

## You Have Time...

I know you're busy, so I'll keep this short and just tell you what you'll find today:

**What Gift Will You Give?** Santa and Jesus can coexist, but what gift are you bringing to the party?

**Learn a Little about Christmas** - Bible study and prayer meditation.

**The Holidays Aren't Always Happy** - A link to last year's December newsletter on depression.

**Supporting Hope in the Lord Ministries** - It's not money!

My friend, you are on my heart. I know this can be a difficult season, but I want to encourage you to let go of the busyness and stress and hold on to the reason for Christmas. Search for Jesus. Let the lights remind you that He is the light of the world. Let the ribbons and bows make you thankful for His gift of eternal life. Let the candy and treats remind you that He is the source of true joy.

We can ask Jesus to help us make Him the priority in our life and in our celebrations. We can pray that we will be touched by Jesus' humble and humanly arrival on earth as we never have been before.

Because the birth of our Savior is worth celebrating,  
Jennifer

## What Gift Will You Give?

My kids are still Santa age. And, yes, we do Santa in our house. Our explanation is that Santa delivers presents to help everyone celebrate Jesus' birthday. And, though I sometimes regret not having the behavior leverage, we taught our kids that Santa's presents have nothing to do with being good, just as Jesus' gift to us of coming to earth as a man to save us from our sins has nothing to do with us being good. In fact, the whole point of Jesus' gift is that we could never be good enough.

Well-meaning people are always asking my kids if they've been good and Santa is coming. How surprised and dismayed they are when my kids tell them it doesn't matter if they've been good. (And how many disapproving looks I get.)

Did you know that it doesn't matter if you are good either? Jesus didn't live and die for you *after* you get your act together; He came for the dirty, no-good version of you. He came to earth to live perfectly and die so His blood would finally and fully wash away the stain of our sins. The point is not that we are good (we aren't!); the point is that Jesus is good.

After we accept Jesus' blood as the covering of our sins, we're still not good ourselves. But we have the Holy Spirit living within us, giving us the power to live for Christ - to banish our will and instead seek God's will.

Jesus' birthday is certainly a reason to celebrate and have a chubby man in a red suit deliver presents around the world. But if you've ever been to a birthday party, you know the guest's gifts are not the main attraction. The prime gifts are for the birthday gal or guy.

It's Jesus' birthday. What are you going to give Him? What sacrifice will you make? What will you give up to honor Him? Your time? Your talents? Your money? Your will?

Don't skimp on Jesus' gift. Pick it out through thoughtful prayer and then commit to giving it to Him. He gave you life and is the single most important person in your life; celebrate His birthday extravagantly. Give beyond what is comfortable: it is what He did for you.

God Bless You & Merry Christmas!!

*I would love to hear about your gift ideas! Email them to [Jennifer@jjbrown.com](mailto:Jennifer@jjbrown.com).*



## Dig Deeper - The Christmas Story

Grab your notebook and Bible and get ready to explore. **Don't rush through!** Take your time to wander through the scripture and let God speak to you.

**Looking for earlier lessons?** You can print them at [http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable\\_PDF\\_Bible\\_Study\\_Files.html](http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html)

### Day One

*Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.*

1. Read Matthew 1:18-24.
  - a. How did Mary become pregnant (v.18, 20)?
  - b. What does this tell you about Jesus' conception?
  - c. Note that the lineage recorded in Matthew 1:1-16 lists "fathers" until it reaches Joseph, whom it calls the "husband" of Mary and not the "father" of Jesus.
2. Read Isaiah 7:14. This was written approximately 700 years before Mary was with Child. What does this tell you about God's plans? His promises?
3. Read Luke 1:26-38.
  - a. Mary was young, poor and a woman. In her culture she would have been considered "unusable" by God. What does this tell you about God (see 1 Samuel 16:7)?
  - b. Put yourself in Mary's shoes. How would you react to Gabriel's announcement?
  - c. How would your family, friends, coworkers and neighbors react to your news of being single and impregnated by the Holy Spirit with the Son of God? Do you imagine it was much different for Mary?
  - d. How did Mary react (Luke 1:38)?
  - e. Read her further reaction in Luke 1:46-55.
  - f. What does this tell you about Mary?
  - g. In the Luke 1:46-55 passage, Mary quotes 12 different scriptures. What does this tell you about Mary?
  - h. What does Mary's knowledge of scripture tell you about her heart?
  - i. What will you do to give God the gift of a heart filled with scripture?
- 4a. Do you think Mary might have been concerned about Joseph's reaction?
- b. Reread Matthew 1:8-24, noting Joseph's role and actions.
- c. Where in your life are you in Mary's shoes, needing follow God's call on your life and trust Him to take care of the details?
- d. Where in your life are you in Joseph's shoes, needing to trust God and obediently support His call on someone else's life?
- 5a. List the two names for Jesus given in the Matthew passage, along with their meanings.
- b. What do these two names mean to you?
6. Some religions teach that Jesus was not God, but simply a human. List all the evidence from the Matthew passage that proves Jesus is fully God, even as He is fully man.

