians 1:13.

The God without edges who speaks and mountains tremble. The God who has conquered the power of death and breathes life into every living thing knows you by name! This One who cannot be defined and cannot be limited, has made Himself known. Have you taken hold of him?

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* Colossians 1:15  
Celebrate the coming of Immanuel - our ridiculous, glorious God with us!