



Faith *over* Fear.

**A series of daily
devotionals for the
Advent season.**

Faith over fear.

The season of Advent invites us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus, not just with celebration but with reflection. In the Christmas story, fear is a recurring theme: in the Temple, in dreams, on hillsides and in quiet homes. Yet each time, God responds not with judgement but with reassurance: ‘Do not be afraid.’

This series, *Faith Over Fear*, helps us to think about how faith can grow even when we feel afraid. It reminds us that God is close when life feels uncertain, that he can be trusted in the waiting, and that even when fear takes hold, it doesn’t have to have the final word.

In this series of short reflections, we explore how choosing faith over fear helps us to welcome Jesus more deeply into our lives.



Elizabeth:

Trusting God's timing.

30 November.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45

Elizabeth had lived with the heartache of unanswered prayer. She and her husband Zechariah were faithful people, serving God day after day, year after year...but the dream of having a child had faded with time. Then, unexpectedly, everything changed. An angel announced that they would have a son, and Elizabeth became pregnant.

We don't hear much about Elizabeth's fears, but they must have been there. After all the years of hoping and waiting, could she really believe this was happening? Still, she chose to trust. She recognised that God was doing something new, even when it didn't make sense.

Instead of giving in to fear or doubt, Elizabeth responded with faith. When she became pregnant, she said, 'The Lord has done this for me' (Luke 1:25), giving God credit for her joy.

Later, when Mary came to visit, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately recognised that Mary was carrying the promised Messiah. She called Mary 'the mother of my Lord' (Luke 1:43). She saw what others might have missed and spoke words of blessing and affirmation.

Elizabeth's story shows us that faith doesn't always mean having everything figured out. Sometimes it means holding on quietly, trusting God when the timing seems strange, and recognising his work even when we don't fully understand it.

Faith over fear means choosing to believe that God is still working, even when the answers are delayed or the path ahead is unclear. Elizabeth reminds us that God's timing is often different from ours, but it's never too late for hope.

Where are you waiting on God right now? What would it mean for you to act in faith even without all the answers?

Lord, help me to trust you when things don't happen in my timing. Even when I feel afraid or unsure, give me faith to believe that you are still working. Amen.

Trusting God's timing.

01 December.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45, Psalm 145

Elizabeth's story is one of quiet endurance and deep trust. She and Zechariah were righteous before God – faithful, devout and prayerful. Yet for years, they carried the sorrow of unanswered prayer. Their longing for a child was met with silence. And still, she chose to trust.

When God finally answered, at a time and in a way that no one had anticipated, Elizabeth recognised the miracle. Her response did not convey disbelief or resentment, but gratitude and awe. She withdrew, spending five months in seclusion, perhaps not out of shame but in reverence. She gave thanks for the new life growing within her, and for the grace that had lifted her disgrace as a childless woman among the people.

Elizabeth understood that God's timing rarely matches our own, but his purposes are always good. Her waiting was not wasted; it prepared her to recognise the sacred in the unexpected.

When Mary meets with Elizabeth to share news of the miracle that is happening within her, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Older in years and rich in spiritual insight, she saw what others might have missed. The hand of God at work in Mary's life. She spoke words of blessing and affirmation, declaring, 'Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!' (Luke 1:45).

This is a gift of seasoned faith, to recognise God's movement and to speak courage into the hearts of others. In that sacred moment, as she became a voice of affirmation to someone younger who was walking into the unknown, Elizabeth allows us to see how faith that rises and endures through waiting can become faith that strengthens others, that builds legacy, that speaks life into the next generation.

In a world full of fear and doubt, we need the steady voice of those who have waited well and trusted deeply.

How can you speak words of blessing and affirmation to other generations today?

Faithful God, thank you that you hear every prayer. Like Elizabeth, may I recognise the sacred in the unexpected and speak faith into the hearts of others. Give me eyes to see your hand at work and the courage to encourage today. Amen.

02 December.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45, Psalm 37:1-7

When we look at Elizabeth's experience, we see what is possible when we keep trusting, even when life isn't going the way we had hoped.

Elizabeth and Zechariah were far beyond childbearing age. But where people saw a couple too old to give birth and have a family of their own, God saw his faithful children and made a way. In this miraculous act, we see God's infinite power and perfect love on full display. We are reminded of his desire and ability to work beyond human expectation, to bless the faithful in unexpected ways.

And this was no ordinary child but the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, the arrival of John the Baptist, the one who would prepare the way for the Son of God, the Saviour of all.

Through Elizabeth and Zechariah's story, we get a glimpse of God's larger plan unfolding. Their years of disappointment and disgrace were not the end of the story, but part of God's purpose for them. Their

lives testify to the power of perseverance in faith and service, even through seasons of silence and waiting. They remind us that when the situation seems impossible, we must fix our eyes on the One who makes all things possible.

In the face of delay, disappointment or doubt, in the face of the impossible, we are called to remember who God is. The One who is faithful, the One who delights in pouring out his blessings abundantly on those who are faithful too.

When fear tells us that time is running out, let our faith remind us that God is never late. He sees your quiet obedience. He hears your silent prayers. And he is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine. In his own perfect time.

Let us serve him faithfully, humbly and diligently, confident that he sees, he knows and he will fulfil his perfect plan as we trust in him.

What prayer have you stopped praying because the wait felt too long? What might it look like to bring that back to God today?

