

Issue 17 - A Modern Story of Costly Surrender

Messy Story of the Week

Daniel and his wife, Hope, had spent years building toward one dream: for Daniel to become a police officer.

It wasn't just a career goal. It felt like a calling — a way to serve, protect, and make a difference in the world. They had planned their life around it: late-night study sessions, physical training, budgeting, and long conversations about the family they hoped to start once the academy was behind them.

When the acceptance letter finally came, they celebrated with tears and takeout and grateful prayers. Everything about their future seemed to be lining up.

But two weeks later, Daniel's phone rang after midnight. His younger brother's name lit up the screen — followed by a voice he didn't recognize.

A police officer.

A cold explanation.

A location he knew too well.

His brother had overdosed. And Daniel's five-year-old nephew, Caleb, had been found alone in the apartment. His mother, battling her own addiction, couldn't be located.

Child Protective Services needed someone — immediately — to take custody. And there was only one name on the list who could.

Daniel.

By sunrise, little Caleb was sitting at Daniel and Hope's kitchen table, wrapped in a borrowed blanket, staring at a bowl of untouched cereal. The shock of everything hung heavy in the room.

Hope reached for Daniel's hand under the table. Both knew, without speaking it aloud, that the police academy would not allow new trainees to take on emergency custody. All the doors Daniel had prayed for and worked toward suddenly felt like they were swinging shut.

That night, Daniel sat on the edge of his bed with tears in his hands. Everything in him wanted to beg God to fix it — to make a way for both dreams, both callings, both paths forward.

Instead, he prayed the only prayer he could form:

“Lord, I don’t understand.

This wasn’t my plan.

But this little boy needs a father, and You put him in my arms.

If this is the road You’re asking me to walk, give me the strength to say yes.”

It wasn’t the future he expected. It wasn’t the story he would have chosen.

But it was a holy surrender — quiet, costly, and filled with the same tremble that echoes through Mary’s own words in Luke 1:

“Let it be to me according to Your word.”

FAITHFUL GOD THEN & NOW

When God’s calling doesn’t look like the life we pictured

I think what moves us so deeply about Daniel’s story is that moment on the edge of the bed — the moment of quiet surrender when everything he thought God was doing suddenly changed direction.

It hits close to home because so many of us were taught to look for God’s calling in open doors, clear plans, and confirmation after confirmation.

But Scripture is full of another kind of calling:

the calling that arrives wrapped in interruption, sacrifice, and a future that no longer looks familiar.

That’s the kind of calling Mary received.

She wasn’t asking for her life to be rewritten.

She wasn’t seeking a new path.

She wasn’t in a season of vocational searching or spiritual uncertainty.

She was living faithfully — quietly, humbly, obediently.

And then the angel spoke words that shifted everything:

“Do not be afraid, Mary...
You will conceive...
You will bear a Son...
He will be great.”
(Luke 1:30–32)

Not one part of that message aligned with the life she had planned with Joseph.
Not one part fit her timeline or her understanding.
Not one part protected her from potential misunderstanding, gossip, or danger.

But Mary’s response is what has echoed through centuries:

“Let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38)

It wasn’t a passive surrender.
It wasn’t resignation.
It was trust —
a deep, trembling, God-centered trust in the One who sees the whole story.

Mary didn’t know how everything would unfold.
She didn’t know that her “yes” would lead her to Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Cana,
Capernaum, Jerusalem...
to the foot of the cross...
to the upper room...
and to a lifetime of watching God redeem the world through her obedience.

Her surrender didn’t make sense at the beginning.
Neither did Daniel’s.
Neither does ours, most days.

But what we learn from both is this:

God’s calling is not always the path we pictured —
but it is always the path He walks with us.

He doesn’t abandon us in the cost.
He doesn’t leave us alone in the unknown.
He doesn’t waste the sacrifice, the delay, or the detour.

