

How the Nativity Stories Build Our Faith

By Bob Young

Introduction. Think about a time when you had an “aha moment.” When the pieces fell into place. When something mysterious and difficult to understand became clear.

I have seen that happen spiritually. As a preacher, I believe the ideal time to present Bible truths and help people build their faith is when they are focused on a particular Bible message anyway.

- That is why I share Bible stories of renewal, revival and starting over at the beginning of the year.
- That is why I preach about marriages in mid-February (with no intention of honoring St. Valentine).
- I make certain the gospel story is front and center in March and April for Easter.
- I share what the Bible says about mothers in May; I share what the Bible says about fathers in June.
- I usually throw in a “memorial” sermon near the end of May; a “freedom” sermon in early July.

Throughout the year, the church has opportunities to share what the Bible says about material goods (April 15), learning (August), work (early September), and gratitude (late November). Graduation and summer camps present opportunities to focus on youth.

In planning the preaching calendar in this way, I do not seek to include secular or religious holidays in the church calendar. I only want to focus people’s attention on what they are thinking about anyway.

A Question. Christmas is approaching. How can the Bible accounts of Jesus’ birth help build faith?

The Nativity stories should not be ignored. In fact, the Nativity stories are an important part of Scripture. Yes, it is highly improbable that December 25 is the exact birth date of Jesus. Yes, many religious (and secular) traditions have grown up around the holiday. But, the early chapters of the Gospels are part of God’s revelation. Should we Christians not make clear that God is part of our family celebrations, generosity, and friendships.

Body. In this sermon, I mention five takeaways that strengthen my faith when I read the Nativity stories of Jesus’ birth. In the Gospels, the stories of Jesus’ Incarnation are an essential part of the teaching of each book.

Here’s how my faith is strengthened when I think about the Nativity.

-1- When I read of Jesus’ birth, I am reminded again that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. I appreciate the inspiration of Scripture; I appreciate the importance of the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus’ coming. Jesus’ birth was foretold, Jesus’ birth fulfilled prophecy.

-2- When I read Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth, I see repeatedly that God was in control of the details of Jesus’ birth. In the careful numbering of the generations, in the events and in the instructions, God was orchestrating the coming of Jesus to this earth.

-3- When I read the genealogies, I am reminded of the certainty and the importance that Jesus came to earth as a descendant in the line of David. Jesus came as king; Jesus came as the Messiah. The baby was a threat to Herod because Herod recognized him as a king. Jesus came as Savior, Immanuel, and Christ. Make no mistake about it – we are reading a story about royalty. We are reading about one who comes as a Servant King.

-4- When I read the stories of Jesus’ birth, I learn the identity of Jesus as divine Son of God and human being Son of Man—Savior, God with us, and Anointed One combined in one person. Prophet, Priest, and King. In Jesus’ identity, I grasp the humanity of God in the flesh and am impressed by the frailty of God in the flesh. We are reading about a Servant Lord!

-5- When I read John’s Gospel, I am called to wrestle mentally with the idea of the pre-existence of the Logos Word who became flesh. What does it mean that we have a “tabernacling” God who comes to live among us?

Conclusion. Some days, such things are too wonderful for me! How can I grasp such possibilities, such grandeur? My list is incomplete, but my faith is made more complete. Five great factors of faith, faith strengthened, faith made more secure, stable, firm by reconsidering the Nativity narratives.