Lord, when I grow weary of waiting, remind me that you are faithful. Help me to trust your timing and serve you with quiet confidence, knowing you see, you hear and you will act. Amen.

Major Rosemary Matunde

Trusting God's timing.

03 December.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45, Hebrews 11

'You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.' – Luke 1:45 (New Living Translation)

Some of the greatest figures in the Bible had to wait years for God's promises.

Moses waited 40 years. Then he led for 40 more. God asked him to do things he felt totally unworthy of and unequipped for. Moses never made it to the promised land. Yet look at all he accomplished on the way.

Joseph had a vision. But slavery, prison and famine were all in the plan before that vision became his reality. Joseph was faithful. In less than ideal circumstances, he took the opportunities God gave him to change lives along the way.

David waited for around 15 years to become King of Israel. He knew it was coming. In the waiting, David felt it all but he remained passionate about his calling, a man after God's own heart.

For these people, as for Elizabeth and Zechariah, life didn't stop in the waiting.

Everything that happened in the meantime was used to prepare them, inwardly as well as outwardly, for what was to come. Then, when they reached their promise, they were blessed beyond measure.

All of them were flawed. They doubted, they questioned, they strayed. But God had a plan. All of them chosen by God for a purpose. And all in God's perfect timing. They all had faith, they knew who their God was and that he could be trusted. They had hope for what was to come.

There are countless other examples, both in the Bible and almost certainly in your story too.

Even if you're not quite where you expected to be, or if you feel like you're still waiting for answers or the next instruction, God invites you to trust in him, to remember his goodness and his faithfulness.

Our God is with us, he is for us and he is at work, even when we can't see it.

What are you waiting for right now? Ask God to reveal what he might be wanting to teach you while you wait.

Lord, help me to trust you in the waiting. Teach me patience and prepare my heart for what is to come. Even when I don't see the way, remind me you are faithful and at work. Strengthen my faith and keep my hope alive. Amen.

04 December.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45, Hebrews 11:1, Habakkuk 2:3

'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.' – Hebrews 11:1

Prayer can be defined as heartfelt communication with God. It is an invitation to approach God, as formally or informally as we desire. Sometimes, we might not receive answers to all our prayers immediately, but we must wait for them. God has planned big things for our lives, and he will do even greater things among us. As we wait for answers, there may be fear and doubts in us. In those times, we should trust him and have faith in him. This is essential in our Christian walk.

At the age of 17, I had many different dreams and purposes for my future. I was confused and at this time had important decisions to make that would affect the direction of my life. I prayed for those dreams and purposes. And I waited.

In this time of waiting, I felt that God was not listening to my prayers. I had expected that he would be with me in my hard times, yet I often felt so alone. My fear continued as I didn't know what my future was going to be or what I was going to do. Sometimes, in my uncertainty, I doubted myself. I

realise now that even in my waiting, in my anxiety, doubt and fear, God was with me and silently doing his great work within me.

I continued to pray because I knew that God had a plan for my life and he knew what was going to happen next. I shared with some of my spiritual role models, and as I opened his Word, God continued to talk to me through Scripture. In waiting, I learnt about patience in a new way, that God carries out his plan within us, not at the time we desire, but at the time that is right and best. And when we wait for him with faith, he answers us.

I waited for two years to receive an answer. Honestly, two years felt like a very long time for me and waiting so long for God's answer was difficult. But in my waiting, I learnt to trust him more. To have faith that he would answer me. And he did. The answer came and I made my decision. You may also be facing a time of waiting like this, or you may face it in the future. In those times, remember to stay connected with God and trust his good work. Having faith in God, our Protector and Guide, can reduce fear in those situations of unknown. May God's guidance be with you today and tomorrow.

What can you do to stay closely connected to God in times of waiting, in moments when it can be easy or tempting to walk away rather than lean in?

Father, help me to stay close to you when I'm waiting. Teach me to trust in your timing and not rush ahead. Keep my heart connected to you and fill me with peace as I wait on your perfect plan. Amen.

Bethel Kumaravel

Trusting God's timing.

05 December.

Luke 1:5-25 and 39-45, Galatians 4:4, John 6:35

'But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son...' – Galatians 4:4

From the moment humanity fell, God promised redemption. But centuries passed before the Messiah came. Generations waited in hope, through silence, exile and uncertainty. Then, at just the right time, Jesus arrived. Not in power or prominence, but in humility and quietness.

God's timing may feel mysterious to us, but it is never random. In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul reminds us that Christ was sent by God 'when the set time had fully come'. Not too early. Not too late. Exactly as God intended.

In our own lives, waiting can feel like being forgotten. Prayers unanswered. Dreams deferred. But Advent reminds us of this:

God will do what he has promised, exactly when it is needed most. His plans are unfolding with precision, not hesitation.

In John 6:35, Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never grow hungry.' This isn't just about physical need but the deep hunger of the human heart. A hunger for purpose, peace, healing and hope. Jesus satisfies every longing, not always in the way we might expect but always in perfect time.

You may be waiting for clarity, for a breakthrough or restoration. And it's okay to name the ache. But don't lose heart. God sees you. He knows your need. And in the fullness of his time, he will provide what is best.

Take a moment today to pause and consider: what am I feeding my soul with? Choose one intentional way to draw spiritual nourishment from God – through Scripture, prayer, worship or quiet reflection. Let him meet you there.

