

PREPARE HIM ROOM "ROOM FOR JESUS' ARRIVAL" LUKE 2:1-14

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Faith – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

The announcement of the angel Gabriel: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord," implies that Luke 1:1-14 is about salvation, which was made available by grace to all people through the birth and subsequent death of Jesus Christ.

The book was published seventeen years ago, but if you haven't gotten around to reading it, let me encourage you read *What's So Amazing about Grace?* Regarding his personal testimony, Philip Yancey writes:

"Grace did not come to me initially in the forms or the words of faith. I grew up in a church that often used the word but meant something else. Grace, like many religious words, had been leached of meaning so that I could no longer trust it.

"I first experienced grace through music. At the Bible college I was attending, I was viewed as a deviant. People would publicly pray for me and ask me if I needed exorcism. I felt harassed, disordered, confused. Doors to the dormitory were

I learned grace by being graced.

– Philip Yancey

locked at night, but fortunately I lived on the first floor. I would climb out the window of my room and sneak into the chapel, which contained a nine-foot Steinway grand piano. In a chapel dark but for a small light by which to read music, I would sit for an hour or so each night and play Beethoven's sonatas, Chopin's preludes, and Schubert's impromptus. My own finger pressed a kind of tactile order on the world. My mind was confused, my body was confused, the world was confused—but here I sensed a hidden world of beauty, grace, and wonder light as a cloud and startling as a butterfly wing.

"Something similar happened in the world of nature. To get away from the crush of ideas and people, I would take long walks in the pine forests splashed with dogwood. I followed the zigzag paths of dragonflies along the river, watched flocks of birds wheeling overhead, and picked apart logs to find the iridescent beetles inside. I liked the sure, inevitable way of nature giving form and place to all living things. I saw evidence that the world contains grandeur, great goodness, and, yes, traces of joy.

"About the same time, I fell in love. It felt exactly like a fall, a head-over-heels tumble into a state of unbearable lightness. The earth tilted on its axis. I did not believe in romantic love at the time, thinking it a human construct, an invention of fourteenth-century Italian poets. I was as unprepared for love as I have been for goodness and beauty. Suddenly, my heart seemed swollen, too large for my chest.

"I was experiencing 'common grace,' to use
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the theologians' term. It is a terrible thing, I found, to be grateful and have no one to thank, to be awed and have no one to worship. Gradually, very gradually, I came back to the cast-off faith of my childhood. I had experienced the 'drippings of grace,' C. S. Lewis's term for what awakens deep longing for 'a scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.'

"Grace is everywhere, like lenses that go unnoticed because you are looking through them. Eventually God gave me eyes to notice the grace around me. I became a writer, I feel certain, in an attempt to reclaim words that had been tarnished by graceless Christians. In my first job, with a Christian magazine, I worked for a kind and wise employer, Harold Myra, who let me work out my faith at my own speed, with not pretense.

"For some of my first books I teamed with Dr. Paul Brand, who had spent much of his life in a hot, arid region of South India serving leprosy patients, many of whom belonged to the Untouchable caste. In this most unlikely soil, Brand experienced and conveyed the grace of God. From people such as him, I learned grace by being graced.

"I had one last skin to molt on my way toward growth in grace. I came to see that the image of God I had been raised with was woefully incomplete. I came to know a God who is, in the words of the psalmist, 'a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness'" (41-42).

It comes as no surprise that Philip Yancey's new book is entitled *Vanishing Grace: What Ever Happened to the Good News?*

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 2:1-14

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3And everyone went to his own town to register.

4So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the

Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Cf., John 1:10

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline the names of the two political figures mentioned in vv. 1, 2.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 4.
- * Bracket the repeated reference to "David" in vv. 4, 11.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 4, 7.
- * Circle "house" in v. 4 and in the margin write, "See 2Sa 7:11, 16."
- * Circle "pledged" in v. 5.

- * Underline "cloths" in vv. 7, 12.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 10.
- * Underline "good news," "great joy," and "all the people" in v. 10.
- * Highlight "Savior," "Christ," and "the Lord" in v. 11.
- * Circle "sign" in v. 12.
- * In the margin next to "in the highest" in v. 14, write "in heaven."

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. According to Luke 1:56 after the Annunciation (1:26-39), Mary spent three months with Elizabeth before returning home to Nazareth. According to 2:6 the time came for her baby to be born. What do you suppose happened in the meantime?
2. Nowadays the Nativity has a sentimental, rather romantic, not the least bit scandalous air about it. What do you think?
3. You're Mary; how does traveling more than 70 miles just before your first child is due strike you? Why would you do such a thing?
4. What evidence of divine providence do you see in the story?
5. How come the repeated reference to "the town of David;" wouldn't a simple "Bethlehem" do?
6. Explain why angels were sent to shepherds, the "illiterate hirelings who watched the flocks of others, 'nobodies' who failed to leave their names" (Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, 37).
7. List the three things that the angel told the shepherds about Jesus.
8. What was the point of the sign? (Cf. v. 17.)
9. Put the praise to God in verse 14 in your own words.
10. **Discussion.** One author writes, "Our generation, needing a Savior more, perhaps, than any that has ever existed, would be too humane to allow one to be born." What do you think he means and do you agree?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Contemporary images of Christmas and today's traditions surrounding the season retain only a faint semblance of the Nativity—too bad. What's more, that semblance grows dimmer with every passing celebration—again, too bad. Philip Yancey writes: "Christmas art depicts Jesus' family as icons stamped in gold foil, with a calm Mary receiving the tidings of the Annunciation as a kind of benediction. But that is not at all how Luke tells the story. Mary was 'greatly troubled' and 'afraid' at the angel's appearance, and when the angel pronounced the sublime words about the Son of the Most High whose kingdom will never end, Mary had something far more mundane on her mind: But I'm a virgin!

