The "Exciting" SHBC

REACH ▪ TEACH ▪ DEVELOP ▪ SERVE

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Week 1: Believe in the Promise

Scripture: Luke 2:25–32 | Background: Isaiah 9:6–7

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

LUKE 2: 25 - 26

The Bible introduces us to people in Luke 2 who understood waiting better than anyone. But they were not waiting for a package, or Christmas morning, or for a wedding ceremony to start. No. They were waiting for God to fulfill a promise that had been made generations before they were even born. Christmas is a season of anticipation. We wait for Christmas morning, we wait for family to arrive, we wait to open presents, and we wait to celebrate. But the first Christmas was preceded by a much longer kind of waiting. Simeon had spent his life waiting to see God's promise fulfilled. His faithfulness reminds us that believing God does not always mean seeing the promise immediately

Think: I can trust that God's timing is best and I can trust it.

Feel: Be encouraged that waiting does not mean God has forgotten you.

Do: Choose one promise of God to hold onto and trust this week.

POINT #1: GOD MADE A PROMISE

Before we get to Luke, we must understand that hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God had already begun telling His people that a Savior was coming. And this was not a promise that appeared out of nowhere. The Christmas story is the continuation of a promise God had been making for an exceedingly long time. In fact, you could argue that the entire Old Testament is building toward Christmas. One of the clearest depictions of this promise shows up in the book of Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah was talking about the coming King. A Savior. A Messiah. Someone who would come and establish God's kingdom. Someone who would bring hope to God's people. And for hundreds of years, the Jewish people waited. And yet, in their hearts they still believed. And that is what makes their faith so amazing. This is what makes your story so amazing. Just as they were living in the gap between the promise and the fulfillment, so too are you and I.

Here is what we need to understand: the gap does not mean God has forgotten His promise. Sometimes we interpret God's silence as God's absence. But the Christmas story reminds us, and Simeon shows us, that God can be working even when we are waiting. Do you believe in the Christmas Miracle?

Discussion Question: What is the most miraculous part of the Christmas story? Explain your answer.

POINT #2 – GOD'S PROMISE IS WORTH WAITING FOR

Fast forward now hundreds of years, the book of Luke introduces us to the man we mentioned earlier named Simeon.

Read Luke 2:25-26

Notice how Luke describes him. He was righteous. He was devout. He was waiting. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. Then Luke tells us something incredible: God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Messiah. A centuries old promise from God, and God told Simeon he would see it become a reality in his lifetime. Simeon believed God. And so, he waited.

Imagine waking up every morning wondering: "Could today be the day?" Imagine going to sleep every night thinking: "Maybe tomorrow." And then doing that again. And again. And again. You see, faith does not mean believing God only when His promises are fulfilled quickly. Faith means believing God when the fulfillment takes longer than we expected.

Discussion Question: Do you have a Christmas wish? Take a moment to share with the class.

POINT #3 – BELIEVING THE PROMISE CHANGES HOW WE LIVE TODAY

Faith does not put your life on hold while you wait for God to fulfill His promise. Faith changes how you live while you wait. That is what God wants to remind some of us today. You may not be able to control what happens next. You may not know when the answer is coming. You may not know how God is going to work it out. But you can decide how you are going to live while you wait. You can still worship. You can still pray. You can still serve. You can still love people. You can still be generous. You can still take the next right step. You can still trust God. Because waiting on God does not mean doing nothing. Waiting on God means remaining faithful until He makes the next thing clear.

Read Luke 2:27-32

Simeon saw God's salvation with his own eyes. That is the miracle of Christmas. God did not just make a promise. God kept His promise. And here is what I want us to take home today: If God kept His promise at Christmas, we can trust Him with the promises we are still waiting on. Now, that does not mean every prayer will be answered exactly the way we want. It does not mean every situation will turn out the way we imagined. It does not mean waiting will always be easy. But Christmas gives us something we desperately need while we are waiting. Christmas is the evidence that God is faithful. Do not forget: When you are sitting in the gap, look back at Christmas.

Discussion Question: "Faith changes how you live while you wait." What are some practical ways we can continue to worship, pray, serve, and trust God while we're waiting for something?

IMPLICATIONS & ACTIONS

When you are wondering if God remembers you, look back at Christmas. When you are tempted to give up praying, look back at Christmas. When you do not understand what God is doing, look back at Christmas. Because there was a time when God's people were waiting too. And then, in the fullness of time, Jesus came. God had not forgotten. God had not abandoned them. God had not broken His promise.

Remember those Christmas movies? They always end with the blessed hope that everything will be all right. In Jesus Christ all ends well because God keeps His promises. The encouragement we have today is: The story of Jesus is one of the greatest stories ever told! Do you believe the story well enough to share it with someone in need of a miracle?