Lord, nourish my soul with your presence and fill me with your peace. Help me to find true fulfilment in you alone, trusting that you satisfy every longing of my heart. Amen.

06 December.

Luke 1:5-25, 39-45 and 46-54

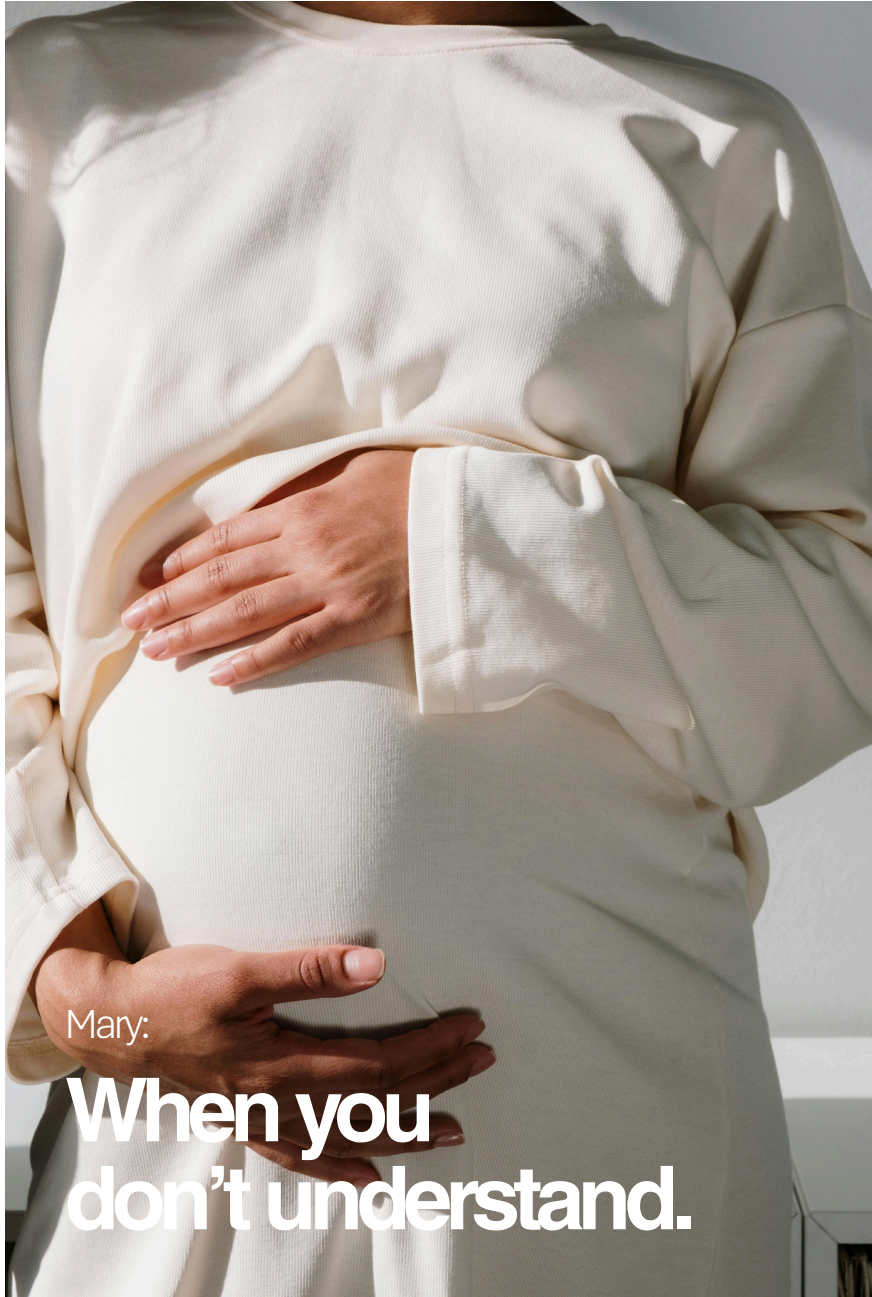
As we come to the close of this first week of Advent, we pause to centre our hearts and reflect. Today, we invite you to sit with Mary's Song, the Magnificat, a powerful anthem of praise and trust. Her words invite us to see God's mercy, strength and justice alive in our own lives. Let us find courage, strength and hope in this ancient, yet ever-relevant, song of faith.

'Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.
He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.
His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.
He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.'

Luke 1:46-54 (New Living Translation)

Take some time to think back over the past few days. What has God been saying to you in this first week of Advent?

Gracious and loving God, as we journey through this season of anticipation, still our hearts and open our ears. Like Mary, may we recognise your hand at work – lifting the humble, feeding the hungry and showing mercy across generations. Give us the courage to trust you more deeply, the strength to walk in faith and the hope to see your promises unfolding even now. Amen.



Mary:

**When you
don't understand.**

When you don't understand.

07 December.

Luke 1:26-38

Mary was a young woman with no power or status and she was chosen to bear the Messiah. Hardly the kind of person that anyone expected to be part of God's rescue plan. But God's ways are often surprising. When the angel appeared and told her she would give birth to the Messiah, Mary was understandably confused and asked how this could be, which was a natural response to something that felt impossible.

Her question wasn't one of doubt or disbelief. It was the honest response of someone trying to make sense of something far beyond her understanding. She didn't run away. She didn't argue. And she didn't demand more proof. Instead, she listened. And then she responded with faith: 'Let it be to me according to your word' (Luke 1:38 ESV).

