



12 Days
of

CHRISTMAS



Bible Reader

DAY 1

Who wrote the story?

Have you ever wondered how the Bible was written?
Who wrote the story of Jesus' birth?
How did that person know what really happened?
Allow me to introduce you to Luke, a master investigator of truth...

Read
Luke 1 v 1 – 4

Think...

Luke is writing a letter to his friend, Theophilus,
to make sense of all the amazing reports that people are saying about Jesus.
The whole area of Israel is buzzing with gossip and amazing stories about Jesus.
Some people say he was God. Some say he was a fake.
Others are blowing up the stories beyond reality to impress others.
What can anyone believe?

Luke goes about investigating all the stories, asking people who were actually there.
Luke looks for clues of truth all over the place, takes notes and puts them all together
to make sense of them all. Then Luke writes a letter with all the facts for his friend,
so that Theophilus can know the truth.

Do you want to know the truth about Jesus? Was he real?
Did all the miraculous stuff really happen?
Let's keep reading and we'll see...

Pray...

Dear God, you sent Jesus, your Son, to earth so that humans could see you, meet you and know you.
Thank you for people like Luke, who wrote the story of Jesus on earth,
so that we can know what happened and see, meet and know you too!

Live...

You can be a master investigator too!
Look around you for clues of God in what he's made.
Every bug, every cloud, everything can tell us
about God if we're really looking!



DAY 2

Miracle baby number 1!

God is about to send his own Son to earth.
He decides to send a prophet before to get the people
ready for this amazing event!

Read
Luke 1 v 5 – 25

Think...

Imagine the President of your country announced he would pay you a visit.
Would you clean your room? Tidy your garden? Bake a delicious cake?
Would you be nervous or wouldn't you care? Sometimes when important people arrive at a new place,
a red carpet is rolled out for them to walk on. Red is the colour of royalty and honour,
and a carpet shows that they are being welcomed.

God had never taken the form of a human before. Jesus, who is God,
taking on a human body was a big deal and God wanted all the people to be ready. So he chose a godly
but childless couple to have a very special son that would prepare his people for when he arrived.
It was kind of like rolling out a red carpet to welcome Jesus.

Imagine Jesus was coming to dinner tonight. What would you do? How would you feel?
What would you wear, and what food would you prepare?
Why not pretend he is – lay him a place at your table and imagine he is there.
Because you know what? He is!

Pray...

Father God, help me to remember you're actually always around.
And you are a most important guest!

Live...

Do something special with God today – have a tea party,
or meal with him. It may just change the way you see your life!



DAY 3

Miracle baby no 2!

Elizabeth's baby, John, was a miracle because she was old, and she hadn't fallen pregnant even after years of marriage to Zachariah.

God opened her womb and she fell pregnant.

But the next miracle baby that was announced by an angel was an impossible baby.

No other baby on earth would be like it!

Read

Luke 1 v 26 – 38

Think...

A baby always needs a mom and dad in order to be made inside a mom's tummy.

But the baby we've just read about would have no earthly dad.

God would place the baby inside of Mary's womb, and she would be pregnant without being married.

Now in the old days, women would get into a lot of trouble if they were pregnant without being married. Can you imagine how Mary must have felt when she heard the angels news? Surprised? Scared? Confused? Probably all of that. But she trusted God more than anything else, and she accepted that this was God's doing and he would look after her.

Do you think God might ask you to do something outrageous too? Something that would shock other people, probably even offend them. How will you respond?

Pray...

God, I think it's amazing that you wanted to be born by a virgin, to show that you really are God.

I want to be more like Mary, who trusts you completely, no matter what you ask me to do.

Please prepare my heart for that big moment.



Live...

Perhaps God will ask you to do something big for him today.

Will you freak out, or will you trust and obey him?

DAY 4

Divorce God's mother?

As mentioned yesterday, a young lady found pregnant with no husband was a shameful thing and would give the neighbourhood enough to gossip about for months! Joseph loved Mary, and didn't want to disgrace her. But he also didn't want to marry someone who was already pregnant. What should he do?

Read
Matthew 1 v 18 – 25

Think...

