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**TITLE:** The Most Stunning News Ever!

**WRITTEN BY:** Kent Hulbert

**MAIN SCRIPTURE VERSE OR PASSAGE:** Matthew 1:18–23; Luke 2:25–32

**IN ONE SENTENCE, WHAT IS IT YOU WANT THE STUDENTS TO HEAR:** We do not have to do life alone because our God is with us.

**SERMON MATERIALS NEEDED:** None

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION/STORY/OBJECT LESSON:**

*(Ask the crowd to share their favorite Christmas movies.)*

One of the greatest Christmas movie classics, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, tells a great story about relationships.

The story follows George Bailey, a man who sacrificed his dream of seeing the world to stay in his hometown and run the family-owned business after his father's sudden death.

Throughout the movie, we watch George grow from a child to a young man, then to a husband, father, and business owner. When life's circumstances push George's business to the brink of bankruptcy, the stress inside him boils over, and he contemplates taking his own life. A guardian angel is sent from heaven and convinces George of the beauty of his life, including his present troubles. With renewed gratefulness, George goes back home.

Upon his return, George’s family and friends rally around him with an overwhelming display of support and generosity. With his business secure and his financial situation saved, George uncovers a note left by his guardian angel, “Dear George, Remember no man is a failure who has friends.”

*It's a Wonderful Life* expresses our need to have other people in our life, but it also displays a desire for the supernatural to be involved in our life. What if I were to tell you that God has been working in and through our life already? What if the God of the universe is a personal God who longs to have a relationship with us? More specifically, He longs to have a relationship with you!

If we're genuinely interested in knowing God personally, the most surprising aspect is that God has taken action to know us. This isn’t a fictional story like *It’s a Wonderful Life*, but real, historical accounts of God desiring to be with us. A couple of passages of Scripture will help us see God’s continued steps toward knowing us; the most stunning news ever is revealed.

**POINT 1:** God Speaking to Us

*(Read Matthew 1:18–23.)*

God communicated to Joseph as he was trying to process everything that was unfolding around him. Mary, his fiancée, was pregnant and not by him, yet she claimed she was still a virgin. Even though Joseph loved Mary, he contemplated divorcing her privately so she would not be publicly humiliated. His emotions and thoughts were likely stirring. But God sent an angel to speak hope, peace, and confidence to Joseph. God’s messenger encouraged Joseph to have the courage to take Mary home and assured him that Mary was a virgin and the Holy Spirit had enabled her to conceive. And this baby, who he was to name Jesus, was no ordinary baby. This baby is the Savior, taking away people’s sins.

*(Read Luke 2:25–32.)*

Joseph and Mary followed the customs and religious laws for a newborn when they came across Simeon. We do not know if Simeon was a religious leader, but we do know that he was a person of high character and the Holy Spirit was active in his life. Verse 25 says Simeon “was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah.” He eagerly waited, expecting any day, for many years, for the Savior to arrive. As his path crossed with Joseph and Mary’s, Simeon held Jesus. God spoke to him and through him. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that the One he had been waiting for is Jesus. Simeon desperately wanted to see the Messiah before he died, and God honored his prayers.

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:**

*(Share a personal story when God spoke to you through a message, a passage of Scripture, during a prayer time, or even through a friend.)*

**APPLICATION:**

God chose to speak to Joseph and Simeon because they were willing to listen, and He still speaks to those who listen. Life will bring moments that will rock our world emotionally, just like for Joseph. Life can be repetitive, the same thing day after day like for Simeon. But if we are eager to hear God and expectant that He will speak to us, He will speak and can answer our prayers.

Your age is not a barrier. Your circumstances are not beyond God. He is speaking to men and women today who are open to listening to Him.

Do you hear what God is speaking to you? Are you listening to insights from His Word? Are you listening for His direction in your life? Are you ready to obey His ordering of your day? God is speaking to those who will listen.

**POINT 2:** God Is Working around Us

Luke 2:27–28 says, “That day the Spirit led him [Simeon] to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there.”

God is always at work within and around our situation. Mary and Joseph were starting this new marriage adventure and raising a baby one day at a time. But they were not in this alone. God was at work in their lives and working in others. God led Simeon to the temple that day at the very same time Joseph and Mary would be there.

Our timing and perspective are now and yesterday. God's work in and around your situation is eternal. His work is now, yesterday, and the entire future ahead. You may wonder why Joseph and Mary couldn’t have already been married before she became pregnant. It’s because of God’s timing, and the right response to His timing is always trust.

Why at the time of a vast, dominant empire? Jesus arrived at the exact time God intended. During this time politically, the Roman Empire was oppressive and sometimes supressed religious expression. However, the Romans had built roads throughout a vast empire and established a common language for all people. God’s hand was in this situation, working so more people could know that He had sent His Son to save them. That dark time became the perfect time.

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:**

*(Share a personal story when you knew God was at work around you.)*

**APPLICATION:**

As you look at the different situations you are facing in life, remember that God is at work around you. He is working in and through others to bring about the purposes He has for your life. He orders the steps of a righteous person (Psalm 37:23) and His timing and work around us are as perfect today as back then. Don't worry. Do not be anxious. Rest and trust in His care. He is at work!