Mary didn't have all the answers. She didn't know how her future would unfold, how Joseph would receive this news or how others would react. But she trusted God enough to say 'yes'.

Her story reminds us that faith is not the opposite of questions. Faith is saying 'yes' to God even when we are unsure or afraid. It's choosing to trust when life takes an unexpected turn, to believe that God can be at work even when we don't fully understand.

Faith over fear doesn't mean we never ask 'how'. It means we bring our 'how' to God and still choose to follow him. Like Mary, we can carry both the questions and the courage, knowing that God is with us in all of it.

When have you felt overwhelmed by what God might be asking of you? What does it look like to say 'yes', even in uncertainty?

Lord, when I am afraid and uncertain, give me the courage to say 'yes' to you. Let my faith grow in the shadow of my fear. Amen.

When you don't understand.

08 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 55:8-9, Proverbs 3:5-6, Hebrews 11:1

We are human. Beautifully and wonderfully so. With finite minds and limited understanding, countless flaws and irrational fears. We are also made in the image of God, with the capacity to hope endlessly, trust unceasingly and love remarkably. And to question.

Mary's response to God's messenger doesn't feel unfamiliar or unlikely, but entirely human. A response of curiosity, underwritten with a confidence in who her God is. She wasn't rejecting the message; she was trying to understand it. And in that moment, we see something beautiful: that God welcomes our honest questions when they come from hearts anchored in trust.

Has God ever asked you to do something that didn't make sense? Something that challenged your logic or disrupted your plans?

Maybe you're there right now – standing before a situation that feels impossible.

In those moments, like Mary we can respond with honest curiosity rather than fear or resistance. We can ask, 'How can this be?' not as a statement of doubt, but as a declaration of faith that trusts God to make a way, even when we can't see one.

He doesn't turn away from our questions: he meets us in them, speaks to our hearts and reminds us that nothing is impossible with him.

Let your questions lead you closer to the One who holds all the answers.

Whatever lies ahead, whether it makes sense or not, may we have the courage to choose faith over fear and the humility to say, 'I am the Lord's servant.'

Think of a question you've been holding in your heart. Something you haven't fully voiced to God because it feels too uncertain, too hard or too holy. Today, bring that question to him in prayer. Don't hide it, offer it. Then spend time listening. Let your trust grow deeper in the space between asking and understanding.

God, thank you for welcoming my wonder, my confusion and my longing to understand. Help me to trust you even when things don't make sense. Like Mary, give me a heart that is open, curious and anchored in faith. Teach me to say, 'I am your servant', even when the path ahead is unclear. Amen.

When you don't understand.

09 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 19:26, Luke 2:19

Nothing is impossible for God.

This is what Gabriel says to Mary when sharing the news about Elizabeth's pregnancy, a pregnancy that is unexpected because of her age.

These words are echoed by Jesus in Matthew 19:26: 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

I have treasured this Bible verse in my heart. Our knowledge of who God is and what he can do helps us to overcome fears in our lives. When I know who God is, there is nothing to be afraid of, because for him all things are possible!

When I was a little child, I lost my favourite teddy bear just before bedtime. When I had

looked all over to find it, I ended up in a desperate prayer to God. My prayer sounded like this: 'If you help me now, I will do whatever you want me to and I will thank you my whole life.' Big words from such a small child, but I trusted God with my little child heart and he heard my prayer every time.

It may seem like a nice little story, but I have, like Mary, kept this story in my heart, and God reminds me sometimes of the promise I made to him. Later in life, he called me to be an officer in The Salvation Army, and although I still occasionally 'walk on water' with a faith like Peter's, sometimes afraid, God reminds me not to fear but to trust that he's always there for me. Whatever he calls me to do, I respond: 'I will do whatever you want me to do!'

What difference does it make in my life when I put all my trust in God?

Heavenly Father, I thank you for taking care of me, even when I'm afraid and don't know what to do. I will, like Mary, surrender my life in your hands once again. Amen.

Major Elisabeth Grahm

When you don't understand.

10 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:19

‘Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.’ – Luke 2:19

Mary's life changed in an instant. A heavenly message, a divine calling and a path that no one had walked before. There was no blueprint nor guarantees, no instruction manual nor detailed plan.

In a world that rushes towards answers and clarity, Mary invites us to do something radical: to treasure the mystery. There was so much that Mary could not understand, but far from demanding the details she held space in her heart for God's unfolding story. She listened, she noticed, she treasured.

We've all had moments in life that made no sense at the time. Seasons where prayers felt unanswered, the future felt uncertain or God was calling us to go in a completely new direction. We don't always have clarity, but we do have a choice. A choice

to close off and move on, or to stay open, pay attention and hold out for the next instruction.

With a bit of distance and time, we may begin to see the conversation that brought quiet reassurance, the verse that returned to us again and again, the unexpected kindness that carried us through. These were the treasures.

To treasure something doesn't mean we always understand it. It means we choose to value it. To hold it close and revisit it with wonder and trust. Mary's quiet practice of treasuring shows us a faith that listens more than it speaks, that ponders more than it seeks to understand.

What if God is inviting you not to figure everything out but to simply notice? To treasure what he is doing?

What moments, words or experiences is God inviting you to treasure, even if they don't make sense to you?

Loving Father, teach me to treasure your presence and trust in your timing, even when I don't understand. May I carry faith in my heart as Mary did, choosing to ponder rather than panic, to wonder rather than worry. Amen.

