# PARTNERSHIP

# Christmas Devotion



2026 Dec Issue

Cultivating Missional Pastors,
Equipping Lay Ministers to
Strategically Engage Asia's Harvest

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# *His Story,* Our Story

03

## SCRIPTURE

***Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3***

## OBSERVATION

**Luke was a historian-theologian who wanted to teach his readers about God and the ways of God through Christ.**

## DEEPER REFLECTION

**As a historian, Luke's account was the result of diligent research. His sources were eyewitnesses with first-hand knowledge of Jesus' life and ministry, leading to an account that is historically grounded, accurate and purposeful. If not for Luke, we would have neither the Christmas story of Jesus' birth, nor some of the stories that augment the Christmas story, nor, for that matter, the account of the growth of the early church in Acts. Interested in confirming Theophilus in his faith, Luke was also a theologian who wanted to teach the recipients of his gospel about God and the ways of God through Christ. He could be said to have used history to inform his theology. There are distinct emphases: the themes of prayer, salvation and God's special interest in the marginalised people of first-century Jewish Palestine (e.g., the sick, tax-collectors, women and children). Luke also emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit more than the other synoptic gospel writers. This has two important applicational implications: (1) We can trust the Bible as historically reliable. (2) We can share our story. Luke told the story of Jesus (in Luke) and the church (in Acts). If there is a central theme in Luke-Acts, it might be "salvation". Luke-Acts is the story of the "Saviour" (Lk 1:69, 2:11; Acts 5:31, 13:23), and the story of those who are being saved (e.g., Lk 19:1-10; Acts 2:47), and traces how salvation extends from Israel to the ends of the earth (Lk 1:77, 2:30; Acts 1:8, 13:47). What is your story? Are you purposefully sharing your redemptive story and showing how it weaves into the story of Jesus this Christmas?**

## *APPLICATION*

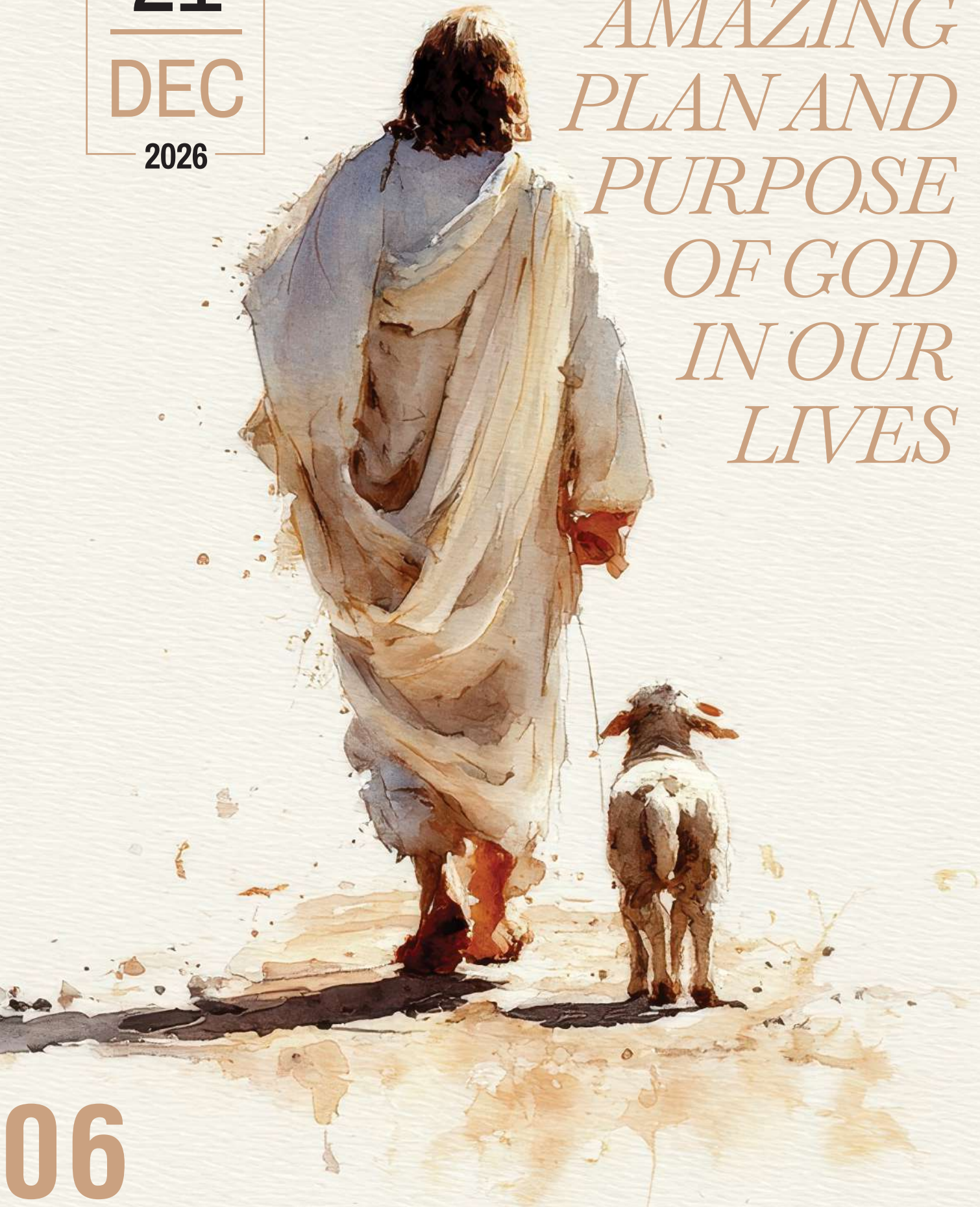
**Am I growing in my understanding of God's story through Christ and helping others know with "certainty what they have been taught" (Lk 1:4)?**

