



The Nights Before Christmas :: Andy Stanley

INTRODUCTION

The Christmas story is amazing in and of itself—a virgin would give birth to a child who would save the world from its sins. But it is even more amazing when you realize that the details of this story were predicted hundreds of years before they happened. Examine the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah 735 years before the first Christmas and discover what it means to us today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever kept a promise over a long time? Or has someone else kept a promise they made to you? What did that mean to you?
2. Read Matthew 1:18-23. God made promises throughout the Old Testament that he would redeem his people, Israel, and the whole world. The birth of Jesus was part of these promises. What does it mean to you that God keeps his promises even over the centuries?
3. Read Isaiah 7:1-9. Ahaz found himself under attack from two of his enemies. The prophet Isaiah was sent to remind the besieged king of God's promise to protect his people if the king would stand firm in his faith. Despite knowing God's promises to take care of us, why do we look to others and to ourselves instead of God? How have you seen this in your life or in the lives of those you know?
4. Read Isaiah 7:10-17. Ahaz had already made his mind up to turn to the reigning superpower, Assyria, for help (2 Kings 16:7-9), not God (Isaiah 7:12). As a result God declared that he would turn Assyria against the nation and judge them for their lack of faith. And yet God would give them a sign that he would still be with them even through these hard times (Isaiah 7:14). God is still faithful despite our lack of faith. Is there an area of your life where you are tempted to doubt that God will come through? How will you trust him to be faithful to his promises?
5. Read Matthew 1:24-25. Joseph responded to the message of the angel by obeying everything he had been told. What is your response to a God who is with us and who keeps his promises?

THINK ABOUT IT

How has God proven faithful to his promises both in your life in the lives of those around you?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This Christmas season, how will you remind yourself that God keeps his promises and that he is with you?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." Matthew 1:22-23