When you don't understand.

11 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Romans 8:28

There are times when life whispers a call that does not come with clear instructions – it's more like a nudge towards something unfamiliar. Personally, I think that is where faith begins to bloom. I am reminded by Mary's story that I do not always have to fully understand, but only fully trust. There have been moments when I have felt nudged towards certain choices that do not make sense – using my voice to speak up when silence would have been a safer option or believing in grace when everything around me felt unsteady.

I have stood in places where God's plans for me seemed confusing or even frightening, and there have been times

when I have chosen to ignore God's plans for me, all because I was too scared.

But Mary's story has constantly reminded me to step forward and not retreat. I have learnt that grace discovers us in obedience and not in clarity. It is not always about having answers – it is about having enough trust to say 'yes'.

For me, faith over fear does not mean we do not tremble. It means we anchor ourselves in love that casts out fear. It also means that what does not make sense to us in the moment becomes meaningful in the unfolding.

Have you ever said 'yes' to something without knowing where it would lead, only later realising that God was writing something beautiful through your surrender?

Heavenly Father, you who knows our hearts, thank you for speaking into the ordinary moments of our lives. Like Mary, help us to say 'yes' even when we are afraid or uncertain. Let the faith that treasures your promises grow in us, even when our path is unclear. May our surrender be the seed of your glory. Amen.

Maleleko Munkombwe

When you don't understand.

12 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 55:8-9, Habakkuk 1:5

In our humanness, we can sometimes grow complacent about the power and presence of our God, unintentionally minimising our expectations of what he can accomplish, losing sight of his work so evident around us. We don't mean to, but slowly and subtly we begin to expect less. We stop looking for the miraculous, stop anticipating answers to prayer and begin to explain away the extraordinary.

But if we slow down and pay attention, we can see the hand of God moving intricately in the detail of our everyday lives. In the provision of resources we can find no source for, in unexpected encounters that bring colour, clarity or comfort to our days, in the solution to problems we've been hopelessly pondering. Evidence of a God who is near, involved and faithful.

As we have spent time in the experience of Mary in these days, perhaps the most profound reminder is this: God delights in using the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary – and he invites us to respond

with faith, even when we don't understand. He invites us, like Mary, to place our trust not in knowing all the details or every part of the plan, but in the One who calls us.

God chose an ordinary, inexperienced, young girl to be part of his redemption plan for the world. Mary wasn't a scholar or a leader. She held no position of power or privilege. Yet God looked upon her with favour and called her to something extraordinary.

In this Advent season, let us be inspired to return to awe and wonder, to rediscover the majesty and might of our God. Let us not lose sight of the miraculous among the ordinary and may we never grow numb to the wonder of who our God is and what he is capable of – the One who calls us to move out from our comfortable places, to follow him into the unfamiliar, the intimidating, in his strength and for his glory.

Today, ask God to open your eyes to his presence in the everyday. Look for the unexpected, the unexplainable, the unmistakable. And when you see it, let your response be one of faith: 'How can this be?'

Lord, forgive me when I lose sight of your wonder, when I stop expecting you to move in powerful and personal ways. Open my eyes to your presence in the everyday, and rekindle in me a heart that sees and believes, even when I don't understand. Amen.

When you don't understand.

13 December.

Luke 1:26-38, Psalm 40, Proverbs 3:5-6

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.' – Proverbs 3:5-6

Today, we encourage you just to rest in the presence of your Heavenly Father, the One who invites you to trust in him, even when you don't understand. In a world that often demands certainty, God calls us to surrender. As you rest today, release your need for clarity and lean into the faithful presence of your loving Father.

The Advent story is filled with mystery, silence and waiting. In the quiet, God often speaks. Set aside some time today to be still before God. With no agenda and no words, just listen. Let this act of stillness be a declaration of 'I may not always understand, but I trust you'.

Father, thank you that you invite me to come to you, just as I am. Help me not to lean on my own understanding, but to rest in your wisdom and love. Amen.



Joseph:

**When it costs
you something.**

When it costs you something.

14 December.

Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph had every reason to walk away from Mary. From his perspective, it looked like betrayal. The woman he was pledged to marry was expecting a child that wasn't his. He had already decided to separate from her quietly (Matthew 1:19), a way of protecting both her dignity and his own. But then God interrupted.

In the quiet of the night, an angel appeared with a message: 'Do not be afraid.' Mary's story was not a scandal, it was a sacred plan. God was at work in a way that no one had seen before. Joseph had a choice to make.

And his decision was courageous and counter-cultural. Choosing to take Mary as his wife meant stepping into public

judgement, risking his reputation and shouldering the weight of something he couldn't fully explain. His faith wasn't just internal trust – it was bold obedience in the face of misunderstanding. He didn't let fear decide his future. Instead, he aligned his life with what God had asked of him, even when it was costly, even when it didn't make sense.

Sometimes, following God means letting go of what others think. It might mean sacrificing comfort or reputation. Joseph's story reminds us that faith is more than belief. It's trust put into action. It's choosing God's way, even when it costs us something.

When has God invited you to choose obedience over comfort? What does it look like to follow God when others might not understand?

Lord, help me to listen for your voice above the noise. Give me the strength to follow you, even when it costs me something. Amen.

When it costs you something.