Joseph was a good man, but as far as he could see, Mary had done a terrible thing. She had fallen pregnant! This was a great insult, and he could have exposed her, telling the whole neighbourhood what a bad woman she was. But instead of getting his revenge, he had a kind heart and decided to take care of matters as quietly as possible. He wanted to protect Mary from disgrace by divorcing without drawing attention to the fact. But when God showed up in a dream, he changed his mind immediately, trusting that God was doing a great thing.

God had really chosen his son's earthly parents well!
Both Mary and Joseph were God-fearing, upright people. And both trusted God entirely. They didn't refuse to do the outrageous things God was asking them to do.

How do you feel when someone has betrayed your trust? When someone has let you down? Do you want to take revenge, or are you willing to forgive them? Before rushing off and doing something you may regret, spend a moment with God and ask him what he wants you to do. You'll find it will be the best way to resolve the problem by far!

Pray...

God, help me to be like Joseph, who is good and kind and wants to protect others from shame.

Live...

Remember that there are always two sides to every story. When someone lets you down, find out their side of the story first, before you rush off and do something that you'll regret later.



DAY 5

What a family tree!

Have you ever tried to trace back your family tree?
How far could you go?
Your grandparents? Your great-grandparents?
Wouldn't it be great if you could trace your family
all the way back to Adam?! Jesus could!

Read
Luke 3 v 23 – 38

Think...

Were there any names in that long, long list that you recognized? Noah? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? David, who killed Goliath? Don't you think its amazing that back in those days, they had such an accurate account of family trees? What's even more amazing is that there wasn't paper to record some of the first fathers. The information was passed down by word-of-mouth, father telling sons, and sons telling their sons.

God thinks family trees are really important. It's important to remember who has gone before you and to honour them. They have worked hard to provide for the next generation. We owe all the technological wonders of our current world to men and women who have gone before us.

How about asking your parents to make up your own family tree?
See how far you can go back.

Make a family tree for Jesus, marking down only the names that you recognise,
otherwise things will get a bit crazy!

Pray...

Thank you, God, for the amazing men and women that have gone before me.
I recognise that all that I am and have come from their inheritance,
and I'm right where you want me to be because of them.
Thank you for medicine, technology, travel and all the other amazing things the generations
before me have worked so hard to improve.

Live...

Live today, knowing that you are laying down the
foundation for your children and their children.
How do you want their world to look?
Does that make you live differently today? How so?



DAY 6

Girl talk

When something amazing has just happened to you,
don't you want to run and tell someone?
Mary couldn't wait!

Read

Luke 1 v 39 – 56

Think...

Mary knew that when the angel told her the news of her pregnancy, something much bigger than just falling pregnant had just happened. This had never happened before, and would never happen again, in all the world and in all of history. God had chosen her to be the mother of his child.

But she couldn't go running around the town telling every one. There would be many who wouldn't believe her. They would think she'd gone mad. No, it wouldn't do to tell just anybody.

In fact there was really only one person who would understand – Elizabeth. Elizabeth was her cousin, but much more importantly, Elizabeth had just miraculously fallen pregnant. Elizabeth was married, so it wasn't the same as Mary's pregnancy, but it was still an amazing miracle.

When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's house, the baby John inside Elizabeth jumped. John was specially chosen by God, and even in the womb, he could tell he was in the presence of God in human form. How amazing is that?!

Mary and Elizabeth could share their immense joy with one another, knowing that there was complete acceptance and understanding and safety in one another. Do you have a friend like that?

Pray...

Thank you, God, for my special friends that I can spend special moments with.
Help me never to take them for granted.

Live...

Remember a special time you had with a special friend,
and thank God for it.



DAY 7

Neighbourhood celebration

Life can be hard, and dull and disappointing,
so it's especially important to celebrate
when something special happens.

Read
Luke 1 v 57 – 58

Think...

Sometimes we can get so focussed on our lives, our work and our duties,
that we forget to celebrate the special stuff that happens.
Birthdays aren't about getting presents,
they're an opportunity for us to remember how special that person is.
It's a chance for that person to be shown that he is surrounded by people that love him.
Celebrate the birthday boy!