"In the modern United States, where each year a million teenage girls get pregnant out of wedlock, Mary's predicament has undoubtedly lost some of its force, but in a closely knit Jewish community in the first century, the news an angel brought could not have been entirely welcome. The law regarded a betrothed woman who became pregnant as an adulteress, subject to death by stoning.

"Matthew tells of Joseph magnanimously agreeing to divorce Mary in private rather than press charges, until an angel shows up to correct his perception of betrayal. Luke tells of a tremulous Mary hurrying off to the one person who could possibly understand what she was going through: her relative Elizabeth, who miraculously got pregnant in old age after another angelic annunciation. Elizabeth believes Mary and shares her joy, and yet the scene poignantly highlights the contrast between the two women: the whole countryside is talking about Elizabeth's healed womb even as Mary must hide the shame of her own miracle.

"In a few months, the birth of John the Baptist took place amid great fanfare, complete with midwives, doting relatives, and the traditional village chorus celebrating the birth of a Jewish male. Six months later, Jesus was born far from home, with no midwife, extended family, or village chorus present. A male head of household would have sufficed for the Roman census; did Joseph

drag his pregnant wife along to Bethlehem in order to spare her the ignominy of childbirth in her home village?" (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, 30-31). The Nativity was a scandal in its day. We've sanitized it and miss the point entirely.

The shepherds got it right in their day. The angel Gabriel (cf., 1:26) told them that a Savior (i.e., deliverer, cf., 1:46-55, 67-79), Christ (i.e., Messiah, cf., Ps 2:2) the Lord (i.e., God incarnate, cf., 2:11) had been born in Bethlehem. Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem so Joseph could register to pay a tax imposed by Rome. Mary did not have to accompany Joseph, so why did she go with him? Perhaps she went to escape the criticism she faced as an unwed mother in Nazareth (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 35), or perhaps to be certain that Joseph might attend the birth of the child (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 83); no one knows the answer for sure. When the time comes for Mary to give birth no appropriate place can be found. There is no room at the inn! On the make-shift nature of her birthing room, one commentator writes, "Such inns would have been either the second story of a house that housed animals below or a one-story building with a stable next to it. Since no such locale has a vacancy, the couple finds shelter where they can. Jesus therefore enters the world in as mundane a way as possible. His first hours of human existence are spent in a manger" (84-85).

Then Gabriel, accompanied by the heavenly host, invited the Shepherds to join in the chorus and give praise to God. The hymn they sang had but one verse: "Glory to God in the highest," where "highest" refers to the highest heavens not to the highest degree; "and on earth peace" where "peace" is likely a synonym for salvation; "to men on whom his favor rests," which makes it clear that salvation is not automatic for everyone. God's favor rests only on those who respond to God's grace by trusting in God's Son. Then, as abruptly as they appeared, the angels returned to heaven and the shepherds set out to find the child.

The Message of the Passage

*Praise God and spread the good news; our Savior,
Christ the Lord, has been born in Bethlehem.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Caesar Augustus** "Augustus Caesar was ruling, but God was in charge, for he used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill his word" (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:175). Caesar Augustus ruled the empire from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. "After he had, by political astuteness and military strength, put an end to the terrible civil wars which had raged for many years throughout the Roman world and to all resistance that was offered to him, he reigned for forty-four years as absolute monarch over the Roman Empire. Through a peaceful and mild rule he gave to the world a period of unprecedented outward calm and to his huge empire a permanent organisation [sic] which afterward facilitated the spread of Christianity" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 99-100). "It was Augustus, in fact, who first borrowed the Greek word for 'Gospel' or 'Good News' and applied it as a label for the new world order represented by his reign. The empire declared him a god and established rites of worship. His enlightened and stable regime, many believed, would last forever, a final solution to the problem of government" (Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, 33).

v. 1 **decree** "Just as the edict of the Persian king Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple accomplished God's plans (see 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Isa. 44:28-45:1), so Augustus' order that a census should be taken played an important part in God's redemptive plan" (Evans, 35); see Mic 5:2.

