

THE WORST CHRISTMAS EVER?

REMEMBER WHEN?

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Matthew 1-2/ Luke 1-2

LESSONS FOR A DREARY CHRISTMAS OR A REALLY DARK FEBRUARY

- (1) We only need a **SAVIOR** when all is **LOST**.

- (2) **TIME** changes everything.
1 Corinthians 15:19/ Hebrews 11:32-40

- (3) Just because we're **CONFUSED** doesn't mean God is.
Isaiah 55:8-9 & Romans 8:28/ Matthew 6:33

- (4) The power of **PRAISE** is the gift of **PERSPECTIVE**.
Philippians 4:4-9/ Luke 2:19

Food for Thought

For the week of December 23, 2012

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. This week we heard how even if we are confused about what's going on, God isn't. Romans 8:28 is a key verse to turn to when it seems like life is headed that way. Reading more of Romans 8 can give even more hope and perspective when life is hard and God just seems to not be showing up. As you read Romans 8:18-39, write down all that can help give perspective through difficult times.

Romans 8:18-39

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [19] The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

[22] We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. [23] Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? [25] But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

[26] In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. [27] And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

[28] And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [29] For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

[31] What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? [33] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? [36] As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [NIV]

2. Understanding how God works and what he's done in the past can give us great hope, vision and endurance. Below are some verses that speak to how God works beyond our immediate circumstances. Look up each one and write the main point in your own words.

Psalms 55:22

Cast your cares on the Lord
and he will sustain you;
he will never let the righteous fall. [NIV]

Romans 8:26-27

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1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. [NIV]

Philippians 1:6

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. [NIV]

Ephesians 6:7-8

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, [8] because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. [NIV]

2. As the events of that first Christmas unfolded, "Mary *treasured* up all these things and *pondered* them in her heart." (Luke 2:19) In order to see God's work in our life, we too need to take time to "ponder" God's work in our life. Find a few minutes to get away by yourself to reread the Christmas story (Luke 2:1-20) and ask God to help you see his fingerprints in your own life this past year. Take some time to thank God for how he has worked.

Luke 2:19

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. [NIV]