



The Angels are Still Singing

Focus The messages that the angels delivered to the shepherds and others in the story surrounding Jesus' birth are still resounding for us today.

Open Have you ever been in a play or a pageant? Describe the part(s) you played.

Read Biblically, angels are not fluffy little creatures flying around playing harps. They are a commissioned army—messengers of the Lord. In the Christmas story, the angels announced the good news of the Savior's arrival to the shepherds and the world. They also delivered messages of hope and redemption to several individuals, including Zechariah, Mary and Joseph.

The message of Christ's arrival applies to all believers. Likewise, the three individual messages apply to us as well:

- a) There's a purpose in God's timing.
- b) The unimaginable will happen through the Holy Spirit in your life.
- c) The difficulty is not what you think—it will be better than it seems.

Talk

1. Like Zechariah, what kinds of questions invade your thoughts when an appropriate desire or dream is delayed, such as the wish for children, a job or a mate?
2. Have you ever had to wait an extended period of time for an answer to prayer? What did you think and feel throughout the process?

3. What does, “There’s a purpose in God’s timing” mean? What could God be doing through a delay?
4. As with Mary in Luke 2:26–38, God is still promising to do the unimaginable in our lives through the Holy Spirit.
 - a. What is “unimaginable” to you right now (for example, overcoming a habitual challenge, healing a broken relationship, etc.)?
 - b. What was Mary’s response to the angel? Why was she ultimately able to respond with faith?
5. Joseph was enduring crushing disappointment regarding Mary and what seemingly had happened. The angel’s message brought a new perspective: *It is not what you think—it’s better*. Can you relate to Joseph’s pain in some way (disappointment, loss, feeling betrayed or wounded)? What specifically do you think the Lord wants you to hear today?

Live

1. Of the three messages (God’s purposeful timing, the promise of the Holy Spirit’s unimaginable work or receiving comfort by God’s assurance), which is most applicable to you right now? Why?
2. On a piece of paper, write down the message of hope or encouragement you believe the Lord wants you to hear today. Share it with a partner.

Pray

Thank the Lord that His message of hope and redemption lives on. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you to receive and apply His messages of encouragement this year and to walk into 2010 with renewed hope and fresh comfort. Pray for each other, especially for any specific needs that are represented.