15 Decemeber.

Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 30:21, Deuteronomy 31:6

God didn't ask Joseph to do what was easy. He asked him to do what was right.

To stay. To take Mary as his wife. To carry the weight of public suspicion. To step into a story that would confuse others but fulfil a divine purpose. To choose obedience over ease, courage over comfort. And, in doing so, become part of the greatest story ever told.

In the eyes of culture, Joseph's decision to remain committed to Mary looked like the actions of a foolish, weak man with no desire to protect his name or salvage his future. But Joseph trusted what God said in the quiet of the night more than the opinions spoken by others in the light of day.

There are times when God asks us to do uncomfortable things. To reach out to someone when it would be easier to stay silent. To stand for truth when it risks disappointing people we care about. To choose generosity when finances are tight. Fear tells us to protect ourselves. Faith calls us to step into the unknown in quiet obedience.

There are times when following Jesus doesn't feel heroic, it just feels hard. When we act not out of boldness, but because we can't ignore the gentle nudge of the Spirit. As we spend these days in the experience of Joseph, let us be reminded of the way God honours those who are willing to step into vulnerable spaces in his name. With a promise to go with us.

Is there somewhere God is asking you to stay where others would leave, to go where others would not go, to love when others would judge or to speak when silence would be safer?

Father God, you often lead me into places that stretch or challenge me. Give me the courage to follow you, even when it's uncomfortable or costly. Teach me to trust your ways are higher and your plans are good. Amen.

When it costs you something.

16 December.

Matthew 1:18-25, Hebrews 10:23

Joseph was a believer in the God of Israel. A believer who would have likely known the law deeply, certainly well enough to understand the significance of the news he had received. Mary was pregnant. And while they were committed to be married, they were not married yet. At that time, for a woman to be found pregnant before marriage, the law prescribed death by stoning. Joseph knew these were the consequences.

Fear overcame Joseph, if only for a moment. He decided, perhaps afraid of judgement, disappointment or disgrace, to divorce Mary quietly. But a messenger of the Lord intervened.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, suggested that morality, as a set of rules and norms, often arises from a need to control behaviour and avoid negative consequences. However, for those who know God, morality comes from our experience of him and receiving his unearned gifts.

Martin Luther King famously said: 'Courage is the power of the mind to overcome fear.' Yes, absolutely, but where does this courage come from? For those who know and experience the sacrificial love of God, our courage comes from him. Joseph believed that what was revealed to him in a dream was true, that the baby gifted to Mary through the Holy Spirit was the Son of God. Armed with this belief, Joseph found courage in faith to overcome fear.

God is always seeking to strengthen and encourage his people in the face of opposition and trials. His words are our source of hope and strength. When Joseph obeyed God, his fears faded. When we act on our belief, with faith in the God who can help us overcome, fear loses its grip on us.

As we celebrate this Christmas season, may the Lord help each one of us to conquer our fears through our faith in Jesus, the Saviour.

How do you respond to challenging situations in life? Do you let fear dictate your actions, or do you seek guidance and strength from your faith? What do you need to seek God's courage to overcome today?

Oh Lord, I have faith in you for the challenges I face in my life which make me fearful. May you help me to conquer and overcome my fear through faith in you. Amen.

Major Roy Samuel

When it costs you something.

17 December.

Matthew 1:18-25, Hebrews 11:7-8 and 24-27, 2 Samuel 6:14-22

Joseph chose obedience over opinion. He took Mary as his wife not because it made sense to others, but because he trusted the voice of God.

And he's not alone.

Noah built an ark while the skies were still clear. Moses returned to Egypt with a speech impediment and a message no one wanted to hear. David danced with joy before the Lord, even when others mocked him. Again and again, the faithful were willing to look foolish in the eyes of the people around them.

The fear of what others think is real. It can paralyse us, silence us and hold us back from saying 'yes' to what God is asking. But faith doesn't wait for everyone's approval. Faith steps forward with courage, even when it means standing out, being misunderstood or swimming upstream.

What mattered most to Joseph wasn't his reputation or his place in the community, but the reverence, the adoration, the trust he held for his Heavenly Father.

What story might God be writing through your obedience?

Is fear of the opinions of others holding you back from saying 'yes' to God? What would change if you truly believed his voice mattered most?

Lord, help me to care more about your calling than the approval of others. When I'm afraid of being misunderstood, give me courage like Joseph to walk in obedience. Let your voice be the one that leads me. Amen.

When it costs you something.

18 December.

Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 41:10

Moving to a new country wasn't just about packing my things. It felt like leaving behind a part of who I was. I had to start school all over again in a new place where I didn't know anyone. I was scared, even if I didn't always show it. Making new friends wasn't easy, and there were days when I just wanted to go back to what felt safe and familiar.

But during that time, Matthew 1:18-25 reminded me about how Joseph's life got flipped upside down when he found out Mary was pregnant. He felt confused and afraid just like I did. But instead of running away, he trusted God. Verse 24 says, 'When Joseph woke up, he did what the

angel of the Lord had commanded him.' That hit me. Joseph didn't need all the answers to obey – he just needed faith.

That made me ask myself whether I could trust God even if I didn't understand why I had to move. Then I came across Isaiah 41:10: 'Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.' It reminded me that even in a new place, God didn't leave me. Slowly, I started seeing him in small things: a kind classmate, a smile at church or a teacher who genuinely cared.

Now, I see that this change was part of my story. God is still writing it.

