

Study Guide
Series: The Gospel of the Nobodies
“The Nightshift Shepherds”

Monday - Luke 1:1-38

During the season of Lent, our study guides will lead you in reading the entire gospel of Luke. Make this your commitment during Lent and you will be blessed. Most of the time, angels don't appear to tell us what God wants from us. In what ways have you learned to listen for God's voice in your life? When you think a message or call may be from God, what ways have you learned of verifying or confirming that? What tough thing(s) do you believe God may be calling you to during this Lenten season? Are you willing to respond to God as Mary did in verse 38? In Luke 1:13, God's messenger said, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah.” Months later, the same messenger said, “Do not be afraid, Mary” (verse 30). In fact, “do not be afraid” is the most common command in the entire Bible. Does the thought of God taking a direct hand in your life feel at all frightening to you? In what part of your life do you most need to hear God's message, “Do not be afraid”?

Tuesday - Luke 1:39-66

In Elizabeth and Mary's culture, women were second-class citizens. No male leader of her day (let alone an angel) would have greeted this woman of almost no status by saying, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” So Mary sang that God lifts up the lowly. She and Elizabeth were living examples—a childless older woman and a single teen from a backwater town, both given key roles in God's saving plan. Elizabeth welcomed Mary with God-given insight, affirming and encouraging her. She knew God was at work, and that Mary's child was uniquely wonderful. In fact, Elizabeth was, it seems, the first person to call Jesus “Lord”. When has someone affirmed you by noticing God at work in your life? When have you encouraged someone else? Who can you affirm and encourage today?

Wednesday - Luke 1:67-2:20

Zechariah's song praised God for raising up the mighty Savior John would herald. Then the “mighty Savior” arrived—as a poor infant announced to night-shift shepherds, and laid in a manger. A Christmas song says, “This is such a strange way to save the world.” If you were God, would you trust a poor family to parent and protect the Messiah? Would you first tell night-shift shepherds, among the lowliest outcasts in their society, of the child's birth? In what ways do God's values challenge our society's values? Do your personal priorities more closely match God's values or those of the culture around us? “Angel” meant “messenger,” God's messenger. Luke stressed that God revealed the meaning of Jesus' birth to the shepherds. What are some of the main ways God reveals truth to you? In what ways have you learned to trust God's revelation, while also using the power of thought and analysis God has given you?

Thursday - Luke 2:21-52

Luke described Simeon and Anna, two elderly servants of God who recognized that Jesus was the hope for which they had been waiting. Simeon warned Mary that her life would hold pain as well as joy. Reflect on each phrase of Simeon's words in verses 34-35. Ask yourself in what ways each phrase pointed to one aspect of what happened in Jesus' life and ministry. As you reflect on your own story, in what ways has your loyalty to Jesus brought challenges and

adjustments into your life? Have you found facing those challenges for Jesus' sake worth it? The story of Jesus' first Passover is the only glimpse of his life as a boy in any of the gospels. What do you learn from this story about the special challenges his parents faced in raising God's son? In what ways did the story foreshadow how effective Jesus would be when, about 18 years later, he began preaching and teaching?

Friday - Luke 3:1-22

Nearly four hundred years had gone by with no clear prophetic voice in Israel. When John the Baptist began preaching, he drew crowds hungry for a word from God. John the Baptist had a very clear sense of mission: to lead people to be baptized as a sign of repentance, and accepting God's forgiveness of sins (verse 3). He passionately called people to change and be baptized because he felt a sense of urgency. To what extent do you feel a sense of urgency in pursuing God's path for your life? What steps help you keep your commitment to God's call strong and focused? John the Baptist did not baptize people as an end in itself. He was preparing the way for the Savior. Each of us also can prepare the way for the Lord through prayer, worship, generosity toward others and the like. How are you preparing the way for Jesus Christ to work in your life? In the lives of others?

Saturday - Luke 3:23-4:13

For readers today, the "genealogies" (lists of names and relationships) are probably the most "so what?" parts of the Bible. But Luke made a key point with his genealogy, seen if we put it side by side with the list in Matthew 1. Matthew started Jesus' lineage with Abraham. Luke went all the way to "the son of Adam, the son of God." The genealogy highlighted the sense of identity Jesus carried into his temptations. By saying "IF you are the Son of God," the tempter asked, in effect, "Do you know who you are?" Because Jesus knew, he refused the temptation to try to prove his identity in self-serving ways. All of the temptations tugged at Jesus to act in ways that would make his life easier by matching popular hopes of what the Messiah would do. But Jesus, committed to God's way as taught in Scripture, refused to "play to the crowd." Was there ever a time when a desire to please others drew you away from God's purpose for your life? What steps help you keep focused and faithful despite any pressures you face?