

# Responding to Favor

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## I. The Christmas story is the story of God offering new favor to the world.

- A. God's announcement to Mary (Luke 1:26-28)
  - 1. Not just for Mary but for the whole world (Luke 1:28; Ephesians 1:3-6)
  - 2. Definition of favor: "to pursue with grace...honor with blessings" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon)
  - 3. How big is the favor offered through Jesus (John 3:16-17)?
- B. The angels and the shepherds celebrated God's favor (Luke 2:6-20).
- C. The magi pursued God's favor and gave gifts (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12).
- D. Herod and his government rejected God's favor (Matthew 2:3-5, 16-18).
- E. Mary and Elizabeth believed God's favor (Luke 1:38-45).

## II. There were also people in the Christmas story who needed some time to reinterpret the disappointments of their lives.

- A. Joseph gave God (and Mary) a little space and received the revelation he needed to correctly respond to God's favor (Matthew 1:18-25; I Thessalonians 5:16-21).
- B. Zechariah's pain dulled his faith. He eventually correctly responded to God's favor (Luke 1:11-20).
  - 1. It's probably not good to offend God when he's trying to give us good news about our lives (Luke 1:18-20).
  - 2. Aren't you glad that God is a second-chance God (Luke 1:62-64, 67, 76-79)?
- C. Most of Israel pondered God's favor but eventually hardened their hearts (John 7:40-52; Luke 19:37-44).

## III. Recognizing God's favor in your life

- A. Two attitudes of heart (Mark 1:14-15)
  - 1. "Repent"—to change your mind (i.e., about God's favor)
  - 2. "Believe the Good News"—Sometimes life (and God) appears very uncomfortable and unreasonable (I Peter 4:12-16).
- B. Dwelling on the favor of God
  - 1. Remembering testimony
  - 2. Remembering promises (Psalm 27:13-14)
  - 3. God shows favor to the humble (James 4:6)
  - 4. Do not let anything rob you of the joy that comes from favor. All the Christmas characters found joy. Joy is a way of looking at the world through the lens of favor (Philippians 4:4-7).