What is one area in your life right now which you feel unsure or unsettled about? Take a moment to talk to God about it honestly. Then ask yourself: 'What would faith look like here?' Write a simple prayer or a sentence that reflects your decision to trust him, even if the path ahead seems uncertain.

Loving Father, sometimes I feel scared, especially when things change suddenly. Help me to trust you like Joseph did. Remind me that I am not alone and that you go with me wherever I am. Thank you for the new friends and good people around me, for new opportunities and for the chances to grow. Help me to have the courage to take each step in faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Mandy Ambitan

When it costs you something.

19 December.

Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 43:1-2

Joseph's whole world changed in a moment. In an instant and with just a few words, the future he had imagined for himself and Mary suddenly looked a lot less likely. So he made plans he thought were best for everyone: to end their relationship and step away quietly. But a marriage, a child and a future were part of God's plan for this unsuspecting family, even if Joseph couldn't see it yet. In a dream, God gave Joseph exactly what he needed: reassurance and the courage to take the next step.

But notice this: Joseph's obedience didn't change his circumstances. There were still whispers and awkward silences, doubts and misunderstandings, disagreements and broken relationships. His 'yes' didn't lead him out of discomfort or away from rejection, but it did lead him into a more intimate awareness of the presence of his God. Saying 'yes' to God won't always change our situation or solve our problems,

but it will lead us to deeper dependence and draw us closer to the One who sees the whole picture.

Like Joseph, there will be times when our carefully made plans unravel, when we feel misunderstood, when we fear what others will think, when we wrestle with disappointment. In those moments, we may try to search for a solution on our own, to find a way out that feels safe or sensible. Yet it is often in this tension between fear and faith, between control and surrender, that God invites us to trust him more.

Joseph's story reminds us that we don't obey because the path is easy. We obey because this promise is true; a promise that sounds louder than any fear and is steadier than any uncertainty:

God is with us.

Is God asking you to trust him with something that feels costly right now? What would it look like to take the next step in faith today?

God, I am so grateful for your promised presence in my life. When saying 'yes' to you costs me something, remind me that you are worth everything. Help me to trust you, even when the path is unclear, and to find peace, not in outcomes but in your presence. Amen.

When it costs you something.

20 December.

Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 40:31

As this week draws to a close, take a deep breath. Step back from the noise, the busyness, the pressure, the pace – and rest. Today, we invite you to rest in the loving presence of your Heavenly Father, the One who tenderly calls you to step out in faith with him, even when it costs you something.

Advent is a season of waiting. Not a passive waiting but a holy anticipation, leaning forward with hope. Waiting with trust that God is at work in the shadows, in the stillness, in the not-yet.

So let yourself rest in the truth that Emmanuel means ‘God with us’. He is near. He is faithful. He is enough.

What is God asking you to trust him with, even though it feels costly? Set aside some time today to simply be still before him. In the quiet, ask God to meet you there. Receive his peace. Let his courage fill your heart. As you listen, write down one step of faith you feel called to take next week and ask for his strength to take it.

Lord, I thank you for the example of Joseph – someone who was obedient and trusted that your way was best. Help me to carry this courage into my own life, choosing faith over fear of the cost. Fill me with your peace and presence as I wait expectantly for the coming of Jesus. Keep my spirit tender, my steps faithful and my eyes fixed on you. Amen.



The Shepherds:

**When faith shines
through fear.**

When faith shines through fear.

21 December.

Luke 2:8-20

The shepherds were far from special in society's eyes. They were doing their jobs, watching sheep in the quiet of the night, when everything changed. Suddenly, an angel appeared and the glory of the Lord lit up the sky. The Bible says they were terrified. Who wouldn't be?

But then came the words that appear so often in the Christmas story: 'Do not be afraid.' The angel brought a message of good news, not for the powerful or privileged but for all people, beginning with those on the margins.

In that moment, the shepherds could have let fear stop them. Instead, however, their response was full of faith. They didn't wait until they had all the answers.

They didn't let fear or uncertainty hold them back. They went immediately to see what God had done. And after seeing Jesus for themselves, they shared the news with joy.

This story reminds us that fear is a natural part of life, even when God is doing something good. But faith can shine through our fear. When we choose to listen to God's voice, when we take that next step of trust, we open ourselves to wonder and joy and purpose.

The shepherds became the first witnesses to the birth of Jesus not because they were brave or important, but because they responded with faith.

When fear tries to overwhelm you, how can you let faith shine through? What good news is God asking you to carry into your own life and the lives of others?

God, help your light shine through my fears today. Give me faith that moves me forward with hope and joy. Amen.

When faith shines through fear.

22 December.

Luke 2:8-20, Isaiah 9:2, James 2:5

It was an ordinary night for the shepherds – cold, quiet, routine. These men were not considered powerful or important people, just humble workers doing what they always did. Watching their flocks by night. Then suddenly, everything changed.

A sky full of glory.
Angels with a message.
A moment soaked in fear.

The shepherds were terrified, and rightly so! This was not the kind of encounter they expected. But the angel's first words cut through the panic, words we hear often in Scripture: 'Do not be afraid.'

It's the same phrase spoken to Zechariah, to Mary, to Joseph. Again and again, God's invitation to let go of our fear, for something holy is happening.

Good news of great joy for all people. With shaking hands and racing hearts, the shepherds left their field and hurried off to

see this thing that had happened. They didn't wait until fear had passed or the shock had worn off – they moved.