God was faithful in Mary’s story.
God was faithful in Daniel’s story.
And He will be faithful in yours —
even in the surrender you didn’t expect.

Here is the continuation of your newsletter, flowing from the story and “Faithful God Then & Now,” and weaving in your Advent emphasis with care and theological depth.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Here are a few truths we can hold onto as we enter this Advent season of waiting and preparing:

1. God's calling often arrives in unexpected packaging.

Mary didn't receive a calm, scheduled announcement.
Daniel didn't receive a convenient opportunity to serve.
And our own invitations from God rarely arrive when we feel ready.
Advent reminds us that God breaks into ordinary life at the most surprising moments.

2. Surrender is not passive — it's courageous.

Mary's "let it be" wasn't weakness.
Daniel's "yes" wasn't resignation.
Surrender is choosing trust when the path ahead is unclear.
In Advent, we practice that same courageous waiting — trusting the God who keeps His promises.

3. Delays and detours may be part of God's design.

Israel waited centuries for the Messiah.
Mary waited nine months to see God's promise take shape.
We wait for Jesus' return and for the healing we long for today.
Advent teaches us that waiting with God is never wasted time.

4. God's presence is the promise that steadies us.

Mary didn't walk her calling alone.
Neither did Daniel.
Neither do we.
Advent reminds us of Emmanuel — God with us — in our confusion, our sacrifice, and our surrender.

5. Your "yes" to God matters, even before you see the fruit.

Mary carried a hidden miracle before the world ever saw it.
Daniel stepped into fatherhood before he understood the outcome.
Our obedience may look small or costly now, but God is shaping something eternal through it.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

In coaching conversations, I often see the tension between control and surrender. Most people aren't resisting God intentionally — they're resisting the fear, vulnerability, and uncertainty that surrender requires.

What I've learned is this:

- People don't struggle with obedience as much as they struggle with not knowing the outcome.
- We cling to plans because plans feel like protection.
- We hesitate to surrender because surrender feels like loss.

But emotionally, spiritually, and even physiologically, holding tight to control keeps us in a heightened state of stress — always scanning for threats.

Surrender, by contrast, becomes a place of peace.

Not because the circumstances change, but because our source of safety shifts from ourselves to God.

This is why Advent is such a gift.

It invites us into a season of holy release — letting go, slowing down, waiting intentionally, and preparing room in our hearts for Jesus.

Advent is God's gentle annual reminder:

“You don't have to control what I have already promised to redeem.”

FAITHFUL FAMILY TOOLS

Here are some resources you can tap into if this topic is stirring something in you:

- [Faithful Families Free Community on Facebook](#)
Come join our circle of men and women who are walking this journey of faith, marriage, and parenting together.
 - [Subscribe to this Newsletter](#)
Don't miss another issue of "Messy Families, Faithful God!"
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FAITH STEP FOR THE WEEK

During this Advent week, choose one area of your life where you feel tension or uncertainty. Ask the Lord:

"What would surrender look like here?
What would it mean to trust You in this one place?"

Write down the first thought or picture He gives you.
Don't overthink it.

Let this be your small but intentional "yes" for the week — your own quiet echo of Mary's surrender.

SCRIPTURE FOR THIS WEEK

Luke 1:38 (ESV)

"And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.'"

Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

“The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Romans 8:25 (ESV)

“But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

Advent is both a remembering and a waiting:

- remembering the centuries Israel waited for the Messiah,
 - preparing our own hearts to receive Jesus freshly,
 - and waiting with hope for His return.
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2-MINUTE PRACTICE

Find a quiet corner and take two slow, deep breaths.

Place your hands open in your lap — a simple posture of surrender.

Whisper:

“Lord, make room in me.

Prepare my heart.

Teach me to wait with trust.”

Then name one thing you need to release today — one fear, one plan, one internal pressure — and breathe out as if placing it into God’s hands.

This small practice aligns your feelings, thoughts, and body with Mary’s Advent posture: open, willing, surrendered.
