

Sharing the Savior

He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph (Luke 3:23).

Scripture: Luke 3:23-38

Song: “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High”

When the Barna Group surveyed Americans about who they believe Jesus is, 92 percent said they believed Jesus was a real person. When asked more specific questions, however, only slightly more than half of respondents believed Jesus was God. In fact, 18 percent were not sure He was divine.

Scattered throughout the Old Testament, there are hundreds of messianic prophecies fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Luke begins his genealogy of Jesus with a reference to Jesus’ virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14). And while Matthew, writing for a Jewish audience, took his genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham (Genesis 22:18), Luke’s gospel traces Jesus’ lineage all the way back to Adam, underscoring the promise (alluded to in Genesis 3:15) that the Messiah would die for all humanity.

As Christ’s followers, we are responsible for introducing others to Him. It’s crucial, then, that we have a firm grasp on what the Bible teaches about Him: He is God in the flesh; He lived a sinless life; then He died a substitutionary death on a cross for our sins; He rose again, conquering sin and death; and He offers forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life to all who will receive Him. We have a lot to tell!

Father, help me be watchful for opportunities to share the truth about Your Son. In Jesus’ name, amen.

November 25–30. **Dianne Neal Matthews** lives in Tennessee with her husband. She enjoys traveling to visit children and grandchildren, studying nature, cooking, and serving her local church.

The Best Route

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him (Psalm 128:1).

Scripture: Psalm 128

Song: “Trust and Obey”

I know someone who has a complicated relationship with GPS systems. Basically, he doesn't want to trust their instructions. He likes to look at an atlas before a long trip, but highways and roads change between printings of maps. Plus, the atlas can't alert him to traffic delays and accidents like a GPS can do. He arrived late to an event 70 miles away when he didn't take into consideration that the shortest distance according to a map does not necessarily mean the quickest route.

Thankfully, God's instructions are always perfect. He knows what obstacles and dangers are ahead of us in any direction. And yet, as our human nature pulls us to go our own way, we often rebel against His instruction. We think that because we've been around the block a few times, we can figure things out on our own. But God can see where we will land when we make choices based on our feelings or personal desires that go against His Word. These are not destinations where we want to end up.

We may sometimes think of rules and regulations as obstacles to our freedom, but following God's instructions brings us joy, protection, and unexpected blessing. It draws us into a closer relationship with Him. We need to remember that walking in obedience to God's directions is our best route, without a doubt.

Father, help me keep in step with Your Spirit, walking according to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Road Home

With her two daughters-in-law [Naomi] left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah (Ruth 1:7).

Scripture: Ruth 1:1, 3, 6-18

Song: “Lord, I’m Coming Home”

Franklin Graham has never been hesitant to talk about his years of rebellion and the emptiness that resulted from them. Despite his father being a well-known evangelist, Franklin made poor choices and prided himself on defying authority. Although he believed in God, he wanted to run his own life. In his autobiography, *Rebel with a Cause*, Graham describes a turning point in his waywardness: “Suddenly, I had an overpowering conviction that I needed to get my life right with God. . . . My years of running and rebellion had ended.” He received Christ’s gift of salvation at age 22.

From beginning to end, the Bible is filled with stories of prodigals returning home and people who made bad choices being restored to close fellowship with God. A multitude of verses assure us of our loving Father’s readiness to forgive us when we turn to Him. He can even redeem our failures.

God never sees anyone as a lost cause. If our disobedience is causing us to feel like we’ve wandered away from our Heavenly Father, it’s time to turn around and go back home to Him. Let’s not let pride or shame keep us from making a fresh start today.

Father, please reveal any area of my life where I’m resisting You. I want to return to the path that leads to Your loving arms. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God Incidents

As it turned out, [Ruth] was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek (Ruth 2:3).

Scripture: Ruth 2:1-3, 17-23

Song: “God Will Make a Way”

For the first eight years of his life, my grandson had constant, severe allergy symptoms. Finally, a doctor seeing him for a separate issue sent him for imaging that revealed a tiny hole in his skull allowing cerebrospinal fluid leakage. The surgery to repair this defect included a cranioplasty and the possibility of serious side effects. Although pediatric neurosurgeons are not common, it turned out that one of the best practiced in the area where the family had recently relocated. I couldn't help wondering why this problem had not been caught before, until the neurosurgeon said that my grandson happened to be the optimal age for the procedure.

The Bible includes many examples of God going ahead of His people to arrange circumstances for their needs to be met. Whether it's a person or event placed in our lives at just the right time, God is showing us proof of His love and His sovereignty. The combination of these two elements of His character means we have no need to worry about our future.

Sometimes it's easy to see how God has worked things out, but sometimes it's not. When we see the big picture at the end of this life, however, we'll understand that anything that looked like a coincidence was really another “God incident.”

Father, thank You for reminding me today that You go before me to make a way through whatever I am facing. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Eternal Family

[Jesus said,] “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

Scripture: Matthew 12:46-50

Song: “The Family of God”

I was concerned about the little country church I’d grown up in. Attendance is now at 20 or less, and the members are all older with no young people except an occasional visitor. The church has been without a pastor for almost a year and can’t afford to pay what applicants want or need. But when I last visited, the member who spoke during the service eased my mind. He acknowledged the situation but added, “We have God, His Word, and each other. That’s all we really need, so we’re gonna be OK.”

The Bible makes it clear that earthly family relationships are important to God. And in the New Testament, Jesus emphasizes the strong bond of our spiritual relationships. Once we receive Jesus as our Savior, we’re related to everyone else who belongs to Him. In light of this, we honor Jesus through our relationships with our spiritual kin as we love and serve each other, following the example He set with His disciples.

Many people today attend church once a week without ever getting involved or forming relationships there. By contrast, my 94-year-old mom (who still attends that country church) often speaks of what a loving, supportive group she has in the little congregation. Yes, the country church will definitely be OK. After all, the head of that family is Christ.

Father, help me cherish and nurture members of both my earthly family and my eternal family. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Willing to Love

[Boaz said,] “Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. . . . But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it” (Ruth 3:12-13).

Scripture: Ruth 3:1-13

Song: “Children of the Heavenly Father”

Within my circle of extended family and friends, I see many examples of the beauty of adoption. A friend and her husband added to their family by adopting two children from another culture who had been shuttled among foster homes. A childless couple adopted the baby of a young teen who didn't feel ready to be a parent. I know more than one case where family members have accepted guardianship of children of relatives who are struggling in some significant way. All of these scenarios have one common denominator: men and women who are willing to do what biological parents are unable to do.

Taking on someone else's child to cherish, nurture, teach, and provide for demonstrates authentic love to a confused culture that often struggles to define the word *love*. It also reminds us of God's unconditional love that caused Him to redeem us from sin and adopt us as His children.

Our loving Redeemer is ready to step in and heal all our hurts and fill any void in our life. He proved His willingness to do so when He stretched out His arms on the cross so He could welcome us into His family.

Father, whenever I feel hurt, disappointed, or abandoned, remind me of my identity as Your beloved child. In Jesus' name, amen.