

December 18–22  
“Songs of Christmas 2023”



## SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

### 2023 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intentional activities to deepen our relationship with God and mold us to be more like Jesus.

#### DECEMBER PRACTICE Celebration

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## Day 1 Isaiah 9:6-7 | Christmas 2023

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** Isaiah 9:6

It's no wonder the Christmas season has been described by many as "the most wonderful time of the year" (lyrics from the song of the same name by Andy Williams). So much of what is associated with the season evokes feelings of joy as we celebrate the birth of the One promised in [Isaiah 9:6](#). Parties with family and friends, Christmas trees, spectacular light shows, a child's first memorable Christmas morning and all the sights, sounds and smells of the season. Among these are the many Christmas carols and hymns which speak about that special "silent and holy night." In fact, it's impossible to even think about Christmas without hearing the melody and lyrics of your favorite Christmas carol in your mind.

We see songs tightly woven into the narrative of Jesus's birth, even as far back as the first Christmas. We'll look this week at four songs that voice the thoughts and feelings of those who experienced the first days of the newborn Messiah and King. These are sung by Mary, the mother of Jesus; Zechariah, a priest and the father of John the Baptist; the angels who announce the birth to a group of shepherds; and Simeon, a devout and righteous man earnestly awaiting the opportunity to see the Messiah. As we talk about the songs of those who were there, we remember that special morning when "the hopes and fears of all the years" were met in that Bethlehem manger (lyrics from "O Little Town of Bethlehem" by Phillips Brooks).

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** In your journal, reflect on this promise of the Messiah from [Isaiah 9:6-7](#). Write about one of the roles Jesus fulfills that is most meaningful for you this Christmas season.

## Day 2 Luke 1:46-55 | Mary's Song

**And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.** Luke 1:46-49

Mary, the mother of Jesus, sings the first Christmas song nine months before the manger. The song is called "The Magnificat," from the Latin word for "magnify" ([Luke 1:46](#)). As the song begins, we see that "magnify" (or "glorifies" in the NIV) is exactly what Mary does as she begins to comprehend who the child is that she is carrying. Before she does anything else, Mary worships God for his goodness in selecting her to bear the Messiah. To be chosen as the mother of the Son of God was the hope and prayer of every Jewish girl for thousands of years.

God doesn't choose Mary because she was the most deserving, most intelligent, best looking or from the wealthiest family. She was chosen just because God decided to send Jesus through her. God's choice of Mary does not differ much from his choice to adopt us into his family. He doesn't choose us because we are in great physical shape, have accumulated great wealth, have won multiple awards or are the most popular in your high school class. He chooses us because he wants to! The apostle Paul tells us, "For he chose us in him before the world's creation to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will..." ([Ephesians 1:4-5](#)). As Mary worships God for his goodness in choosing her, we can do the same when we think of our salvation through Jesus.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Watch as Fellowship Worship, a ministry of Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas, performs "[Mary's Song](#)." Use this song to draw your heart to worship God for choosing to adopt you as his beloved son or daughter.

## Day 3 Luke 1:67-79 | Zechariah's Song

**He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant.** Luke 1:69-72

The birth of John the Baptist brings to a close an incredible year for his father, Zechariah. The angel Gabriel unexpectedly visits Zechariah while he serves as a priest at the temple in Jerusalem. Gabriel delivers news that although advanced in years, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth will finally have a child. Their son will be John the Baptist, who will prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. Stunned into disbelief, Gabriel tells Zechariah he will not speak again until his son is born. When John is born, and Zechariah finally does speak, he sings! He sings a song of hope of God's faithfulness to his Word and promises.

The hope of which Zechariah sings is the hope we need today. World events, fragmented families and chronic health struggles can cause us to lose hope. We need the reminder that God still reigns, his promises are sure, and his Word can be trusted. When we feel overcome with fear and despair, Zechariah's song speaks to our hope in Jesus, the One John came to proclaim.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Read the last part of Zechariah's Song in [Luke 1:76-79](#). These words speak of God's faithfulness in providing salvation and the promise to lead us in peace. Pray about an area in your life where you need peace this Christmas season, "Father, I need peace in \_\_\_\_\_. May you be pleased to bring peace in this situation and my heart. Please help me trust in your goodness and faithfulness. Amen."

## Day 4 Luke 2:8-15 | Song of the Angels

**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."** Luke 2:13-14

Shepherds are the most unlikely of audiences for a concert, especially one featuring a choir of angels who sing just one brief song. These shepherds have just bedded down the sheep and are doing the same for themselves. Suddenly, a visitor stands in their midst, and God's glory surrounds them. In the following moments, the angels tell of the birth of a most exceptional child—the promised Messiah who would save his people in ways they could scarcely imagine. Then, there was a brief performance of the angelic choir. Their world (and THE world) is turned upside-down in just a few minutes.

The song of the angels tells us that God's peace does not abide on everyone. Peace with God is received only by faith in Christ. Those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus have the privilege and responsibility to tell others how to experience peace with God. Many people in our lives still need to hear about the One born in Bethlehem.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Consider those in your family or circle of friends who have yet to respond to the Gospel. Pray for their salvation and opportunities, especially during Christmas celebrations, to talk with them about who Jesus is and what he has done.

## Day 5 Luke 2:25-35 | Simeon's Song

**"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."** Luke 2:29-32

Described as "righteous" and "devout," Simeon is waiting. He is waiting to see the Messiah, whom God promised he would see before his life came to an end. Day after day, he waits. And waits. And waits some more. Then, one day, he notices a young man and woman cradling a baby as they enter the temple courts. As he moves toward them, he hears the voice of the Spirit say, "Here he is. He's the One." Taking the baby in his arms, Simeon begins to sing (read it in [Luke 2:28-32](#)).

As he sings, he speaks of two things Jesus will do: he will be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" and "the glory of Israel." This means that the baby he holds will offer himself as salvation to the world, not just to Israel. What Simeon sings of this day in the temple courts will eventually be known as the church, where "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Pray for wisdom and faithfulness as you share the Gospel and bring the light of Jesus to the world around you.