



A 31-DAY ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

THE
FIRST
SONGS OF

Christmas

MEDITATIONS ON LUKE 1 & 2

Nancy DeMoss
Wolgemuth

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*To my fellow servants at
Revive Our Hearts
whose faithful labors
are causing many to sing
new songs of praise
to Christ, our Savior and King*



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INTRODUCTION



ONE OF THE THINGS I MOST LOVE about being a child of God is that we have something to sing about. And one of the things I most love about the Bible is that it gives us songs to sing.

Especially Christmas songs.

Have you noticed? The very first songs of the very first Christmas are some of the very first words of the New Testament. Six of these songs (depending how you count them) are recorded in the first two chapters of Luke's gospel.

- *Elizabeth's Song*—the joy of an older woman relieved of her barrenness, yet caught up in the thrill of another woman's even more amazing pregnancy.
- *Mary's Song*—a biblically rich lyric expressed by a teenage girl losing her fear of the unknown as it is overshadowed by her awe of a God who knew where to find her.

The First Songs of Christmas

- *Zechariah's Song*—twelve monumental verses sung with the reverence of an elderly priest, but also the fervor of one whose tongue had just come unloosed.
- *The Angels' Song*—two songs really, each sung to the shepherds: one in the clear voice of a lone angel, the second from an angel chorus in unified worship.
- *Simeon's Song*—the benedictory prayer of a watchful saint attuned to God's timing, aware that he was seeing in Jesus the gospel's grand mystery in miniature.

These five (or six) songs, the original songs of Christmas, are different from many of the ones that get the majority of airplay this time of year. They're not self-centered; they're God-centered. They speak less to what Christmas does for us and more to what Christmas reveals about the greatness, glory, and goodness of God. Rather than being clever rhymes filled with memories and nostalgia, they are biblical lines of historic verse about God's redemptive plan for the world and His eternal purpose for the ages.

In other words, they create an ideal template for experiencing Advent—a term that describes not only the weeks before Christmas, but also speaks of the actual coming of Christ into the world, God becoming flesh. What else could capture so vividly, delivered fresh from that moment, the outburst of joy erupting in God's people as streaks of heavenly light began slowly, yet suddenly, appearing in their darkness? After years,

decades, centuries of oppression and hardship—wondering if God had forgotten them forever—those who'd kept watching experienced something in person that we still can't stop singing about today.

They didn't just have stories to tell; they had songs to sing. And during this Advent season, I'd love for us to sing them together.

Each day's reading in this book revolves around a single line from one of these songs. In addition to a brief devotional thought, I've also included a few other things you can consider doing if your time and situation allow: other Bible passages to look up and learn from, a journaling question to contemplate. But the goal is not to check through the items, making sure you complete everything. Instead, I pray that you'll spend these days leading up to and beyond Christmas lifting up your eyes the way each of these men and women did, your face fully fixed on our great God and Savior as you sing along.

Our Christmas song.



DECEMBER 1
Call to Worship

NEVER IMPOSSIBLE

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow
you; therefore the child to be born will be
called holy—the Son of God. . . .
For nothing will be impossible with God.

{ LUKE 1:35, 37 }



THE ANCIENT OF DAYS BECAME a newborn. The One who created the first woman was born of a woman.

Though heaven and earth cannot contain Him, He chose to be confined to a human body. He chose to be held in the arms of a teenage girl, even though His own arms, His “everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27), hold the entire universe in place. He whose voice is “powerful” and “full of majesty” (Ps. 29:4) was reduced to communicating with the coo and cry of a tiny baby. He who “sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD [who] sits enthroned as king forever” (Ps. 29:10) exchanged His lofty throne for an animal’s feeding trough.

Impossible.

Yet in this case, because the story of Jesus' birth is so known and familiar to us, we do something we don't do often enough. *We believe the impossible.* We sing with joyful acceptance about things that make no earthly sense unless God actually did what cannot possibly be done. We marvel at it, and we worship Him for it, despite our inability to understand it. Because it's baby Jesus, because it's the Christmas story . . . it doesn't sound so impossible anymore.

This year, however, as you prepare for Christmas, don't start with what you already know of the story. Imagine yourself instead in the heart of a young girl to whom the events of Luke 1 occurred on just another ordinary day, in a place where impossible things never happened. She didn't wake up that morning expecting an angel to visit. She had no way of knowing ahead of time what God had chosen her to do, much less how He intended to do it. She was likely thinking of little else besides her plans for getting married and living happily into the future with her future husband. She held in her mind, as perhaps you hold in yours, a simple little picture of what her life was to be like—a picture framed by nothing but *possible* outcomes.

Yet before her name became written in Scripture, before her likeness was carved and colored into countless nativity scenes—before Christmas became somehow easy for us to believe—Mary believed. She believed the impossible.

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Surely, in this December season, you're faced with God-assigned tasks where you're asking, "How can I do this? I don't have the ability. I don't have the time. I don't have the resources. *This is impossible!*" But your task, like Mary's task, is meant to be made possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. You and I must be willing to surrender ourselves by faith and let God take over, knowing He alone can do the impossible through us.

{ *My Prayer* }

Lord, apart from You I will accomplish nothing of eternal significance today or throughout this Christmas season. So I look to You to overshadow me, to fill me with Your Spirit and enable me to accomplish all You have purposed for me to do. Help me to trust not in my own strength, skills, or success, but only in You—for Your honor and glory alone.

The First Songs of Christmas

{ *Keep Reading* }

DEUTERONOMY 33:26-29

“Who is like you,
a people saved by the LORD!” (v. 29)

PSALM 29:1-11

“May the LORD give strength to his people.” (v. 11)

JOHN 15:1-8

“For apart from me you can do nothing.” (v. 5)

{ *My Response* }

Even if the tasks awaiting you in the coming days are things you’ve done many times before, how might they grow in significance as you consciously depend on God to perform them?



ELIZABETH'S SONG

Beatitude

In those days Mary arose and went with haste
into the hill country, to a town in Judah,
and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary,
the baby leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,
and she exclaimed with a loud cry,

“Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
And why is this granted to me
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears,
the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
And blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

{ LUKE 1:39-45 }