## *PRAYER*

***Personal prayer:*** **Lord Jesus, thank you for the joy of Christmas. Please help me remember the true reason for the season and always be ready to share the story of my relationship with you. I commit my unsaved relatives and friends to you, asking that they will hear about your great love for them this Christmas. In your name I pray, amen.**

MON
21
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# THE AMAZING PLAN AND PURPOSE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES



06

## SCRIPTURE

***Luke 1:5-25***

## OBSERVATION

**Being pious and walking blamelessly as law-abiding Jewish priests did not spare Zechariah and Elizabeth from major disappointments in life (they were childless).**

## DEEPER REFLECTION

**The announcement of John the Baptist's birth was part of God's grand plan for Israel and signalled the renewed activity of God among His people as promised in the Old Testament. God's plan centred on the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus the Son of David (2 Sam 7:12-13, 16), the One whom John would precede as forerunner (Luke 1:16-17, 76; cf. Malachi 4:5-6). This is theologically significant: God may have been looking to fulfil His promises to Israel at the national level, but He was also meeting the needs of the righteous couple Zechariah and Elizabeth at a personal level.**

**In the birth narratives, Luke introduces the parents of John the Baptist as pious and law-abiding Jews, faithfully serving as priests despite Elizabeth's barrenness. Zechariah was at the high point of his priestly career when chosen by lot to offer incense in the holy place of the temple. As he offered up incense and prayer, the angel Gabriel appeared and announced the promise of a son to him and his wife in their advanced years. This child was to be called John and would turn many in Israel back to God and "make ready" a people prepared for the Lord (Lk 1:16-17). Although Zechariah had been praying for a child for many years (v 13), he did not immediately believe that God had answered his prayers (v 20). What is noteworthy is this: the fulfilment of God's plan was not contingent on Zechariah's ability to trust God for what he prayed for. At the same time, however, Zechariah's prayer had evidently made a difference as God had heard his prayers (v 13). This is the mystery and**

**invitation of prayer: as we persevere in prayer (human responsibility), God will accomplish His good purpose and plan for our lives (divine sovereignty).**

## *APPLICATION*

**Do I faithfully serve God in the face of setbacks and disappointments, whether in life or in ministry?**

## *PRAYER*

***Pray for the BTS leadership:*** **for a close walk with God for the Board members, the President, the faculty and staff as they serve our Lord together. Pray for them to be refreshed this Christmas as they spend time with family and friends.**

TUE
22
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# Submission And Trust In The Goodness Of God

09

## SCRIPTURE

***Luke 1:26-56***

## OBSERVATION

**In the face of much uncertainty and confusion, Mary was willing to submit to the will of God for her life (v 38).**

## DEEPER REFLECTION

**The angel Gabriel also appeared to Mary, a young maiden betrothed to be married. His announcement must have been greatly disturbing, as she was told that she would become pregnant when she had not known any man. Besides, this was no ordinary child. He would be "great", and would be "called the Son of the Most High (God)" (v 32). And the Lord God would give to Him the "throne of his father David… and of his kingdom there will be no end" (v 33).**

**It sometimes seems easier to submit to God's will when we know what it entails; it is less easy to do so when the journey ahead is unclear. What would her betrothed think when he found out that she was pregnant with a child that was not his? Would she forfeit her marriage and be ostracised by her community? As Christians, sometimes following the Lord and obeying His will can be challenging. Personal sacrifices may be involved and obedience may come at a cost. Hardships, anxiety and fears persist. In such times, truly knowing who God is and putting our faith in His goodness and grace will help us submit to His sovereignty and to trust Him (cf. vv 46-55).**

