

Week Four – *Bethlehem: The Apathetic*

Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. The people in Bethlehem seemed indifferent to the coming of the savior of the world. On a scale of “unforgivable” to “completely justifiable”, how would you judge the Bethlehemites?
2. Should the people of Bethlehem have known the Messiah was coming through their town? Look up Micah 5:2-5a. What promise is made in this prophecy?
3. Does this seem vague to you? Should they have known to look for Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem based on this verse? This verse was written approximately 700 years before the birth of Christ. Is it fair to have expected the people to pay attention to a prophecy that was 3 times older than the existence of the United States?
4. Look at Matthew 2:1-6. Were Herod’s priests able to figure out when and where the Messiah would be born? How did they identify the time and place?
5. The clues were there. God had given His people the information they needed. Put yourself in the shoes of the people of Bethlehem. Why do you think they might have been so unprepared?
6. How did their apathy keep them from being a part of God’s glorious plan for the world?
7. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray and give thanks to God that He has communicated His plans to us through His Word. Ask Him to help you search His Scriptures for what you need to know.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. How hectic is the Christmas season for you? What kinds of things *must* get accomplished for a successful holiday?
9. Read Luke 2:1-7. How hectic does this season sound? What kinds of things needed to be accomplished by everyone in Rome during that time?
10. How did the people in this moment of history lose sight of God’s plan?
11. What causes us to sometimes lose focus on God’s plan in our own lives?
12. Apathy about God’s plan can come because we don’t think it depends on us, unlike the things in our lives that *do*

depend on us to be accomplished. And yet, this is how the people in Bethlehem missed out on the Savior's coming. In what ways do you prioritize the hectic instead of being open to what God might want to do in your life?

13. How might you change your schedule, or eliminate a task, in order to make room for what God might be doing in your life?

14. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you make space for Him and His plan for you.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. In this season of Christmas, where all the talk is about joyful things, like Jesus in a manger, why do we sometimes feel so burned out, so apathetic about the holiday itself?

16. If someone were to ask you what is the reason for the season right now, what would be your honest, gut-check answer?

17. Read Luke 2:1-3. What would have likely been Joseph's answer for the reason he had to uproot his family and travel?

18. What are some of the reasons for your stress and busy social calendar during the month of December?

19. Apathy happens when we have to spend so much time and energy on side reasons that we lose sight of the real focus of this time. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What encouragement does the Bible give us in a season full of distractions?

20. How can we practically keep our eyes on Jesus? What would that look like in daily life?

21. Finish your FIFTEEN by taking some time to thank God for the work Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Ask Him to help you not lose sight of the true focus for all believers: that Jesus loved us enough to endure the cross for our sake.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. In light of people's different sins, how bad would you rank being apathetic toward God? What attitudes toward God would be worse? What attitudes would be better?

23. How did you decide on your ranking? What factors did you consider?

24. Now read Revelation 3:14-18. How does God describe a person who is apathetic toward Him?
25. This sounds pretty bad! What hope is there for people who are lukewarm towards God?
26. Now read a verse of encouragement. Go to 2 Chronicles 16:9a. How does God promise to respond to those whose hearts are fully committed to Him?
27. Are there any fears or worries in your life that are preventing you from fully committing to God's leadership in your life?
28. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Confess to God any ways that you may have been lukewarm in your relationship with Him. Ask for His forgiveness and then hold Him to His promise to sustain and strengthen His people.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. Every year at Christmas, you probably get lots of gifts that you were somewhat expecting. But then there are those great moments where a gift completely surprises you. What is a delightful, surprising gift that you've received?
30. What if someone promised you an amazing gift, but didn't tell you *when* you would get it? What would your actions and attitude be while you waited?
31. What if a year went by and you still hadn't received the gift? How would that affect your attitude?
32. Let's read about a time when that kind of scenario actually happened. Read Luke 2:25-32.
33. What gift had the Holy Spirit promised Simeon? How long had he waited for it?
34. What was his attitude while he waited for the promise? What action did he take as part of his expectation?
35. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, pray and ask that God would give you an attitude like Simeon's. Ask Him to help you stave off apathy and hopelessness. Ask Him to keep you focused on the promises He has made and to wait for them with eager expectation.