



Doggy Bag: Something to Chew On Throughout the Week

1. Reread Micah 5:1 – 5. What makes you feel like a besieged city, or a secure flock? What “rules” you in each case?
2. When have you seen despair give way to hope?
3. If God chose unlikely Bethlehem as the birthplace of His son, what other unlikely places in your life might God’s love show up unexpectedly?
4. Why do you think Mary wanted to see her relative Elizabeth? What do you think Mary hoped to get out of the visit?
5. In your home, how do you make visitors feel welcome?
6. In what sense is Mary blessed among women?
7. Mary "believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished." How did her actions demonstrate this?
8. How does saying psalms of praise bring benefit to God? How do psalms of praise benefit us? How much time do you spend praising God?
9. In what ways do you think Elizabeth acted as a mentor to Mary? How has someone mentored you in the Lord? How has God used you to mentor others? In turn, how did Mary’s presence encourage Elizabeth?
10. What things that Mary and Elizabeth did are important to you in a friendship?



In the Most Unexpected Places
Micah 5:2 – 5a, Luke 1:39 -55

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1. You might be a _____ if you’re from Bethlehem....

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2, NIV)

- *Obscure, Judean village, “the sticks”*
- *Nowhere important from the world’s point of view*
- *Would have gone unnoticed if it had not been the birthplace of a shepherd boy named David.*
- *Bethlehem is one of the “little clans” of Judah – translated least or even insignificant, the “runt of the litter” (Message).*

2. And yet, God can raise up a Son who will be our _____.

*Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor **bears a son**, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of*

the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. ⁵ **And he will be our peace...**

KEY POINT

Time and time again, God exalts the most unlikely and insignificant places and people to carry out the story of faith.

So, when God breaks into our seemingly insignificant lives and we realize we are not alone – what next?

We can turn to _____ as an example of the journey of faith...

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left." (Luke 1:38)

She continued to ponder the Angel's words...

*"What's more, you're relative **Elizabeth** has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's already in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:36 – 37)*

...And a Plan Began To Unfold

"A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived... (v. 39)

➤ **Pursue _____ with someone who understands.**

...She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. (v. 40)

➤ **Look for _____ of the miracle that is taking place.**

At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "You are blessed by God above all other women, and your child is blessed. What an honor this is, that the mother of my Lord should visit me! When you came in and greeted me, my baby jumped for joy the instant I heard your voice!" (v. 41 – 45)

➤ **Discover _____ about the future.**

"You are blessed, because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." (v. 46)

➤ **Take time to build _____ in God's call for your life.**

"Oh, how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and now generation after generation will call me blessed... Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home." (v. 46 – 48, 56)



ACTIONS TO TRY THIS ADVENT:

1. Take some time during your holiday festivities this week to intentionally reach out to those who might be lonely. Begin to pursue community.
2. Find time to pray each day this week.
3. Take a moment to give thanks to God for the gift of Christmas, and for the way that the birth of Jesus has the power to change your life.