

Overcoming the Challenges of Darkness

December 15th -21st

John Chapter 1

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Eternal Word, before all things You were, and into our darkness You came. As I sit with the mystery of Your coming, open my spirit to Your truth. Let this time of study become light for my path. Amen.

Scripture Reading (10 minutes)

Read: John 1:1–18

Pause at the words *light*, *darkness*, *Word*, *glory*, *grace*, and *truth*.

Let each phrase wash over you.

Reflections from the Original Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *What did it mean for divine light to enter a world that had grown accustomed to shadows?*
2. *Why did the world not recognize the One who created it? What blindness is John inviting you to ponder?*
3. *How does the idea that “His own did not receive Him” make you reflect on human resistance to God?*
4. *What does it cost for light to confront darkness—and why does God choose to enter in such a vulnerable way?*
5. *Where in John’s prologue do you sense spiritual conflict, and how might that reflect the unseen tensions surrounding the first Christmas?*

Reflections for Today’s Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *Where does darkness try to overshadow your hope this Christmas—internally or externally?*
2. *In what subtle ways do you struggle to “recognize” Christ in the noise, the busyness, or the routine of the season?*
3. *Is there a place in your heart that hesitates to receive Him fully? Why might that be?*
4. *What competing lights—artificial glimmers of fulfillment—distract you from the true Light?*
5. *How is Christ inviting you to walk deeper into His light during this season?*

Reflection Questions (10 minutes)

1. What word or image from John 1 speaks to you most powerfully?
2. What “darkness” needs the presence of Christ’s light?
3. How does grace and truth shape your understanding of Christmas?
4. Where are you resisting God’s illumination in your life?
5. How can you embody the light for someone else?

Personal Application (5 minutes)

1. Write one sentence beginning: “Lord, shine Your light on...”
2. Identify one practical way you will carry Christ’s light into your relationships this week.

Closing Prayer & Meditation (2 minutes)

Light of the World, shine in me. Chase away every shadow and fill me with Your presence. Amen.

Overcoming the Challenges of Spiritual Dryness

December 22nd – 28th

Mark Chapter I

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Lord, prepare my heart as You prepared the world for the coming of Your Son. Let this time renew me and awaken areas within me that have grown dry or weary. Amen.

Scripture Reading (10 minutes)

Read: Mark I (entire chapter)

Notice how Mark highlights preparation, repentance, and renewal.

Reflections from the Original Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *What was happening in the spiritual landscape of Israel that made John's voice necessary?*
2. *Do you sense that the world was spiritually weary—waiting but unsure how to hope?*
3. *What does the wilderness symbolize, and why might God choose the wilderness as the place to announce His coming?*
4. *How might the people have struggled to discern God's movement after centuries of silence?*
5. *What does Mark's urgency tell you about the spiritual climate leading to Christ's arrival?*

Reflections for Today's Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *Is there a wilderness in your own heart—a place longing for God's voice?*
2. *What spiritual dryness hides underneath December's activity?*
3. *How prepared is your soul to receive Christ anew this Christmas?*
4. *What "voices" compete with God's call for repentance, clarity, and renewal?*
5. *If Christ were to come into your life in a fresh way today, what would He want to cleanse, reorder, or refresh?*

Reflection Questions (10 minutes)

1. Where do you need spiritual preparation?
2. What blocks you from hearing God clearly?
3. How can repentance become a gift rather than a burden?
4. What part of Mark I challenges your spiritual routine?
5. How can you simplify your heart before Christmas?

Personal Application (5 minutes)

1. Commit to one moment of stillness each day this week.

2. Choose one distracting habit to reduce or set aside.

Closing Prayer & Meditation (2 minutes)

Lord, prepare me for Your coming. Make my heart a clear, uncluttered place for Your presence. Amen.

Overcoming the Challenges of Ordinary Hardship

December 29th – January 6th

Luke Chapter 2

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Holy God, as I return to the familiar beauty of Luke 2, help me to notice the hardships behind the glory. Let me see how You meet us in our daily struggles. Amen.

Scripture Reading (10 minutes)

Read: Luke 2 (entire chapter)

Reflections from the Original Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *What pressures did Mary and Joseph feel as they traveled at the worst possible time?*
2. *How did poverty shape the circumstances of Jesus' birth, and what might that reveal about God's humility?*
3. *What must it have been like to give birth far from home, in unfamiliar surroundings?*
4. *Why did God choose shepherds—ordinary, overlooked people—as the first witnesses?*
5. *What emotions—fear, weariness, uncertainty—might have been present beneath the angelic announcements?*

Reflections for Today's Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *Where do you feel stretched, limited, or burdened this Christmas?*
2. *How do financial or emotional pressures affect your ability to experience the season's joy?*
3. *In what "ordinary" or humble place might God be trying to meet you?*
4. *What parts of your Christmas feel messy, unplanned, or out of your control?*
5. *How is God speaking to you through the simple voices—the "shepherds"—in your life?*

Reflection Questions (10 minutes)

1. What hardship from Luke 2 resonates with you most?
2. How do you respond to feeling overlooked or overwhelmed?
3. What does the manger teach you about humility?
4. How does God meet you in your limitations?
5. What simple practices can help you experience Christ more deeply?

Personal Application (5 minutes)

1. Identify one area of struggle to surrender to God this week.
2. Practice one simple act of kindness, humility, or generosity.

Closing Prayer & Meditation (2 minutes)

Lord Jesus, born in humility, meet me in my ordinary life. Let Your peace settle in every place that feels fragile. Amen.

Overcoming the Challenges of Threats and Fear

January 7th - 13th
Matthew Chapter 2

Matthew 2 — “Overcoming the Challenge of Threats & Fear”

Total Time: 60 Minutes

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Father, as I read Matthew’s account, open my heart to understand the fear, danger, and uncertainty surrounding Christ’s birth. Teach me to trust You when life feels threatened or unstable. Amen.

Scripture Reading (10 minutes)

Read: Matthew 2 (entire chapter)

Reflections from the Original Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *What emotions might Joseph have felt receiving warnings in dreams—fear, confusion, responsibility?*
2. *How did political power and insecurity shape the world Jesus entered?*
3. *What does Herod’s hostility reveal about how darkness reacts to the presence of Christ?*
4. *How did displacement into Egypt affect the Holy Family’s sense of safety and identity?*
5. *What does it mean that the Messiah began life as a refugee? What does that teach us about God’s solidarity with the vulnerable?*

Reflections for Today’s Christmas (Contemplative & Inquisitive)

1. *Where do you sense fear—fear of the future, fear of conflict, fear of change—this Christmas?*
2. *What “Herods” in your life try to rob you of peace or joy?*
3. *How do you respond to sudden changes in direction or unexpected disruptions?*
4. *Where do you feel spiritually or emotionally displaced?*
5. *How is God inviting you to trust His guidance in uncertain moments?*

Reflection Questions (10 minutes)

1. What challenge in Matthew 2 seems most relevant to your life?
2. What helps you trust God when His instructions are unclear?
3. How do you handle life's unexpected detours?
4. Where do you need God's protection or clarity?
5. What promise of God reassures you most right now?

Personal Application (5 minutes)

1. Write a short prayer asking God for courage and clarity in one specific area of fear.
2. Identify one step of obedience you will take this week, even if you feel uncertain.

Closing Prayer & Meditation (2 minutes)

Lord of every season, guide me as You guided Joseph. Calm my fears and strengthen my faith. Amen.