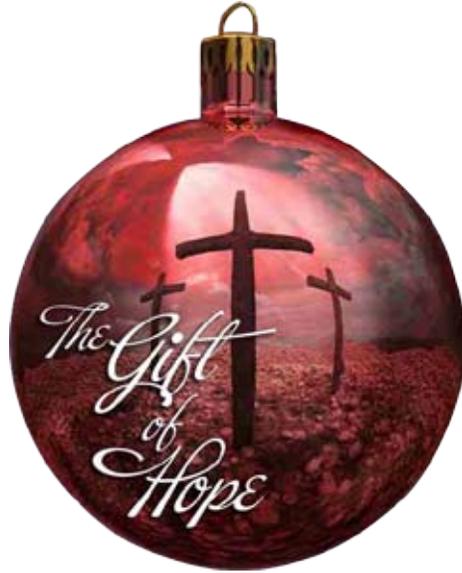


By JoAnne E Billison & Tommy Billison

The Gift of Hope

By JoAnne E Billison & Tommy Billison



The following story is an imaginative tale taken from the Bible account of Christ's birth. The story is fictional and does not include any actual expository study of the scriptures. The purpose is to stimulate deeper thought and appreciation into the mighty gift of Hope given us through the birth of Christ.

The Gift of Hope

By JoAnne E Billison & Tommy Billison

Revealing the Treasure

Mary took a deep breath and looked intently toward the sky. "Joseph", she cried "look at all those stars"! The heavens were full of bright flickering lights dancing across the night-time sky. Many of them were clustered together and seemed like angelic beings gazing down upon the earth in anticipation of this wondrous new birth. Mary didn't understand the significance of the child she carried, but held the mystery deep within her heart as if it were a treasure waiting to be found and cherished. She longed to see the child and easily handled her labor. The contractions started again and the child would soon be delivered.

In due time, the son Mary waited for, lay in her arms. As she gazed into his beautiful eyes a much needed peace entered her body. Slowly, the child's gentleness swept over her senses, "I feel as though I am holding a part of heaven itself." "What miracle will this child bring us", she thought?

The journey that brought her to this place was long and treacherous. "Now that the child is born, perhaps we'll be accepted", she told Joseph. "I won't miss the bitter taste of rejection, the wicked stares, or the dreadful whispers that filled our days." Being unmarried and pregnant was not an acceptable practice among her people. Many unwed mothers of the day fell under the stones of judgment. "You handled it quite bravely, Mary. You are much stronger than you realize", Joseph replied. "Yes", Mary said, "God gave me the strength and wisdom I needed to endure the rough days." Mary loved God deeply and felt honored to be chosen to bear this child. Perhaps it was her trust in God that gave her such favor.

The memories of the past soon faded away leaving nothing but peace within her. She pulled her child closer to her chest and joyfully gazed upon him. A new sensation enters her heart. "Joseph", she said, "I feel so much hope surrounding this child. I am overcome with this feeling. It feels like something I've never felt before." "I feel it too", shouted Joseph. As they looked at each other, somehow they knew this hope was meant for all mankind. This was a hope that would save the lost, feed the hungry, heal the sick and promise a glorious future to all who believe. They rejoiced as they processed these new feelings within their hearts.

Suddenly, Mary and Joseph heard songs of praise and shouts of joy fill the roads of Bethlehem. Within minutes, shepherds surrounded the little manger that gave them shelter. The shepherds also had a wondrous story to share. They too were amazed to see the baby born this cold winter night. What did it all mean...no one really knew for sure, but Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Mt. 1:18-24; LK 1-2:1-20)

The Gift of Hope

By JoAnne E Billison & Tommy Billison

Going Deeper

Walking with Hope

Mary walked through life with hope. She understood political corruption, poverty, and the pressures of obedience, yet remained positive and faithful. She never questioned God, demanded anything from Him, or responded with a “what’s in it for me” attitude. She simply got on her knees and said, use me. Hers is an example of a deep faith born out of her trust and hope in God. She believed the promises God gave her and her people and clung to them as an anchor to her soul. These promises gave her the ability to put her hopes in God and trust him with the difficult situation she was about to face. She faced each day with courage because she tethered herself to the right hope. When all else fails, hope is the one thing that keeps us going.

Hope is one of the greatest gifts God gave mankind. The hope we received through Christ is not a self-serving hope such as the hope for riches, loving relationships, or a great job. Though we may desire those things and are free to pray for them, they in and of themselves cannot sustain us. We cannot place our hopes in these things because these things are temporary at best. Our finances, relationships and jobs, can fail us. The hope we received through Christ runs much deeper within. Biblical hope is connected to the promises of God. Biblical hope assures us that evil will not rule the day forever. Biblical hope guarantees us strength, healing, peace, and, an eternity spent in a loving relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hope stands behind the courage that keeps us going when the going gets tuff. When tethered to Biblical hope, we cannot drift into hopelessness.

The Gift of Hope

By JoAnne E Billison & Tommy Billison

30 day Challenge:

For the next 30 days, every time you face difficulties instead of complaining, arguing or demanding rescue, remind yourself of the hope you were given through Christ. Thank Jesus for this hope and pray for courage, strength and wisdom to face your circumstances. Journal your experiences and watch what unfolds in your life.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:14 NIV)