v. 2 **Quirinius** Luke's timing of the census is problematic since Quirinius was not governor until after Herod died and Jesus was born before Herod died. The best possible solution to the problem, which involves the meaning of the Greek word translated "first," is mentioned by many commentators. Since the word can also be translated "before" (cf. Jn 15:18), verse 2 means that this census took place "before" Quirinius was governor of Syria (see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 11-23; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, 104). "The exact date of the census cannot be determined with precision. However, it is reasonable to think that the census would have been after Herod came into disfavor with Augustus in 8/7 B.C. More specifically it was probably after Herod's execution of his sons Alexander and Aristobulus in 7 B.C. when there was an intense struggle for the throne by his other sons which resulted in Herod's changing his will three times before his death in the spring of 4 B.C. With such instability and such a bad state of health, it would have been an opportune time for Augustus to have had a census taken in order to assess the situation before Herod's death . . . Therefore, a census within the last year or two of Herod's reign would have been reasonable, and in fact, most probable. The exact year of this census, which would mark the *terminus a quo* of Christ's birth, is difficult to pinpoint but it was probably taken sometime between 6 and 4 B.C." (Hoehner, 22-23).

v. 5 **pledged** The relationship of Mary to Joseph is somewhat different from either wife or fiancée. The Greek term has been variously translated "engaged" (NASB, NRSV), "betrothed" (RSV, NEB, cf. "betrothed wife" NKJV), "espoused wife" (KJV), "fiancee" (*The Message*). "This is an unusual way of expressing a journey made by a husband and wife. Luke may have been suggesting here what Matt 1:25 states explicitly, that the marriage had not yet been consummated, although Mary was living as a wife with Joseph (as her going to Bethlehem with him suggests)" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 107). "Even if Luke meant that Mary was now married to Joseph, the advancement of her pregnancy far beyond the time that had elapsed since their marriage would have been obvious to all in Nazareth and possibly, if not probably, would have led to harsh criticisms and insults. (That such may have been the case in the years following his birth may be in view in the critical remarks found in John 8:41). Whether Mary was married or still engaged, it is not difficult to understand why she, despite being near to giving birth, would have preferred to accompany Joseph" (Evans, 44).

v. 8 **shepherds** "In first-century Palestine shepherds did not have the reputation for being overly circumspect with regard to the property of others. They were often held in contempt and considered as nothing more than roving vagabonds and thieves. Whether Luke had this idea in mind is not certain, but if he did, then the lowly shepherds anticipate the blessings many other such persons of low estate will receive from Jesus during his ministry. (If Luke viewed the shepherds as thieves, then ironically we have both Jesus' birth and death in the company of criminals [see Luke 23:32-43])" (Evans, 36).

v. 11 **Savior** Savior "reflects the call of Jesus to deliver his people, as Mary's and Zechariah's hymns declared (cf. 1:46-55, 67-79). 'Christ' (from the Greek word for 'Anointed One') is indicative of his role as the promised Messiah" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 84, 85). "The word is used of both God himself and of Jesus. 'Lord' sometimes translated the divine name Yahweh ('The One Who Is'; see Exod. 3:14) and probably is to be understood in 2:11 in terms of the incarnation; that is to say, the Lord is present in Jesus" (Evans, 37).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Guest writer: Carol Bourland – The mother of Jesus, Mary, was a typical Jewish teen of her day. She was taught that God had promised to send a Savior to rescue her people. We think of Mary as ordinary, but was she ordinary or *extraordinary*? Mary wasn't rich; she was to marry a simple carpenter. But one day Gabriel, God's angel, appeared to her, and she was frightened, of course. However, he told her she was favored by God and not to be afraid. She took him at his word and seemed as if she was no longer afraid. Wasn't that *extraordinary*? Gabriel told her she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, God's Son, who would save people from their sins. Mary believed him! Now that's *extraordinary*! She was a virgin (not married, yet), so she asked Gabriel how it would happen. He told her God would perform a miracle, and Mary believed him! *Extraordinary*—the fact that Mary, a regular girl was chosen to be the mother of Jesus, the one God promised her people long ago, was very special, but her faith made her—*extraordinary*. Her cousin said it best when she said to Mary, "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." (Lk. 1:45) Does your faith in Jesus make you *extraordinary*? Absolutely! If you have believed in Jesus and accepted Him, the Son of God, into your heart, you are just as extraordinary as Mary was. Mary was a chosen one and so are you.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Luke 1:26-38

1. Who appeared to Mary?
2. What did he tell her?
3. Did Mary believe the angel?

What Do You Think

Mary was chosen to perform a special task for God, to be the mother of God's Son, Jesus. Was what God asks Mary to do easy? If God asks you to do a difficult task, like be nice to and stand up for the person who everyone else makes fun of at school, would you do it?

What R U Going To Do

Mary believed God would do what He said he would do, and He did. She was an ordinary girl who became *extraordinary* because she trusted God. There are kids in the world doing *extraordinary* things because they care about others and love Jesus. Sit down as a family and discuss how you can be *extraordinary* in God's eyes. Then do it.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Single-mindedness – I pay attention to the important things God has for my life.

Memory Verse

Philippians 4:13 – *I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

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