


# CHRISTMAS INSIDE OUT - *FROM DOUBT TO HOPE*

## LUKE 1:18-20, 31-34, MATTHEW 1:18-23

- **Many people struggle with doubt at Christmas.**
- **Doubt often stems from personal insecurities, circumstances, and perceived (or real) societal ostracism.**
- **When doubt comes, we must cling to our faith which is birthed from our hope.**
- *"Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see."* (Hebrews 11:1)
- **Satan wants to destroy our sense of hope and fill our minds with doubt.**
- *"It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him."* (Hebrews 11:6)
- ***What steps can I take to move from doubt to hope this Christmas?***

***Moving From Doubt to Hope at Christmas Requires:***

## UNDERSTANDING GOD CAN OVERCOME OUR <u>WEAKNESSES</u>

- The Angel - *"Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."* (Luke 1:13-14)
- *"Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."* (Luke 1:18)
- **Doubt takes over our thoughts when we focus on our circumstances instead of on God who reigns over our circumstances.**
- **Zechariah learned that doubting can sometimes have serious consequences.**
- The Angel - *"I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was He who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn't believe what I*

*said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time."* (Luke 1:19-20)

- **Zechariah's muteness seemed like punishment for his doubt, yet his silence allowed him to contemplate God's purposes and eventually allowed him to express words of faith.**
- **When we experience setbacks, we must have hope and faith so we can move forward.**
- The Lord - *"Call on Me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give Me glory."* (Psalm 50:15)
- ***What weaknesses do I need the Lord's help in overcoming?***

***Moving From Doubt to Hope at Christmas Requires:***

## UNDERSTANDING GOD IS NOT BOUND BY <u>HUMAN</u> <u>LIMITATIONS</u>

- *"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, 'for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High…' Mary asked the angel, 'But how can this happen? I am a virgin.'"* (Luke 1:31-34)
- **Mary's doubt was more of a curious inquiry: "How can this happen?"**
- Mary - *"I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."* (Luke 1:38)
- **Mary accepted God's plan even though she didn't understand why or how it was happening.**
- Mary - *"How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For He took notice of His lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed."* (Luke 1:46-48)
- **Although Mary first responded to the angel with doubt and misunderstanding, her acceptance of the situation brought her to worship.**
- ***What doubts do I have because I've placed my own limitations on the Lord?***

***Moving From Doubt to Hope at Christmas Requires:***

## UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLANS SUPERSEDE <u>CULTURAL</u> <u>NORMS</u>

- *"Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit."* (Matthew 1:18)
- **Most people who knew Mary probably doubted her claims of being pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- *"Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly."* (Matthew 1:19)

- **Joseph struggled, as any person would, when hearing Mary's story about her pregnancy.**
- *"As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit."* (Matthew 1:20)
- **Sometimes God asks us to do what doesn't make sense to the world to bring Him glory and to fulfill His purposes.**
- ***"****When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus."* (Matthew 1:24-25)
- **Once he encountered the angel, Joseph's immediate obedience demonstrated his faith in the Lord.**
- ***What cultural norms am I willing to set aside to follow God's will?***

***Moving From Doubt to Hope at Christmas Requires:***

## REMEMBERING JESUS CAME TO GIVE US <u>HOPE</u>

- *"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'"* (Matthew 1:23)
- **The birth of Jesus was a miraculous event fulfilling the promise of hope foretold by the Old Testament prophets.**
- *"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light."* (Isaiah 9:2)
- **In Jesus, we find assurance and hope which transcends our circumstances.**
- **The Christmas story shows we can come to God with our messiness, our baggage, our anxieties, and our doubts, and He will be there for us.**
- *"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him."* (Romans 15:13)
- ***What is keeping me from asking the Lord to transform my doubts into hope?***