

## **“FRESH EYES” INTRO. – MARY**

**(adapted from a series by Jeff Henderson)**

**I. INTRO. WE ALL HAVE FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIES. RECENT POLL RATED TOP 50 OF ALL TIME. AMONG THE TOP WERE “A CHRISTMAS STORY” (SHOW SLIDE), “IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE” (SHOW SLIDE), “CHRISTMAS VACATION (SHOW SLIDE), AND “HOME ALONE” (SHOW SLIDE) LET’S TAKE OUR OWN POLL – WHICH = YOUR FAVORITE (GO THROUGH AND HAVE THEM RAISE HANDS)**

**A. MY KIDS LOVED THE “HOME ALONE” MOVIES. THE FIRST TWO INVOLVE STORY OF 8 YEAR OLD KEVIN McALLISTAR – ACCIDENTALLY LEFT HOME WHILE FAMILY FLIES OUT ON CHRISTMAS VACATION. THE LATE JOHN HUGHES = WRITER. HAD A DIFFICULT TASK – TRYING TO CONVINCING YOU THAT THESE PEOPLE COULD ACTUALLY LEAVE THEIR YOUNG SON HOME ALONE WHILE GOING ON AN OVERSEAS VACATION. HE DID A PRETTY GOOD JOB OF THAT. NOW HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE WATCHED “HOME ALONE” A SECOND TIME? OR 50<sup>TH</sup> TIME?**

**B. WHEN WE WATCH A MOVIE A SECOND TIME, WE WATCH IT DIFFERENTLY THAN THE FIRST. AS A RESULT, WE MISS MANY OF THE NUANCES OR DETAILS OF THE STORY BECAUSE IT HAS BECOME FAMILIAR AND WE ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. YOU MIGHT EVEN BE TEMPTED TO SKIP THE FIRST PART OF THE MOVIE AND JUST GO TO THE SCENES WHERE THE ROBBERS GET INTO KEVIN'S HOUSE. THAT'S WHEN THE REALLY FUNNY PART BEGINS. BUT WHEN WE BECOME THAT FAMILIAR WITH A STORY, WE CAN MISS SOME OF THE BEST, MOST MEANINGFUL PARTS!**

**C. THE REASON I BRING THIS UP = I THINK THAT THE SAME CAN BE TRUE OF THE REAL CHRISTMAS STORY. IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, WE CAN BRING SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE AND FAMILIARITY INTO THE STORY WE HAVE HEARD, THAT WE AREN'T ABLE TO SEE IT WITH "Fresh Eyes". WE COULD MISS SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL NUANCES AND MEANING OF THE STORY. BUT IF WE COULD APPROACH THE CHRISTMAS STORY THIS YEAR IN A FRESH WAY, I BELIEVE WE WOULD SEE SOME NEW AND INTERESTING ASPECTS TO THE STORY GOD**

**HAS GIVEN US AND THE BIBLICAL WRITERS HAVE PASSED DOWN. THAT'S WHY WE ARE DOING A SERIES CALLED "FRESH EYES" – SEEING THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN A NEW LIGHT THAT COULD REALLY SPEAK TO US THIS SEASON.**

**\*WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT SOME SPECIFIC CHARACTERS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY OVER THE COMING WEEKS IN A FRESH WAY AND POINT OUT SOME PLOT TWISTS THAT YOU MIGHT NOT BE THAT FAMILIAR WITH. IN DOING SO, I BELIEVE WE ARE GOING TO SEE SOME VERY HELPFUL, PRACTICAL, AND INSPIRING INSIGHTS INTO THIS AMAZING STORY!**

**AND AS WE DO, I THINK WE WILL BE REMINDED IN A RENEWED WAY HOW MUCH GOD LOVES YOU AND ME!**

**\*PRAY - "DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUND US AND PUZZLE US AT TIMES. GIVE US HOPE IN THIS DARK WORLD THAT WAS NEVER YOUR ORIGINAL INTENTION. HELP US TO SEE THAT YOU WILL EVENTUALLY WORK IT**

**TOGETHER FOR GOOD AND THAT YOU HAVE INTERVENED BY SENDING YOUR SON TO HELP US GET THRU HARD TIMES AND HARD QUESTIONS.". AMEN**