**Thankfully, God often uses significant people to encourage us in times like these. God may use an "Elizabeth" – someone who was ahead of Mary in her lived experience. When Mary came to visit with her, Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and remarked to Mary that she would be "blessed" when she "believed" that the Lord would fulfil His word to her (v 45). That is why we all need a spiritual community, such as a small group in church or godly mentors who can share how they have navigated life's challenges as Christians.**

***Song:*** **Be Born in Me (Mary) by Francesca Battistelli**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsXOP7aQeqQ

## *APPLICATION*

**Does God want me to submit to Him in obedience or to trust Him in an area of my life?**

## *PRAYER*

***Pray for our BTS students:*** **Pray that they will not neglect their devotional time with the Lord amidst the busyness of their studies and ministry duties. Pray for their spiritual growth as disciples of Christ while they study, intern and serve in the local churches.**



WED
23
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# Fulfilling Our Roles In The Kingdom Of God

12

## SCRIPTURE

***Luke 1:57-80***

## OBSERVATION

**John the Baptist's birth, recognised as remarkable and having the Lord's favour, was essentially to prepare the way for another, Jesus Christ Himself (v 76).**

## DEEPER REFLECTION

**The parallel accounts of John the Baptist and Jesus follow the prologue: the prophecy of the birth of John is followed by the prophecy of Jesus' birth; the birth of John (1:57-66) has a parallel in the birth of Jesus (2:1-21); Mary's Song - the Magnificat ('glorifies') – is paralleled in Zechariah's Song – the Benedictus ('praise be'). Why the precedence of John the Baptist over Jesus in their birth accounts? If the gospels are essentially a record of Jesus' life and ministry, why did Luke start his birth narratives with the prophecy of the birth of John the Baptist? Perhaps one explanation is this: John the Baptist is intentionally depicted as the one who came to fulfil his role as the forerunner of Jesus Christ, as promised in Scripture (Luke 1:17, 76; cf. Matt 3:1-3). This is certainly plausible in view of Luke's description of how he carefully researched and thoughtfully recorded eyewitness testimonies (the text reads "carefully and methodically write" in the original Greek language); cf. Lk 1:1-4. If correct, this has several implications: (1) John the Baptist's precursory role was clearly articulated in God's plan; (2) John fulfilled his given role with neither comparison nor complaint (see Matthew 3:11-12; John 3:30); and (3) John came to reconcile fathers to children, make wise the disobedient and to "make ready for the Lord a people prepared". Do we know and are we actively and joyfully fulfilling our God-given roles in the Kingdom of God? Are we readying ourselves and others to meet King Jesus? It may simply be sharing our story this Christmas. Let's be ready!**

## *APPLICATION*

**Am I readying myself, like John the Baptist, to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17) through praying, studying and teaching the Word as we await the coming of King Jesus?**

## *PRAYER*

***Pray for our alumni:*** **Pray for our 390 students in 22 countries that they will be faithful in serving as pastors, missionaries, seminary educators and leaders in the marketplace. Ask that the Lord will keep them and their families in good health and provide for them to accomplish all that God has called them to do.**

THU
24
DEC
2026

# Songs That Mark Our Lives



15

## *SCRIPTURE*

***Luke 1:46-55, 67-79; 2:22-40***

## *OBSERVATION*

**Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and Anna all sang songs of salvation concerning the coming of the Christ-child: the fulfilment of the long-awaited promise of the God of Israel.**

## *DEEPER REFLECTION*

**Luke's infancy narrative focuses on the intertwining destinies of Jesus and John the Baptist. The stories of their births are extended into three hymns of praise in Mary's Magnificat, Zechariah's Benedictus, and Simeon's Nunc Dimittis. These songs focus on the hope of Israel's restoration, the joy of eschatological salvation, and identification of Jesus as the promised Davidic Messianic-Saviour. Mary's song is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and an expression of trust in God. These three songs in Luke's infancy narratives are full of rich theology, instructing us on the nature of God and what He has done (e.g., God is "Saviour", compassionate, mighty and holy).**

**What about us? Do we have songs that are theologically rich and shape the fabric of our devotional life? Do we have songs that inform us of God's character and serve to anchor our lives in good times and in challenging times? Rev Dr David Wong, veteran pastor and respected author, and currently the General Secretary of the Bible-Presbyterian Church in Singapore, has shared with me that he chooses a song each year to anchor his life and ministry. This is a wonderful practice as it serves as a compass for God's guidance and provides comfort and encouragement in challenging times: songs refresh our weary souls when God's grace is needed the most. What about you? Do you have a special Scripture passage or perhaps a song or two to mark your life? These also often serve as milestones of God's grace and goodness in our lives. Begin to ask God for these Scriptural texts (that can be memorised) and songs (that we may regularly sing) to mark your life.**