There are many festivals – both Christian and normal – that we can use to celebrate.
When we do, we stop focussing on ourselves, and we look to others.
We share, we spend time, quality time, with others, and we learn to value them more.
This is a very special thing, and something that God is very interested in us doing.
Christmas is one of the most special times to celebrate. It
is a wonderful opportunity to share joy with others,
and to share ourselves, our gifts, our lives and our smiles.

Pray...

Thank you God for every opportunity you give us to celebrate.
Help us to celebrate in a sharing way, so that every one can share in the joy.

Live...

Find something to celebrate today.
If nothing special is happening today, celebrate your health by running
around and enjoying the feeling. Or celebrate your parents,
by laying the dinner table in a special way for them,
or turning down their bed. There are lots of little ways we can celebrate
life and each other, and sharing this joy is what makes life special.



DAY 8

A long, uncomfortable ride

Have you ever ridden a horse for a whole day?
Imagine doing it with a huge soccer ball in your tummy!

Read

Luke 2 v 1 – 7

Think...

Have you ever been on a long journey in a car,
bus or aeroplane? At first it's exciting,
but soon it gets boring and then eventually uncomfortable.
You can't move about, run about, your back gets sore and you feel grumpy and tired.
I think Mary must have felt like this too. She had to ride on the back of a donkey while
pregnant with Jesus. It must have been very uncomfortable for her.
Do you think she complained? I think she must have wanted to, even if she didn't!

The great thing about going on holiday, is that once you've arrived, everything is better.
When you get to the sea or mountains or where ever you are going,
and suddenly the uncomfortable journey is a thing of the past.
You have your cosy bed or tent to climb into and be cosy as toast.
Sadly, this was not true for Mary.
When Joseph tried to find her a room at the inn in Bethlehem,
they were all booked up because of the census.
So they had to stay with the animals in the barn. It was probably smelly, draughty and dirty.
Not a great place to get comfortable after a long journey!

But discomfort soon turned to joy, as she gave birth to her first son, God's son!
She must have been so excited to see his little face,
and to wrap him up and hold him in her arms.
The feeling a mom gets when she sees her little baby is indescribable.
I'm sure she forgot all about the uncomfortable journey,
and even the dirty, smelly stall she had to stay in.
She was with her baby son, and nothing else could be as wonderful as that!

Pray...

Lord, its amazing that Mary had to go through such discomfort just before you were born.
Please help me to be strong and not complain when I
have to do uncomfortable things!

Live...

Try not to complain about anything today. There is always someone
worse off than you, that would be happy to be in your shoes!



DAY 9

A choir in the sky

Do you wish you could see an angel, like Mary did?
How about a whole choir of them singing in the sky?

Read
Luke 2 v 8 – 20

Think...

What a cool thing to see – a huge choir of angels in the clear night sky, singing!
Can you imagine how amazing that must have sounded?
It makes me shiver with excitement just to think of it.

And not only did the shepherds hear the choir, they were told to look for their Messiah,
who had just been born. What an announcement!

But what was really amazing was that their new-born king was not in some golden crib
with nannies fussing over him. He was lying in the feeding trough of an animal shelter.
The shepherds didn't need a parade or ceremony because they knew this baby was God's son.

Has God ever told you to do something and when the moment came for you to do it,
everything felt weird or different, almost like he had let down your expectations?

Toby did. He had gone through his cupboard and taken out the toys and clothes he no longer used.
He wrapped each one carefully and labelled it.

Then he and his mom went across town to the day crèche, where the poor people lived.
He expected to have a lovely time, giving away all the things that were once so precious to him.
But when they arrived no one was there. Everyone but an old lady had gone to the seaside for a
Christmas party. Toby was deeply disappointed, but he gave the gifts to her,
asking her to share them among the children. Days passed, with no word.

But then two days after Christmas, Toby received a note in the post.
It was from the old lady, thanking Toby for his gifts.
She had prayed about each gift and God had shown her exactly who each gift should be for.
Each one was perfectly matched to each child.

Pray...

Thank you God that you are always working,
even if they are in ways I don't expect!

Live...