**D. WHEN WE LOOK AT THE CHRISTMAS STORY WITH "FRESH EYES", ONE OF THE THINGS WE SEE ARE SOME DIFFERENT PLOT TWISTS THAT SEEM *HIGHLY UNLIKELY IF YOU WERE MAKING THE STORY UP!***

**SUCH AS:**

- **Why doesn't the Son of God get a room in the Inn?**
- **Doesn't God have connections?**
- **Why a manger?**
- **Why does God allow Joseph and Mary such a difficult long journey only to be denied a room?**
- **Why such humble beginnings?**

**WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR JESUS TO BE BORN WITH CONNECTIONS LIKE, SAY, MOSES?**

**THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A STRONG BEGINNING THAT WOULD HAVE GOTTEN EVERYONE'S ATTENTION. WHY DO THE ANGELS APPEAR TO SHEPHERDS? WHY NOT FIRST APPEAR TO THE PRESTIGIOUS, CONNECTED AND POWERFUL PEOPLE TO GET THE WORD OUT??**

**E. \*\*WHEN WE BEGIN TO LOOK AT THE CHRISTMAS STORY WITH "FRESH EYES", WE BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT WE PROBABLY WOULDN'T WRITE IT THIS WAY. *THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT* - BECAUSE IF WE ARE HONEST *THERE ARE TIMES IN OUR OWN LIVES WHEN WE WONDER WHAT GOD IS DOING, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?* WE'VE PROBABLY ALL HAD TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE THINK:**

**“God, why are you writing the story of my life like this?”**

**IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN THERE, THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS GOING TO BE A GREAT REMINDER THAT:**

**(SEP. SLIDE) God always writes better stories than you and I ever can.**

**THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T GIVE UP BEFORE ITS OVER!  
WE DONT KNOW THE ENDING YET!**

**I CAN PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEE YOU, THAT IF WE COULD WIPE OUR MEMORIES CLEAN AND WRITE OUR OWN VERSION OF HOW GOD'S SON CAME INTO THE WORLD, WE WOULDN'T WRITE THE STORY THE WAY GOD WROTE THIS ONE! THERE ARE SOME PRETTY CRAZY PLOT TWISTS IN THE BIBLICAL STORY OF CHRISTMAS: YOU HAVE A SCANDALOUS PREGNANCY, YOU HAVE A HUSBAND CONSIDERING LEAVING HIS BETROTHED WIFE BECAUSE SHE IS PREGNANT. YOU HAVE A SMELLY MANGER VS A CLEAN CRIB. IT SEEMS LIKE POOR PLANNING BECAUSE NO ONE CALLED EXPEDIA.COM TO BOOK A ROOM AHEAD AT THE INN. (I WONDER IF SOMEONE IN HEAVEN GOT IN TROUBLE FOR THAT OVERSIGHT?!)**

**F. I THINK IF WE WROTE THE STORY IT WOULD INVOLVE PRESTIGE, GREAT CONNECTIONS, POWER, HEROES, AND THINGS WOULD WORK OUT WELL. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULDN'T BE AS DIFFICULT AS THEY REALLY WERE.**

**G. THAT'S HOW WE WOULD WRITE THE CHRISTMAS STORY.**

**\*\*YOU KNOW HOW I KNOW THAT?? BECAUSE THAT'S HOW WE ATTEMPT TO WRITE OUR STORY! WE WANT OUR STORIES TO WORK**

**OUT WELL, HAVE GREAT CIRCUMSTANCES,  
GREAT CONNECTIONS, AND HAVE GREAT  
THINGS HAPPEN! IN OTHER WORDS:**

**We wouldn't write the Christmas story the way God wrote it because many times we don't agree with how God is writing ours.**

**THERE ARE PLOT TWISTS, EVENTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES THAT CAUSE A LOT OF CONFUSION. WE LOOK UP AND WONDER AND GO, "WHOA, THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE PART OF MY SCRIPT! NO, I WAS SUPPOSED TO GET MARRIED BEFORE THE AGE OF 30. I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT BY NOW. I WAS SUPPOSED TO FINISH COLLEGE BY NOW; BE EMPLOYED; I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A PARENT. I THOUGHT I WOULD BE HAPPIER THAN I AM AT THIS STAGE OF LIFE. . .**