**POINT 3:** God Is with Us

In Matthew 1:23, we read, “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”

Joseph was given an incredible promise, one that was seven centuries in the making. This verse is quoting the prophecy that Isaiah shared in Isaiah 7:14: “All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virginwill conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).”

Isaiah’s prophecy was given to King Ahaz during a dark time. King Ahaz was looking for hope as barbarous nations were invading Israel. In fear, the king began looking to other countries for hope. Isaiah shared there was a faith response, a God-designed offer of hope to deliver Israel. The future sign was a virgin who would conceive a child. Mary was a virgin—not only was she not married, but she had not had relations with any man. Mary conceived a baby because of the work of the Holy Spirit. And that baby was Jesus—Immanuel, God with us!

God wants to be with all His people, not just those who seem to always do the right things. He promises to provide, promises to care, promises to hear and answer, promises to comfort, promises to sustain, and promises to save us from our sin. And God kept His word, uttered through Isaiah seven hundred years earlier, in the birth, the righteous and holy life, and death of Jesus Christ.

What sent the angels into exaltation? What sent the shepherds into the fields rejoicing? What sent the Wise Men to bring gifts and worship? What caused Simeon to burst into a spiritual utterance? What led Joseph to name this newborn child Jesus? What made people call Him Immanuel, God with us?

Not a distant deity. Not an uninvolved creator. Not an impersonal cosmic force. God! The most stunning news ever is God is with us!

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:**

One cold day in December after repeated failed attempts, Orville and Wilbur Wright accomplished what no one else had done before. Off the dunes in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the brothers flew their airplane. They quickly wired a message to their sister Katherine that read, “We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas.”

Elated with the news, Katherine gave the telegram, one of the biggest stories of the century, to the editor of the local paper down the street. He smiled as he read it and said, “Well, well! How nice the boys will be home for Christmas.” (Source: <https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/4551-if_578>)

The newspaper editor missed the point. It wasn’t about the Wright brothers coming home for the holidays—they actually flew an airplane! Don’t miss the main point of this message. God is with us! God desires to know you and be involved in your life. He is for you! He wants you to be able to live life to its fullest.

**CLOSING CHALLENGE/APPLICATION:**

God wants us to know that He is a personal God. He is with us. He assures us that He will lead and guide us in life. Keep seeking Him and asking Him to show himself to you. God is faithful in His timing to accomplish the plans He has for our life. Thank Him for being a God who is with us. God delights when we remind Him of His promises and enjoy being in His presence.

**ALTAR RESPONSE:**

Either lead a collective response or have the students find a place of prayer. Ask the following questions to the audience:

1. Are you growing in your relationship with Jesus? If you know Him as your Lord and Savior, are you appreciating that you have a God who walks with you through everything in life? Ask Him to help you reorder your focus. Nothing is more important than knowing Jesus Christ as your Savior and Leader of your life.
2. Are you following Jesus? He wants to have a relationship with you. Invite Him to be your Savior and Leader of your life. Commit (or recommit) your life to Him. His power will make you into a new person. Your sins will be forgiven and He will begin a work in you, showing you He is God with you!

You can begin your faith journey with God by saying a simple prayer. Prayer is a way to express your faith and trust in Jesus. You might say something like the following prayer to God.

*Dear God,*

*I believe that You are real, that You love me, and that I have been separated from You by sin. And I know I cannot save myself from sin. I know only You can save me.*

*Thank You for sending Jesus to pay the price for my sin. I believe that Jesus is Lord, that He paid the price for my sin with His death, and that You raised Him from the dead.*

*Please forgive me as I accept You into my life and help me through Your Holy Spirit. Help me to live for You.*

*Amen.*

Follow up with the students who indicate they are placing their faith in Christ in praying this prayer with you. Allow students to continue praying and worshipping.

**POWERPOINT SLIDES**

Slide 1 – The Most Stunning News Ever! (Matthew 1:18–23; Luke 2:25–32)

Slide 2 – If we're genuinely interested in knowing God personally, the most surprising aspect is that God has taken action to know us. God is with us!

Slide 3 – God Is Speaking to Us

Slide 4 – Matthew 1:18–23

Slide 5 – Luke 2:25–32

Slide 6 – God Is Working around Us

Slide 7 – Luke 2:27–28

Slide 8 – God Is with Us

Slide 9 – Matthew 1:23

Slide 10 – Isaiah 7:14

Slide 11 – The most stunning news ever—God is with us!

**OUTLINE TEMPLATE**

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**POINT 1:** God Is Speaking to Us

* Matthew 1:18–23
* God spoke to Joseph
* Luke 2:25–32
* God spoke to and through Simeon

**POINT 2:** God Is Working around Us

* Luke 2:27–28
* God is at work when nothing makes sense
* God is at work when we cannot see it all
* God’s timing is always the right timing

**POINT 3:** God Is with Us

* Matthew 1:23
* Isaiah 7:14
* The most stunning news ever is God is with us!

**CLOSING CHALLENGE/APPLICATION:**

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