Expect the unexpected. That's the way God loves to work!



DAY 10

A star signal

Have you ever seen a shooting star?

Read
Matthew 2 v 1 – 2

Think...

Did you know the stars could speak?
This one did! It signalled the birth of a king,
and not just any king. The king of the earth, of the universe, of all time and space.
But not every one was looking at the skies – there was only a small band of men who recognised
that something special was happening in the sky. They were watching and studying,
discussing and speculating. They were curious but more importantly,
they understood that the stars were signalling a very important event.

Don't you think it's amazing that a star – a ball of gas or ice travelled into our range of site at
exactly the right time in the earth's calendar to signal the birth of God's son?

Let's be astronomers ourselves,
and research what actually happened more than two thousand years ago.
Here is some recent research as to what actually happened in the universe...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLqzKYmTGcc>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-zfIDSGuUO>

Stars can speak to us. At our open-air evening premiere for the Toby film, Making Friends, I was
thanking James Alexander, the voice of Jesus, for his contribution. When I said,
"Jesus, are you here?" the whole audience gasped.
A shooting star had at that moment shot across the sky behind me.
Yes, Jesus was there! The stars had spoken!

Pray...

God, I think you're so amazing to have sent a cosmic signal to mark the birth of your son, Jesus.

Live...

Look at the stars tonight and imagine how amazing it must have been
to see something that had never happened before in the sky.
God is still speaking to us through the stars.
Look and listen.



DAY 11

Gifts fit for a king

Imagine you had to visit the king of another country.
What would you be thinking? How would you feel?
What would you take as a gift?

Read
Matthew 2 v 3 – 12

Think...

The scholars knew they were going to visit a king. They needed to bring kingly gifts to honour him.
Gold was an obvious choice as it was the most valuable of all metals.
Frankincence was kind of perfume, used in worshiping God.
But Myrrh was an antiseptic medicinal spice that was used for wrapping a dead body
– a strange gift for a new born baby! Do you think there was any meaning in it?

Since Christmas is Jesus' birthday, wouldn't it be awesome to focus on him this Christmas.
Bake him a cake, sing to him and give him a gift?

When my son, Matthew, was six, we went on a holiday just before Christmas,
where he saw a man giving his life to God and getting baptized in the mountain river.
When we came home, we were discussing what we would give to Jesus for Christmas,
and he suddenly said, "I want to give God my life. I want to get baptised this Christmas day."
So on the sunny South African Christmas Day of 2007,
Matthew and his dad waded into the pool and Matthew gave Jesus the best gift ever – his life!

Pray...

God, what could we give you that would be worthy of your greatness.
Besides, you're God. You own everything. What could I possibly have that you don't already have.
But God, one thing you have given me which I give back to you... my life.
I will live my life for you, honouring you and loving you.

Live...

By giving your life to God, everything you own you give to him too.
Are you ready to tell him that everything you have is his?



DAY 12

Odd visitors

Who came to visit you when you were born?

Read

Luke 2 v 19 – 20

Think...

Don't you think the whole thing is a bit odd?

Firstly, a king is born in a stable.

Then poor shepherds working the night shift come to visit, in the middle of the night!

And they're bubbling with excitement.

And then wealthy wise men, who have travelled over desert for days and days
come and lay princely gifts at Jesus' feet.

God was clearly saying he had come for all men everywhere
– poor and rich, Jewish and Gentile, clever and uneducated.

How do you think Mary must have felt? She had kept the things that the angel Gabriel had told her
about her son a secret. She must have been surprised when such unusual visitors arrived.

But she was a quiet, gentle girl and she thought about all that God was doing and what it could mean.
She must have felt the huge responsibility that she was going to raise the son of God.
He would become a very important man – the most important of all of history.

God wants us to connect with people from different backgrounds.

He brings people into our lives that we wouldn't naturally connect with,
so that we can grow and expand in our understanding and compassion.

Just because people are poorer or richer than us, doesn't mean they are better or worse.
God loves everyone, and he wants us to too!

Pray...

Lord, thank you that you love everyone. Cause that means you love me!

Live...

Look at others as God sees them. Wonderful and unique!