- OUR LIVES HAVE THEIR OWN SHARE OF PERPLEXING PLOT TWISTS. THIS IS WHERE LIFE GETS CONFUSING, DOESN'T IT?**

**THE SAME IS TRUE WITH THE CHRISTMAS STORY WHEN YOU SEE IT WITH FRESH EYES.**

**G.\*\*\*MAYBE THE REASON GOD WROTE THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN SUCH AN UNUSUAL WAY WITH LOTS OF PLOT TWISTS AND TURNS, IS THAT HE KNEW! HE KNEW YOUR LIFE AND MINE WOULD FEATURE THEIR OWN RIDICULOUS TWISTS AND TURNS. OUR LIVES WOULD FEATURE THEIR OWN CRAZY CAST OF CHARACTERS WHO GO BY THE NAME OF “MOM AND DAD”, OR “MY SPOUSE” OR “EX”, OR “FORMER BUSINESS PARTNER”.**

**HE KNEW. AND THAT’S WHY HE WROTE THE STORY THE WAY HE DID. HE KNOWS WE LIVE IN A BROKEN WORLD. HE KNEW. AND CHRISTMAS IS AN INVITATION, A REMINDER THAT. . .**

**God can be trusted with writing the story of your life.  
(EVEN THOUGH IT CAN BE CONFUSING)**

**H. SO TODAY WE’RE GOING TO HEAR FROM SOMEONE IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY WHO KNOWS WHAT A PLOT TWIST LIKE THIS CAN LOOK AND FEEL LIKE. THIS PERSON KNOWS WHAT IT’S LIKE TO BE BLIND-SIDED. THIS PERSON KNOWS WHAT IT’S LIKE TO FACE DRAMA, UNCERTAINTY, FEAR AND CONFUSION – THE KIND OF CONFUSION THAT DEALS BOTH WITH LIFE AND GOD.**



**\*\*AND YET IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS UNCERTAINTY,  
WHAT THIS PERSON SAID IS A *GIFT TO YOU AND ME.***

**IN FACT, MY HOPE FOR YOU TODAY IS THAT YOU  
WILL CARRY THESE WORDS WITH YOU AND SPEAK  
AND PRAY THEM OVER AND OVER WHEN *YOU* FACE  
A PLOT TWIST AND A CHANGING TURN IN YOUR  
LIFE. THESE WORDS BRING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE  
OF UNCERTAINTY. THEY BRING HOPE IN THE FACE  
OF FEAR. AND THEY WILL ALLOW YOU TO SEE THE  
CHRISTMAS STORY WITH "FRESH EYES". THESE  
WORDS CAN BE A PRAYER ALLOWING YOU TO SEE  
*YOUR STORY* WITH FRESH EYES OF FAITH AND  
HOPE.**

**\*GOD CAN BE TRUSTED, GOD IS HERE AND HE IS ON  
THE MOVE.**

**II. TURN TO LUKE 1:26-38 (WRITTEN BY DR. LUKE  
IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY – WHO COMPILED AN  
ACCURATE RECORD OF WHAT HAPPENED IN  
JESUS' LIFE BY INTERVIEWING KEY  
EYEWITNESSES TO THESE EVENTS SO HE  
COULD SHARE THE REAL CHRISTMAS STORY  
WITH US. . .**

**READ [LUKE 1:26-29](#)**

**In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.**

**A. MARY WAS "GREATLY TROUBLED". HOW OFTEN DOES AN ANGEL APPEAR TO YOU AND CALL YOU HIGHLY FAVORED? IT'S A BIT UNSETTLING TO SAY THE LEAST!**

**B. THERE ARE 3 VERY FAMOUS BIBLICAL BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS – ABRAHAM AND SARAH, ZECHARIAH AND ELIZABETH, AND THEN. . .MARY.**

**\*\*THE FIRST TWO WERE MET WITH SKEPTICISM. BUT WATCH HOW MARY RESPONDS. . .**

**C. READ **LUKE 1:30-34****

**But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”**

**D. MARY ASKS A VERY GOOD QUESTION. IN FACT, IT’S A GREAT QUESTION:**

**“HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN SINCE I AM A VIRGIN?”  
WHAT MARY ALSO UNDERSTANDS IS THAT THIS NEWS HAS INSTANTLY PUT HER LIFE IN JEOPARDY! IN THOSE DAYS, WOMEN WHO WERE UNMARRIED AND BECAME PREGNANT COULD HAVE BEEN STONED TO DEATH LEGALLY. THIS ISN’T NECESSARILY GOOD NEWS FOR HER, ESPECIALLY AS AN UNWED TEENAGER.**

