



When my children were little, they asked me to read the same books over and over again. Although I took some pride in being able to recite lengthy portions of The Lorax, and Yertl the Turtle from memory, the repetition also made me numb to the stories I was relating. I could read them with expression while my thoughts and emotions disengaged.

On a superficial level, this was a great coping mechanism. On a deeper level, though it removed me from the wonder, joy and humor of the story. While this may be an acceptable response to Dr. Seuss, I don't want it to characterize my approach to familiar bible stories so, each year, I ask God to give me an idea on how to look at the Christmas story in a new way.

Sometimes I focus on a specific character and imagine the story through their eyes. This year, I had a different idea. I imagined that I was given the opportunity to lie down on clouds (a childhood fantasy ☺), place my chin in my hands, and watch the earth below as He brought about this incredible fulfillment of prophecy. "Observing" the story from this perspective gave me some new thoughts which I thought I'd share with you.

I pictured the wise men coming into sight from the east, making their way along winding desert paths, and through crowded cities. Jostling through crowds and along unfamiliar roads, these men were unsure of their destination and yet certain of their calling. *God was bringing them into His story.*

In my mind's eye, I looked to the south, and envisioned Mary and Joseph walking slowly up to Bethlehem from Nazareth. They were inconvenienced, tired, sore and uncomfortable but, in his sovereignty, *God was using their circumstances, their obedience, and their family history to fulfill his story.*

In the countryside west of Bethlehem, I pictured a group of common men settling down in the evening among their flocks of sheep. As they told tales that night, they were completely unaware that they would soon become characters in a narrative which had been unfolding since the beginning of time. They weren't looking for him, but *God was inviting them to experience the wonder and joy of His story.*

As I imagined this happening beneath me, I was struck anew by the fact that God brought all these individuals together at the same place, at the same time in history, to complete one perfect story. They didn't know that God was calling others to come alongside and they didn't fully understand the role they were playing, yet **each person obediently followed the direction they received, and a beautiful story emerged.**

I feel challenged to apply these thoughts to my life. Like the wise men, I want to keep moving forward with God although I am uncertain where He is leading me. Like Mary and Joseph, I want Him to direct my circumstances and use my family in His plan. Like the Shepherds, I want to allow myself to be drawn into the wonder and joy of what He is doing in the lives of those around me. Even though I don't always understand the role I am playing, I want to obey His voice and I trust that if I do so, He will interweave my life with others and write a beautiful story that displays His grace and mercy.

Off to my left, the angels are getting ready to burst onto the scene. Imagine their excitement as they prepare to break 400 years of silence between God and His people. Let's listen in:

⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

(Luke 2:9-14 KJV)

Merry Christmas!

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