

25 Days of Advent

Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

ADVENT DAY 23: Dec. 23 – Lessons from Advent Devotionals

Devotional

So far we've spent the month of December trying to see Christmas through the eyes of the people who actually lived it, and we've learned a lot about God in the process. We see:

1. ***It is always better to obey God, even when it doesn't make sense. We can trust God.*** Even when we're skeptical, when we can't see how God can do what He says He will do, we can and should trust in Him. Just ask Gabriel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, or Joseph!
2. ***He works through ordinary people, not rulers or kings or rich people. He even works through government officials who don't believe in Him.*** Zechariah was an ordinary priest, one of many. Elizabeth was an old woman. Mary was just a young girl in a small backwater village. Joseph couldn't afford the cost of circumcision in the temple. If you think you're insignificant, remember God knows your name. No matter what you've done or who you are, you can be made new in him. Caesar Augustus had no idea he was helping pave the way for Jesus.
3. ***When circumstances seem dire, don't blame God.*** He may have planned it exactly that way. Remember Mary and Joseph wound up in the stable because there were no rooms at the Inn. Then they had to go hide in Egypt for a few years for safekeeping.
4. ***God chooses the humble over the important, proud, and rich.*** Just ask the shepherds. God didn't announce the birth of his son to rulers or the religious elite but to the lowly shepherds. The church mostly advances along through the winding paths of the ordinary and the outcasts, the misfits, and mundane. If you feel like a misfit, be encouraged. God can and will use you.
5. ***God visits those whose eyes are fixed on Him.*** Simeon and Anna waited patiently for several years to see God in human form. And because they never wavered in keeping their eyes fixed on God, they had the privilege of meeting Jesus while Temple priests, scribes, and religious officials missed it entirely.
6. ***Age is not a requirement for God.*** He works through the young and old alike and everyone in between. Elizabeth was beyond child-bearing years and Zechariah was almost 100. Anna and Simeon were in their 80s. Mary was barely a teenager.
7. ***God often tells us ahead of time what He plans to do.*** Just check out the prophecies about Jesus. He's not shy about proving the truth of what He tells us in his Word. Stories are great, and we love the Christmas story, but don't lose sight of the fact that it can all be proven scientifically and mathematically!
8. ***He plans things out far ahead of time – decades and even centuries.*** Micah prophesied 700 years before Christ that He would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah prophesied almost 800 years before Christ about the traits He would have. And the Wise Men were being trained to look for the star for centuries before they actually saw it. God is always planning and preparing for what He says will come to pass.
9. ***God always wins.*** No matter how bad the bad guys are, they're no match for God. Just ask Herod.
10. ***God can reach anyone whose minds are open and searching for the truth.*** The Wise Men will forever be known as wise because they were searching for the truth. When it turned out to be completely opposite of what they assumed they would find, it mattered not. They had seen the real God and they worshiped Him.
11. ***If we want our prayers to be answered, faith makes the difference.*** God does reward those who depend on him. The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth builds our trust in God. When God proclaims something over our lives or we read something in the Bible, we need to trust Him.

12. Appearances can be deceiving. Faith grasps the truth. So much of the Christmas story is opposite of what people would have expected – the rulers and authorities were powerless and clueless; the simple, poor and ordinary were the heroes. David, as the youngest in his family, knows better than anyone that God looks at the heart, not the outside trappings. Always look for the truth and trust your faith to help you find it.

Let's not just be hearers of the Word, but doers (James 1:22), always looking for how we can apply its truths to our lives today. Don't ever open God's Word without asking yourself what you learned from it and how your life should change to reflect that knowledge.

Look Up – Connect with God

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17; James 1:22-25

Key Verse: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Pray: Father God, thank you for your precious Word of Truth. May we always look for what we should do when we hear that word; help us to put it into practice every day.

Look In – Family Memories

Discuss: Which of these lessons learned resonates the most with you and why? Which gives you the most difficulty? Talk about what steps each of you can take to put this knowledge into practice.

Activity:

- Advent Tree: select a bible ornament and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #23, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e, invite a neighbor to Christmas services at your church). [Family Activities](#)

Look Out – Connect with Others

Do you know anyone who may be alone this Christmas? Invite them over for dinner and share part of your family's tradition with them.