## Day Two

My favorite rendition of the Christmas story in the Bible is this series of passages...it's not traditional, but it is what Christmas means to me.

*Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.*

1. Read John 1:1-18.
  - a. The Word (v 1:1) is Jesus. What does this tell you about Jesus' existence in time?
  - b. The power of this passage overwhelms me no matter how many times I've read it. I don't even know where to start, so I'm going to ask you to write your own lesson on this passage. You can do it every bit as well as I can. Pray for God to speak to you and then jot down all the notes that come to mind as you read over this several times. If you're willing to share, email me your notes, I'd love to see them.
2. What do you learn about Jesus from these passages?
  - a. John 1:29
  - b. John 1:3-34
3. Read John 3:16-21.
  - a. What is the true gift of Christmas (v. 16)?
  - b. What do you learn about condemnation from v. 17-18?
  - c. Why do some reject the light of Jesus and choose instead to live in darkness?
4. Read Romans 8:1-11.
  - a. How does verse 1 support your answer to 3b?
  - b. Why do believers not face condemnation (v. 2)?
  - c. What did God do (v. 3)?
  - d. Why did God do this (v. 4)?
  - e. What are the differences between a believer and nonbeliever (v. 5, 6, and 7)?
  - f. How does God's gift of Christ and your acceptance of Him as your Savior change you (v. 9-11)?
5. Read Romans 9:31-39.
  - a. Write out the last portion of v. 31, putting your name in the verse and personalizing it.
  - b. What is the answer to that question?
  - c. Why can no one be against you (v. 32-34)?
  - d. What will separate you from the love of Christ (v. 35-39)?

You see, God's gift to us is Himself. When we accept this freely-given gift it becomes part of who we are, infused into our very being. It changes us at our very core and should be our focus every day. This gift of life should be so precious to us that not a day goes by that we don't thank God for it.

God gave you Himself. Will you give Him yourself in return? Will you look at the manger scene this year and realize Jesus' birth is not just a given, something to be taken for granted, but a gift? And, what will you do to thank God for this gift?

God Bless You!!



## Supporting Hope in the Lord Women's Ministries

Some of you have asked how you can support the ministry. Surprisingly, it's not with a donation! Hope in the Lord is not an official 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so donations are not tax-deductible. I have considered applying for non-profit status, but as long as I operate as a business and pay full taxes, I can say whatever God leads me to say. If I become a tax-exempt religious organization, I have to follow government, rather than Godly, guidelines – something I see as a potential hindrance in the future.

So, how *can* you support this ministry? This ministry exists to encourage women to hope in the Lord. You can support it by forwarding on the newsletter, sharing the website address, purchasing books (you can

buy extras to give as gifts), and passing on my name as a speaker. That will serve the dual purpose of supporting and growing the ministry *and* spreading the Word of God.

The ministry always needs prayer support. There is nothing good that can be done through Hope in the Lord if God is not at the heart of it. Pray for Him to bless this ministry and for it to be used for His purposes and glory. Pray for me to daily banish my pride and give up my will to follow God's will. Your prayers are vital.

Your notes and feedback are also an important great support. To hear how God is working in your life through this ministry is an unbelievable gift and encouragement. We're never too busy to hear what God is doing in your life!!

Thank you for your support this year and in the coming year. God is good and will provide all we need for His purposes.



Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Give Him praise and worship! Have a wonderful, blessed, peaceful and joyous Christmas season.

Because He first loved us,  
Jennifer