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CHRISTMAS FAITH LESSONS

God wants us to trust Him. How do you feel when someone you know or love says: 'I don't trust you'. Distrust is a hindrance to any relationship. God wants a relationship with us which includes a full trust in Him. Christmas is a good time for us to learn about faith in God and it was also true for numerous characters who lived in Israel 2000 years ago.

Dr. Luke wrote to Theophilus (God lover) about the events of Christmas. Luke wanted him to know the '**certainty of those things**' which were given in '**an orderly account**' - Luke 1:3. We can be sure that the events surrounding the birth of Jesus were not just a nice 'story'. They are true and Luke can be trusted as an eyewitness source.

Based on his accurate description of towns, cities and islands, as well as correctly naming various official titles, archaeologist Sir William Ramsay wrote that 'Luke is a historian of the first rank, not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.' - Wikipedia

As we read the events leading up to and including the first Christmas, we meet several characters from whom we can learn faith lessons. Although we will identify some failures in faith, we should reflect on the fact that we also have failed to walk in faith at times. The Bible is like a mirror which reveals ourselves as we really are. - James 1:22-25. God does not hide the failures and sins of his people in the Bible, but still has compassion on those who fear/reverence Him for he remembers that we are dust. - Psalm 103:13-14

Zechariah He was serving as a priest in the temple when he was startled as an angel of the Lord appeared next to him and told him that his prayer had been heard and his wife Elizabeth would have a son. They were to name him John and he would be like the prophet Elijah. Zechariah then asked how he could be sure of that since he and his wife were very old. The angel then identified himself as Gabriel, sent from the presence of God, who then spoke these words. (read Luke 1:5-18 for the complete account)

'Now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at the proper time.' - Luke 1:19-20 NIV

Zechariah remained a mute for his remaining service in the temple and until after his new son was born. At the circumcision, Zechariah's family and friends asked him what he would like to name the child. He wrote these words down on a tablet: 'His name is John'. Right after this, Zechariah was able to speak and began to praise God!

Faith Lesson:

* If you doubt God's Word, don't speak it out.....keep your mouth shut!

- * Believe God's supernatural Word is greater than your natural circumstances
The angel's words were based on scripture promises -Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6. They revealed that this child to be born was an answer to his prayer and would bring Israel back to God. Zechariah believed that he and his wife were too old to have kids. We can learn from the faith of Abraham who was in a similar situation but his eyes were on God rather than his body.

'And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about 100 years old) and the deadness Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.'

- Romans 4:19-20 NKJV

Anybody can call things as they are in the natural and physical realm, but it takes faith to
'call things that are not as though they were' - Romans 4:17
'Let the weak say, I am strong' - Joel 3:10

Some people get that phrase backwards and call things that are as though they were not. For example, if you are weak, don't say; 'I'm not weak.' If you are sick, don't say I'm not sick. If you are broke, don't say, 'I'm not broke. Based on God's Word, speak things such as, 'I am strong. I am healed. I am blessed'. At the creation of the world, God did not say, 'It sure is dark here.' He said, 'Light, come forth!'

When I was young boy, I would walk out to the pasture behind our barn and call for the cows to come. 'Come boss. Come boss. Come boss'. I was calling for the cows to come because they were not at the barn. Slowly, but surely they made their way back to the barn. Some people call for their dogs or cats in a similar way. 'Here pooch. Here pooch!' or 'Here kitty kitty'. They are not with you, but you are calling them here. You are calling forth the desired result.

- * When God corrects us, it is not meant to put us down but to make us more fruitful for Him. A few days after the birth of his son John, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave a wonderful prophecy about him. - Luke 1:67-80 If Zechariah had believed God and praised Him right after the first angel encounter, he would not have had to go 9 months without speaking. Regardless of our faith level, it is always good to praise the Lord.

Joseph How many men would believe an angelic dream that told them to go ahead and marry their bride to be, even though she was with child through no man but by the Holy Spirit? Joseph did, and was quick to obey God's other instructions through dreams and angels, which protected the life of his family and effected the destiny of mankind for all generations. His love for Mary and God was greater than any shame or scorn from others towards him and Mary.

Mary The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her that she will give birth to a child who will be called Son of the Most High and will become a king whose reign will last forever. She asks how can this be since I am a virgin? Her question was a valid one, and not

one of unbelief, for she realized that the child was beyond human origin. He was 'Son of the Most High'. The angel went on to explain the process of this virgin birth would come as power of The Most High would come upon her, for 'Nothing is impossible with God.'

Nothing = no rhema word

(no specific, personal Word spoken by God is without power)

Mary responded with humility and faith.

'I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.' - Luke 1:38

Mary went to spend time with her cousin Elizabeth. Baby John leaped in Elizabeth's womb as Mary greeted her and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She then prophesied to Mary.

'Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished.' - Luke 1:45

Mary then broke forth with a beautiful prophetic song where she magnified the Lord and acknowledged God as the Mighty One. Luke 1:46-55

Faith Lesson

- * God gives favor, faith and grace to the humble
- * God loves to fill and use those who are willing empty vessels for His glory and purposes
- * Joseph and Mary had the great honor and privilege of bringing forth and raising the greatest child to ever be born and live on this earth. God knew the atmosphere of faith and love they would have in their home for Jesus. For that amazing and important role, he had found the right couple in Mary and Joseph.

'The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him....' - 2 Chronicles 16:9a

May all of us welcome Jesus into our hearts and homes this Christmas. Not just for a visit but to take up permanent residence. What a privilege to host the King of all Kings. His name is Jesus the Christ.

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