



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

UNWRAPPING CHRISTMAS FROM FEAR TO FAITH

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We are all excited about Christmas, a most joyous time of the year; it is a time of gift giving and exchanging presents. Most importantly, It is the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ who is God the Father's greatest gift to mankind (Jn 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:15). Moreover, tracing the Christmas story, several biblical characters such as Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds were given the message "Do not fear." From them, we will learn that when God chooses us for His plan, we need to cast aside our fear, rather we should trust and obey Him.

1. ZECHARIAH (Luke 1: 6-20)

1.1 Zechariah and Elizabeth who were childless were both righteous in the eyes of God (v. 6-7). During those times, this was seen as a curse or a punishment.

1.2 The angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah, telling him, "Do not be afraid" (v. 13). Zechariah received the message from the Angel that his wife Elizabeth would soon bear a son (v. 13-17),

1.3 Since Elizabeth and Zechariah were both old, Zechariah doubted the angel's message (v. 18). Subsequently, he was unable to speak (due to his unbelief) until John was born.

1.4 God had chosen Zechariah and Elizabeth to set His plan in motion: the birth of John, who would prepare the way for Jesus.

2. MARY – Luke 1: 26-38

2.1 God sent the angel Gabriel the message to Virgin Mary: she would conceive and bear the Son of God (Isa. 7:14). Though Mary was initially troubled, angel Gabriel assured her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (v. 30). Indeed, Mary was obedient to God's call.

2.2 Mary accepted God's purpose in her life in humble obedience (v. 38). She knew the tremendous risk that may happen, yet she willingly obeyed Him.

3. JOSEPH – Matthew 1:18-23

3.1 God also had a plan for Joseph. He was chosen to be the foster father of Jesus. Joseph was faced with a terrible dilemma when he learned that Mary was pregnant, so he wanted to leave her (v. 19).

3.2 An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife" (v. 20). Then Joseph obeyed the angel's command to marry Mary (v. 24).

4. THE SHEPHERDS – Luke 2: 8-15

4.1 When the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus, they were terrified, but the angel assured them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (v. 10).

4.2 The shepherds went to Bethlehem (v. 15). After they had seen Mary, Joseph and Jesus in the manger, they spread the message about the birth of Jesus (v. 16 & 17).

CONCLUSION

Fear can sometimes be paralyzing, causing inaction. To combat fear, we should read the Scriptures, spend time with God in prayer and establish a personal relationship with Him. Only then can we completely trust Him.

Finally, when God calls us according to His purpose, we must simply obey. No matter what we face, we need not fear because God is always in control. There is absolutely nothing that catches God off-guard. Hence, God's perfect love for us drives out fear (1Jn. 4:18).

REFLECTION:

1. What is the fear(s) that you have to overcome?
2. Have you surrendered your fear(s) to God or are still in doubt in doing so?

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