## *APPLICATION*

**Do I intuitively turn to Scripture to connect the blessings of God – or indeed life's circumstances – to what God is saying to me as a disciple of Christ?**

## *PRAYER*

***Pray for BTS donors and friends:*** **Thank God for faithful ministry partners and friends who support us with finance and prayers. Ask that the Lord will bless them even as they partner with us, enabling us to train God's servants in serving Singapore and blessing Asia.**

FRI
25
DEC
2026

# The Christ Of Christmas Is For Everyone



18

## SCRIPTURE

***Luke 2:1-21***

## OBSERVATION

**Though often overlooked in their time, humble shepherds were the first recipients of this "good news of great joy" that "a Saviour is born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord."**

## DEEPER REFLECTION

**Christmas is meant to be a joyous occasion, but it can be a difficult time of year for many people: the destitute, the sick, prisoners, and foreigners who are unable to return home to be with loved ones. In Luke 2:1-21, we read about the angelic hosts appearing in glory and proclaiming the good news of the Saviour's birth to lowly shepherds. They were told that the birth of the Christ-child had taken place, not in a palace or heralded by pomp and pageantry, which would certainly have caused them to hesitate and might even have prevented them from going at all, but in a lowly stable. As it was, the shepherds immediately left to witness the nativity scene in Bethlehem for themselves. The simplicity of the scene with "a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger" was remarkably inviting for these shepherds, ordinary as it was. Yes, the story behind Christmas is both remarkable and simple. It is remarkable because God chose to become a human being and appeared as a humble infant in an ordinary Jewish family. Perhaps the majestic hymn of praise sung by the heavenly hosts to signal the coming of this Christ-child (vv 13-14) was meant to emphasise that the infant Jesus was no less divine even though he chose to be "born in the likeness of a human" (Phil 2:5-11; cf. Col 1:15-20). The Christmas story is also a simple one: on Christmas day "is born in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (v 11). Let's take every opportunity to share the joy of this good news with everyone, and especially with those in our midst who are often overlooked. Be blessed this Christmas!**

## *APPLICATION*

**Let's pause to give thanks to God for the gift of the Christ-child this Christmas, and remember those who may be missing family or friends during this most joyous of festive seasons.**

## *PRAYER*

***Pray for BTS faculty, staff and students:*** **as we prepare for intensive classes and begin another semester in January 2027. Ask that the Lord will bless us with a good year of learning and growth in our walk with God, and that we will have many opportunities to lead others to Christ.**

# Ministry Advancement Programme (MAP) Electives 2027

Baptist Theological Seminary, 1023 Upper Serangoon Road

#01-01 Baptist Centre Singapore 534761

# The New Testament for Lay Leaders Series: Unpacking the Gospels

## Course Description:

The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus' life, ministry and teachings. Some are familiar while others are less so. Some are clear and easy to understand. Others are couched in language and historical-cultural contexts foreign to us. Are these accounts of Jesus historically reliable? What about parables – why did Jesus use them? How do we read the four Gospels in the New Testament wisely and well? In this course, we will learn foundational interpretive concepts to unpack and apply this important corpus of our faith – the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ – according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

10, 17, 24 Apr; 8, 15 May 2027

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Venue: Baptist Theological Seminary, 1023 Upper Serangoon Road

Course Fee: $120 / Pax

**Dr Ho Chiao Ek**



Dr Ho Chiao Ek has been actively involved in training, mentoring and pastoring youths, lay leaders, seminarians and pastors since 1981. He holds a PhD in New Testament Studies from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and currently serves as President of Baptist Theological Seminary, Singapore.

# The Old Testament for Lay Leaders Series: Unpacking the Historical Books

## Course Description:

The books of Kings not only retell selected key historical events of Israel but also bear witness to God who is steadfastly faithful to His promises and abundantly gracious in drawing near to build, help, turn and forgive His people who waver pathologically in their commitment and response to Him. This course will explore the rich landscape of selected passages from 1 and 2 Kings through close reading, drawing out their enduring insights into God and humanity.

2, 9, 16, 30 Oct; 6 Nov 2027

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Venue: Baptist Theological Seminary, 1023 Upper Serangoon Road

Course Fee: $120 / Pax



**Dr Vincent Ooi**

Dr Vincent Ooi joined BTS in 2026 with 15 years of seminary teaching experience. He teaches the Old Testament, the Gospels and Biblical Interpretation. He has a PhD in physics and another in biblical interpretation and Christian spirituality. He was a pastor in the UK for about 8 years.

**Scan to Register**

Deadline:
2 Apr & 24 Sep 2027

*For MAP participants, 5 out of 20 credits will be granted to complete the programme.*

For enquiries, please email to btscomms@bts.org.sg or call 6472 0091 ext 203.

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