Faith doesn't mean we're never afraid. It means we trust God enough to move forward anyway.

Throughout Scripture, we see this kind of courageous obedience. Esther approached the king knowing her life was at risk. Daniel kept praying even when the hungry lions were waiting. Mary said 'yes' to God before she knew what it would cost her. Each one faced fear, but faith lit the way.

These lowly shepherds remind us that fear might be part of our story, but it doesn't have to be the end of it. They left their fields to encounter Jesus and returned glorifying God. They were forever changed.

What might happen if, like them, we let faith shine through fear?

Where is fear holding you back right now – and what might it look like to take a step anyway?

God of light and hope, thank you for meeting us in our ordinary moments. In the ordinary moments of my today, let my faith shine brighter than my fear so that I may glorify you in all I do. Amen.

23 December.

Luke 2:8-20, 2 Corinthians 5:7

At the age of 21, I bungee-jumped from a bridge out over the Kawarau River near Queenstown, New Zealand. Before taking the plunge, a bath towel was wrapped around my ankles with a simple cord, then the bungee rope was attached. 'Is that it?' I questioned. 'That's all I need?' 'There's nothing more to it?' Only to jump. I've never placed more faith in a bath towel than I did that day!

We can choose to experience self-imposed fear through thrill-seeking endeavours such as a bungee jump. More often than not, however, fear comes to us unannounced, often when we least expect it, tapping into the deepest recesses of our subconscious, at times eliciting some of the strongest emotional and even physiological responses. But it's not all bad. Fear is a natural safety mechanism preventing us from unnecessary harm or misfortune at times. It is our response to fear, in light of our faith, however, that is of great importance.

The shepherds were joined suddenly by an angel of the Lord – who came bearing good news which would lead to great joy for all people – and they were terrified! As if to

emphasise the point – and to add to the shepherds' collective fear – the angel was suddenly and subsequently joined by a vast host of others, and they were praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased' (Luke 2:14 NLT). What was the response of the shepherds to this supernatural experience? They replied, let's go and 'see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about' (Luke 2:15 NLT).

Like a bungee jump, when it comes to the life of faith, we sometimes find ourselves asking the questions, 'Is that it?' 'That's all I need?' 'There's nothing more to it?' These are questions founded, perhaps, on the notion that there must be some sort of additional requirement on our part other than the faith we have expressed in Christ and the undeserved grace of God that has already been shown towards us.

In fact, all that is left for us to do is to continually take a leap of faith out of the fearful or unknown and into that which God invites us to daily, made possible only through the Advent of Christ in our world – true love among us.

23 December.

Luke 2:8-20, 2 Corinthians 5:7

What is your natural reaction and/or response to fear in your life?

What enables you to approach fear from a perspective of faith and to overcome it?

What prevents you from doing so?

What does taking a 'leap of faith' look like for you in your present context?

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, Love among us,
Perfect love that expels all fear.
Light of the world, call us out of the fearful and dark places,
Draw us out of uncertainty into divine clarity.
May fear give way to faith, obscurity to prominence,
Make known to us the intrinsic mystery of Advent and Atonement,
Wait for us in the places you have called us to, where we are yet to be.
Light and Life of the world, may it be so.
Amen.*

When faith shines through fear.

24 December.

Luke 2:8-20, John 1:14

Today, we invite you to pause, to rest in the presence of your Heavenly Father.

The One who became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

The One who moved into the neighbourhood.

The One who became Emmanuel, God with us.

May you know his nearness today.

May you breathe deeply in his presence.

And may his presence be your greatest gift this Christmas.

Where do you most need to experience the presence of Emmanuel, God with you, today?

Jesus, thank you for coming close, for stepping into our world and into our fears. In the quiet of this day, help me to slow down and remember that you are here. When worry rises or uncertainty lingers, let faith shine through my fear. Remind me that you are Emmanuel, God with us, and that your presence brings peace that no fear can shake. Help me to trust you today and to rest in the light of your love. Amen.



Christmas day:

**Faith that
brings peace.**

Faith that brings peace.

25 December.

Isaiah 9:1-6, John 14:27

On Christmas Day, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Not only as a baby in a manger, but as the Saviour who brings peace to a fearful world. Long before the Cross or the empty tomb, peace came wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a humble place. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came near.

Years later, he would say to his disciples, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27). The peace Jesus offers is unlike anything the world can give. It isn't dependent on calm circumstances or clear answers. It's a deep, settled trust that God is with us, right here, right now.

Christmas doesn't erase all fear, but it does remind us of where we can place our trust. The message that began with 'Do not be afraid' is still the message that God chooses to give to me today. I don't walk alone. God has come near. Emmanuel, God with us, is still true today.

Choosing faith over fear means welcoming that peace into our hearts. It means trusting that Jesus is present in both joy and struggle, and letting his peace shape how we live, how we hope and how we respond to the world around us.

What fears do you want to give to Jesus today? How can his peace help you to live with faith in the days ahead?

Jesus, thank you for coming into our world and into my life. Fill me with your peace today and help me to choose faith over fear every day. Amen.



This series features reflections written by Commissioner Patti Niemand and Ashleigh Pringle from The Salvation Army's International Spiritual Life Development team, as well as guest writers from around the world. For more from The Salvation Army International Spiritual Life Development, visit sar.my/spirituallife.

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV®

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

Used with permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All images sourced from pexels.com