



9 Months of pain

WEEK 2 • DEC 6

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Introduction

In his message “9 Months of Pain,” Pastor John shares how the Christmas story wasn’t smooth sailing but was messy and full of pain. Mary was faced with painful obedience, and Joseph had his life plan upended. Not to mention they lived under an oppressive government which forced them to travel to Bethlehem and lay their newborn in a manger. Yet the angels announced Jesus’ birth as “great joy to all people” because He entered our story to fix the ultimate problem of humanity and to be with us, now and always.

Discussion

1. How would you define painful obedience, and can you describe a time when you experienced it? [See Luke 1:26-38 for Mary’s response.]
2. God often upends our lives to accomplish His greater purpose. Share a time when God did that in your life and what it produced in you. [Read Matthew 1:18-22 and 2:13-15 for how Joseph’s life was upended.]
3. Pastor John said we should have great joy because Jesus is with us through the mess. In what ways have you seen God at work during the mess of 2020?
4. Pastor John said, “God is with us, and it isn’t always smooth sailing.” How would you encourage someone struggling with the fact that God doesn’t rescue us from pain?

Do Something

1. Read through the Christmas story this week [Matthew 1:18-2:18; Luke 1:26-2:20] and reflect on how God shows up in the mess and uses it.
2. Help a person or family who is struggling by spending time with them, providing for a need and/or praying for them.
3. List the ways you are grateful to God for how He has shown up, comforted you or answered your prayers.

Resources

The following videos are available on [RightNow Media](#).

1. [Because of Bethlehem](#) by Max Lucado
2. [Bugtime Adventures: Joy to the World](#) for kids
3. [The Christmas Card](#) [a comical video of the messiness of taking the family Christmas picture]