**\*ILLUS. MAYBE YOU ARE NO STRANGER TO UNCERTAIN TIMES IN YOUR LIFE WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE YOUR STORY HAS TAKEN AN UNEXPECTED TURN – AND YOU DON’T KNOW THE OUTCOME OR IF**

**IT WILL FINISH WELL. . .(I KNOW SEVERAL GOING THROUGH SEASONS LIKE THIS. PLEASE DON'T GIVE UP. THE STORY ISN'T OVER!)**

**\*ILLUS. NOT LONG AFTER CHRISTMAS IN 2005 WHEN MY DAD WENT THROUGH A ROUTINE SURGERY, THEY FOUND CANCER. IT WAS UNEXPECTED. WE JUST THOUGHT HE WAS HAVING MORE TROUBLE GETTING AROUND BECAUSE HE WAS OLDER, BUT IT HAD ALREADY SPREAD THROUGHOUT HIS BODY UNDETECTED. THEY TOLD ME HE HAD 2 MO. TO LIVE TOPS. HE PASSED AWAY 3 MOS. LATER. MY MOM HAD ALREADY BEEN UNHEALTHY DUE TO A STROKE AND HEART PROBLEMS FOR SEV. YEARS. THEN CAME THE CALL 2 MOS. AFTER MY DAD PASSED THAT SHE WOULD NOT LIVE MUCH LONGER. THEN IN THE MIDST OF THAT MY 17 YEAR OLD SON TOLD ME HE DIDN'T WANT TO FOLLOW CHRIST ANYMORE, AND BEGAN TO CHOOSE THE PARTY LIFE THAT WENT AGAINST MUCH OF WHAT WE HAD TRIED TO TEACH AND MODEL.**

**I FELT CONFUSED BY THIS OVER THE YEARS. A LITTLE ANGRY WITH GOD, AND FRUSTRATED. THERE WERE TIMES I WOULD BE DRIVING TO CHURCH WONDERING IF I SHOULD GET UP AND TEACH AT ALL. BUT GOD HAS USED IT TO HELP ME**

**GET CLOSER TO HIM, STAY CLOSE TO BOTH MY SONS AND MY WIFE, AND REACH OUT TO YOU WITH A MORE UNDERSTANDING HEART. PLUS AN UNEXPLAINABLE PEACE.**

**E. NOW LOOK AT VERSES 35-37 - When Mary asked - How can this be. . .**

**The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called<sup>[b]</sup> the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”**

**VERSE 37 IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN SEE THE CHRISTMAS STORY WITH FRESH EYES.**

**“For no word from God will ever fail.”**

**NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD! NOTHING.**

**MY PARENTS PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY READY TO MEET JESUS! 12 YEARS LATER, MY OLDEST SON IS A BELIEVER – ALTHOUGH AM NOT SURE WHERE**

HE IS AS FAR AS DAILY RELATIONSHIP W. CHRIST. HE MARRIED A BELIEVER. GOD MOVED HIS YOUNGER BRO. INTO THE SAME POLICE DEPT. WHO HAS BEEN A WITNESS AND EXAMPLE TO HIS BRO. THERE IS GREAT MUTUAL RESPECT THERE THAT I THANK GOD FOR AND IS A HUGE ANSWER TO PRAYER! WE ARE STILL SEEING HOW THIS WILL ALL PLAY OUT, BUT GOD PUT HIM IN THE MOST BIBLE READING, CHURCHED CITY IN AMERICA WITH SOME GREAT CHRISTIAN FRIENDS AND A JOB AT HIS CHURCH OFF AND ON.

HE GREW A HEART AGAIN IN HIS MIDDLE 20'S! (A lot of your kids will too!). TELLS ME HE LOVES ME EVERY TIME HE CALLS) THROUGHOUT MUCH OF THIS (STRUGGLED AT TIMES) SHARON AND I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BE THANKFUL WITH OUR SOURCE IN GOD AS NICK TALKED ABOUT SO WELL LAST WEEK!

\*WE PROB. ALL HAVE STORIES LIKE THIS TO TELL IF WE THINK ABOUT IT!

F. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS TODAY, I WANT TO POINT YOU TO WHAT MARY DOES NEXT. *THIS COMES STRAIGHT FROM A VERY PERPLEXING PLOT TWIST – A VIRGIN TEENAGE GIRL IS PREGNANT WITH*

**GOD’S SON. IT’S CRAZY. YOU CAN LOOK AT THE CHRISTMAS STORY AND EVERYTHING IS ALL “SILENT NIGHT” AND CALM AND BRIGHT. BUT LOOK CLOSER. THIS IS A CRAZY PLOT TWIST OF A STORY. AND AS MARY BEGINS TO STEP TOWARD ALL OF THAT, SHE SAYS THIS SENTENCE - THIS PRAYER – *WHICH IS REALLY A GIFT TO YOU AND ME!***

**READ LUKE 1:38**

**“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

**IF YOU FOLLOW MARY’S EXAMPLE, HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR?**

**When you want to reject in fear, you would respond in faith.**

**G. THE BEST POSSIBLE ADVICE I CAN GIVE YOU THIS MORNING IS TO PRAY THIS PRAYER OVER THE PLOT TWISTS AND UNCERTAINTIES IN YOUR LIFE:**

**“I am the Lord’s servant. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Amplified Version)**

**H. THIS HAD TO BE INCREDIBLY CONFUSING TO MARY. IN FACT, IT WAS A CONFUSING JOURNEY AT TIMES FOR 33 YEARS ALL THE WAY TO THE CROSS FOR HER. AND THEN THINGS GOT REALLY INTERESTING 3 DAYS LATER ON THAT SUNDAY WHEN JESUS ROSE! LET’S BE HONEST. MARY HAD QUITE A CRAZY YET WONDERFUL RIDE, BUT ONE OF THE THINGS THAT SUSTAINED MARY WAS REMEMBERING WHAT THE LORD HAD SPOKEN TO HER. SHE LEANED INTO THIS. “I AM THE LORD’S SERVANT. MAY IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.”**

**HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE LORD HAS SPOKEN OVER YOU BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU ON THE CROSS; THIS IS WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT YOU IF YOU ARE A CHRIST FOLLOWER. YOU ARE GOD'S SERVANT, BUT ALSO YOU CAN SAY:**

- I am a child of God - John 1:12**
- I am God’s workmanship. - Eph. 2:10**



- **I am totally and completely forgiven - 1 John 1:9**
- **I am Jesus' friend - John 15:15**
- **I am a whole new person - 2 Cor. 5:17**
- **I am a place where God's Spirit lives - 1 Cor. 6:19**
- **I am created in God's likeness - Eph. 4:24**
- **I am a citizen of Heaven - Phil. 3:20**
- **I am greatly loved - Romans 5:8**
- **\*\*THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS ABOUT YOU. THIS SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF HOW WE VIEW OUR STORIES, OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, AND OUR LIVES.**
- **IT LEADS US TO OUR BOTTOM LINE FOR TODAY:**
- **When you don't understand what God is doing, remember what God has spoken. (or promised)**
- **YOU ARE LOVED BY GOD. YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD. YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. YOU ARE FORGIVEN BY GOD. WHEN WE REMEMBER AND LIVE BY THESE WORDS THAT HE HAS SPOKEN, WE CAN JOIN MARY AND SAY THIS PRAYER AS WELL:**
- **"May it be done to me according to your word."**

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**I. THIS IS A VERY SHORT LIST OF STATEMENTS GOD HAS SAID OVER YOU. WHEN THE PLOT TWISTS COME, WHEN THE SUDDEN TURN OF EVENTS HAPPEN, WHO WILL YOU TRUST? WHEN DECISION TIME COMES, AND YOU CAN FOLLOW JESUS OR YOU CAN FOLLOW THE CROWD INTO SOME DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR, WHO WILL YOU TRUST? WILL YOU START TRYING TO WRITE YOUR OWN VERSION OF HOW THINGS WILL END, WITH LIMITED INSIGHT AND A LIMITED VIEW OF FUTURE EVENTS? OR WILL YOU TRUST GOD. WHO KNOWS THE WHOLE STORY TO LEAD YOU?**

