****

**Chapter 1 Study Guide: The Birth of Hope**

**Icebreaker**: In this series “HIS Story,” the goal is to know Jesus like you’ve never known Him before.” How well would you say you know Jesus? If you had to write a biography about Jesus based on what you know today, what kind of details would be included in the book?

1. What do you personally want to learn about Jesus? What questions do you have about Him?
2. During this study, we encourage you to read the chapters in advance and underline anything that jumps out at you as important and mark a “?” next to questions you have. Is there anything in the reading this week that jumped out at you?
3. On pg. 4 the writer says he’s followed the life of Jesus carefully from the beginning and interviewed eyewitnesses to write an orderly account about Jesus. Why do you think the author went to so much trouble to get it right? How important is it to have certainty when it comes to Jesus? (explore consequences of NOT having certainty compared to rewards of having certainty)
4. On pg. 5 it says, “Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us.” What do you think this means? What does it say about God’s heart for His people? For us?
5. On pg. 10 an angel is sent to Zechariah to announce that God has answered his prayers and will give him a son. Then on pg. 11, the angel says that because Zechariah doesn’t believe that God has answered his prayers, he will be unable to speak until his son is born.

Why do you think Zechariah could pray about having a son but could not believe that God really answered this prayer? What do you pray about that you’d be surprised that God answered?

1. In ancient writings, the birth story of an important person set the stage for the purpose of their life. What do these following circumstances say about the purpose of Jesus’ life?
   1. Pg. 15, God used a poor, unwed couple to give birth to the Messiah.
   2. Pg. 16, the angels appeared to shepherds who were lower-class citizens. Since working in the field kept them from observing the regulations of the law, they were social outcasts in a religious society.
   3. Pg. 18, God led the Magi (where we get our word magic…some versions say “wise men”) with a star to Jesus even though they were involved in pagan practices of the day such as astrology and astronomy. This in no way endorsed these pagan practices but instead illustrates that indeed “every knee will bow” as even these pagan Magi worshipped baby Jesus.
   4. Pg. 11, 15, 16, 19, are a cluster of angelic appearances.
2. When you consider the events surrounding Jesus’ birth, where do you see evidence of God’s Upper Story of redemption? How does recognizing God’s power and control help our faith in the midst of our daily lives?
3. One of the few details the Gospel writers share about Jesus’ childhood was the incident with Jesus in the temple and His parents that happened when Jesus was twelve years old (pg. 21). How was Jesus able to obey His heavenly Father (John 5:36-37) without disobeying his earthly parents (Ephesians 6:1-3)?
4. Jesus was obviously educated and gifted enough to astonish those who observed Him in the temple as a twelve year old! What does this say about the potential of our youth to do great things for God (1 Timothy 4:12)?