

AN IMAGINATIVE CHRISTMAS  
WHAT IF YOU HAD BEEN MARY?  
LUKE 1:26–38



## The Heart of the Matter

Listening to a sermon that lacks imagination is like taking a shower with your raincoat on. It's dull, dry, and pointless. Imagination brings life, color, and beauty to what would otherwise remain dead, plain, and bland. Life is a theater, the mind is a picture gallery, and we link the two through words. When words are carefully chosen and woven together into a story, enhanced by imagination, it is almost impossible not to connect the dots. Solomon wrote, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11 NIV). But even a story can fail to hold our attention if it's overly familiar. And that's what makes so many Christmas sermons dull, dry, and pointless. Let's not let that happen this year. Let's imagine that you are Mary, thinking her thoughts and feeling her feelings as a young, teenage, Jewish girl in the first century.



## Discovering the Way

### 1. What If You Had Been Mary?

If you had been Mary, at least eight things would have been true of you. And then your life would have taken a sudden, dramatic, and unexpected turn.

### 2. What If You Had Talked with an Angel? (Luke 1:26–38)

If you had been Mary and talked with an angel, four truths would have been communicated clearly about Christmas.

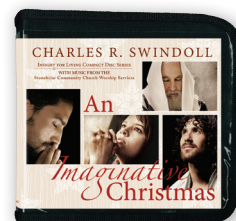


## Starting Your Journey

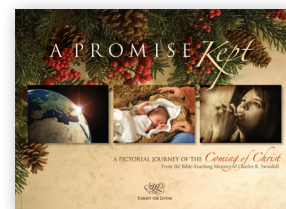
This Christmas season, these three truths will keep the familiar story fresh and alive: nothing is impossible with God, others are available to meet our needs, and God's grace is always sufficient.



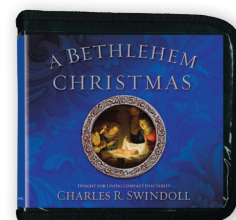
## Tools for Digging Deeper



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AN IMAGINATIVE CHRISTMAS  
CONSIDER HOW JOSEPH MUST HAVE FELT  
MATTHEW 1:18–25



## The Heart of the Matter

Everybody loves a story. A well-told story holds our interest from start to finish—especially if it includes drama and intrigue, the kind of plot that leaves us . . . hanging. A story is a picture painted in words. If the words don't leave brush strokes in the mind, then we haven't told a story or communicated a message. Mere words are no more a message than a menu a meal or a road map a journey. Spoken words must transform into mental images; that requires imagination. When we see ourselves in the story—as one of the characters, hearing the sounds, seeing the sights, smelling the aromas, and feeling the emotions—then the story “comes to life.” Let's do that with one of the most overlooked persons in the Christmas account: Joseph.



## Discovering the Way

### 1. Who Cares about Joseph?

Grooms are always background to the bride. Fathers are always faint memories in light of mothers and babies. And Joseph . . . well who cares about Joseph? God does.

### 2. What Would You Have Done If You Were Joseph? (Matthew 1:18–25)

It often gets lost, but Joseph was the hero of the Christmas narrative. He was loyal, faithful, humble, and courageous. If you had been in Joseph's sandals, what traits would you have exhibited?

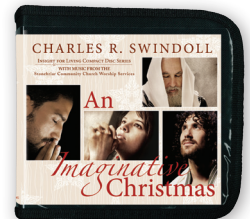


## Starting Your Journey

Where are you in Joseph's story? What do you do when facing a tough, life-altering decision . . . or when bearing the brunt of wagging tongues for doing what is right . . . or when standing alone and forgotten . . . or when being called upon to shield someone . . . or even when following the Lord through a radical plan? Would you be like Joseph and go there?



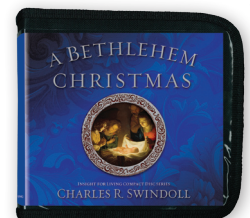
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AN IMAGINATIVE CHRISTMAS  
IMAGINE BEING ONE OF THE SHEPHERDS  
LUKE 2:6–20



### The Heart of the Matter

Those who work “behind the scenes” are usually forgotten people. We tend to overlook them. We don’t even ask their names. When was the last time you bothered to talk with the UPS or FedEx person who delivers your packages? If you have your lawn cared for by others, when’s the last time you thanked them? In most cases, these and others like them, do their work anonymously. In fact, they expect to be overlooked. They often feel like nobodies. This was certainly how the shepherds of the Christmas story felt . . . until they received a visit from heaven.



### Discovering the Way

#### 1. The Dark Side of the Christmas Story

Most of us don’t like to think about it amid the lights and presents of Christmas, but the original story began on the dark side.

#### 2. The Christmas Light Shines on the Nobodies (Luke 2:6–20)

Jesus’s first evangelists were no-named nomads—the shepherds watching their flocks in the Bethlehem fields. Amazing!

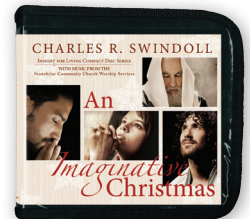


### Starting Your Journey

To you who feel anonymous and overlooked, you have a Savior who knows you. To you who have been shamed, you have an Advocate who forgives you. To you who feel like misfits, you have a place where Christ cares for you. And to you who have been chosen to share the good news, you have a mission to reach the no-names, the anonymous, and the nobodies.



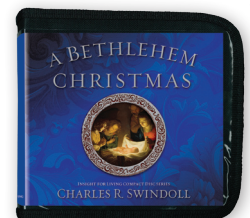
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AN IMAGINATIVE CHRISTMAS  
THINK OF YOURSELF AS A TEMPLE RABBI  
LUKE 2:40–52



### The Heart of the Matter

Communication is tricky business. We can think we're being clear, but that doesn't mean we are. We can believe the other person understands us, but that doesn't mean he or she does. Saying things very clearly in no way guarantees that the other person is connecting all the dots . . . and in the right order. When we think about Jesus being human, many immediately think of Him with a halo, looking oh so meek and mild. We have a hard time imagining Him learning how to walk and talk or wiping sweat from His forehead after a long day in the carpenter's shop. No one thinks about how He had to work through tangled relationships with His six younger siblings. So could you imagine what it was like to be a rabbi in the temple when this 12-year-old boy began questioning you? Talk about not connecting the dots.



### Discovering the Way

#### 1. The Babe Jesus Grew (Luke 2:40)

Jesus grew as any Jewish boy of His day would have grown. But Jesus, as He grew, understood that Scripture was speaking of Him.

#### 2. Jesus Confounded the Rabbis (Luke 2:41–47)

When Jesus appeared in the temple at the age of 12, His questions about Scripture confounded the wisest and most learned men in Israel.

#### 3. Jesus Confused His Parents (Luke 2:48–52)

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, after searching for Him for three days, He confused them with His answer to their question. But He went home in obedience.

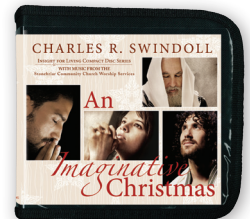


### Starting Your Journey

Are you exceptionally gifted, highly intelligent, or especially creative? Stay submissive. Do you find yourself in a high-powered place of influence? Stay surprised. Is it obvious that you have a very bright future? Stay silent.



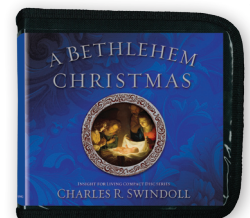
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