**WILL YOU BE LEAD BY FEAR OR FAITH?**

### **III. CONCLUSION**

**A. WHEN WE SEE THE CHRISTMAS STORY AS “ALL IS CALM, AND ALL IS BRIGHT”, IT SOMETIMES DISTANCES THE STORY FROM REALITY. BUT WHEN WE SEE IT THROUGH THE EYES OF A TRUSTING TEENAGE GIRL WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN UNBELIEVABLE NEWS**

**AND IN THE MIDDLE OF IT SHE PRAYS FAITH AND PROMISE OVER THAT NEWS – THAT’S WHEN WE FIND THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS PERSONAL, RELATABLE, AND HELPFUL.**

**B. TODAY AS WE CLOSE, I WANT TO SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE FACING A PLOT TWIST OF UNCERTAINTY IN OUR LIVES. I WANT TO PRAY FOR GOD TO DO WHAT ONLY GOD CAN DO – TO BRING US HOPE AND STRENGTH AND PEACE IN THE MIDST OF THE TWISTS AND TURNS IN OUR LIFE STORY. SO WE DON'T GIVE UP BEFORE WE EXPERIENCE THE END OF THE STORY GOD HAS IN MIND FOR US.**

**SO THAT. . .When you don't understand what God is doing, you can remember what God has spoken.**

**WOULD YOU PRAY WITH ME? FIRST I JUST WANT TO ASK US ALL TO PRAY THIS SIMPLE PRAYER OF MARY’S TOGETHER (IT’S OK TO PRAY WITH EYES OPEN AND LOOK AT THE SCREEN) PRAY WITH ME:**

**“I am the Lord’s servant; May it be done to me according to your word.” (say again outloud)**

**NOW YOU CAN BOW YOUR HEADS.**

- **"LORD THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH A PLOT TWIST IN THE STORY OF THEIR LIVES. MAY WE LEARN THE BOTTOM LINE OF TODAYS MESSAGE FROM YOUR WORD - WHEN WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE DOING, HELP US REMEMBER AND TRUST IN WHAT YOU HAVE SPOKEN OR PROMISED.**
- **IF YOU ARE GOING THROUGH A SEASON LIKE THIS TODAY AND YOU WOULD LIKE PRAYER, WHILE ALL HEADS ARE BOWED RAISE YOUR HAND UP AND DOWN. I WANT TO PRAY GOD’S INTERVENTION OVER YOU. “GOD BE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE RESPONDED, IN A SPECIAL WAY THIS MORNING. GIVE THEM "FRESH EYES" TO SEE WHAT YOU MIGHT BE DOING AS YOU WRITE THEIR STORIES AND HELP THEM TRUST IN YOU FOR THE OUTCOME! AND TO NEVER GIVE UP BEFORE THE STORY YOU ARE WRITING IS OVER. AMEN**
- **PRAYER ROOM IS OPEN AS WE PREPARE FOR COMMUNION. WHY STRUGGLE ALONE? YOU**

**CAN PARTAKE AND MAKE YOUR WAY THERE,  
OR FEEL FREE TO JUST GO ON AHEAD TO THE  
PRAYER ROOM IF YOU WOULD RATHER. NICK  
AND DIANE (Sharon) WILL BE THERE FOR YOU.**

**\*\*COMMUNION IS A TIME TO REMEMBER WHERE  
THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH LED TO -- ALL THE  
WAY TO THE CROSS - A GIFT GIVEN TO YOU TO  
BRING ABOUT NEW LIFE. MARY WITNESSED THIS  
TOO. AT FIRST THEIR WAS GRIEVING, BUT THEN  
REJOICING AT RESURRECTION AND NEW LIFE. YOU  
MAY BE GRIEVING NOW, BUT COMMUNION IS A  
REMINDER OF HOPE AHEAD. REMEMBER THAT AS  
YOU PARTAKE. BRAD AND BAND WILL SING OVER  
YOU.**

**\*\*BRAD SINGS "MARY DID YOU KNOW"**

**\*\*COMMISSION**

**READ THE WHOLE LUKE ACCOUNT THIS WEEK**

**NEXT WEEK - Nick sharing on "LOOK UP" - About the  
Shepherds and the Christmas story from their view.  
Bottom line - "How We View Life determines how we  
DO life."**

**PLUS YOU WILL FIND OUT THE ALL TIME GREATEST  
CHRISTMAS TOY IN THE "TOY HALL OF FAME"**

**BE WITH US. "Remember: When you don't  
understand what God is doing this week, remember  
what He has spoken and promised!"**