

A  
*way*  
IN A  
*manger*



Touching Lives  
with James Merritt



# A WAY IN A MANGER

## SERIES OVERVIEW

Christmas is not just an event that happened in the past. It is an experience that we live in the present and an expectation that we have for the future. We all deal with our past, our present and our future. None of us have a perfect past. There are times when the skeletons in the closet rattle and we hear them at night - past regrets, past failures, things we all wish we could do over. We all live with troubles in the present, anxiety, worry, problems, disabilities, depression, discouragement. The older you get the more the future looms bigger and bigger - trips to the hospital, uncertain diagnosis, and of course the realization that one day the present will end, and we will all be in the future. We all wonder in a way when will it happen? How will it happen? What happens after it happens? Maybe this is why we all love Christmas so much, because, Christmas is about a God who can heal our hurts in the past, is our help in the present, and gives us hope for the future. The way he does that is found in a manger. When we really understand what happened at the first Christmas, when we really understand who was born, why he came and what he did, we realize we don't have to fight the past. We can face anything in the present and we don't have to fear the future.

## SERIES VERSES

*Galatians 4:4-7*  
*Colossians 1:15-10*  
*Philippians 2:5-11*

# A WAY IN A MANGER

## WEEK 1: The Way In: The Right Time

*Galatians 4:4-7*

### OVERVIEW

In our first message of this series, we are going to help those of us who need God to show up in a strong way in our lives, but for whatever the reason He hasn't yet. We all have those times when we wonder, "Is God asleep? Has He taken a leave of absence? I need God to do something, and I need God to do something now." In the fourth chapter of a book called Galatians, a man by the name of Paul takes us all the way back, not just to the Christmas story, but what happened before the Christmas story. There are three things we can always know is true about God that should give you, not just peace about your present situation, but patience knowing that God will show up. If you are wondering where God is, what God is doing, and when God will act, let the Christmas story remind you of three things that are always true...

### KEY POINTS

#### 1. God Is Waiting For The Best Time

For thousands of years, the Jews had been waiting for a messiah. They were looking for a messiah. They were longing for a messiah. The Gentiles had waited on a savior, but a little over two-thousand years ago, on an exact day, an exact month, in an exact year, in an exact place, God said, "The time is now. The wait is over." You see, the reason why God waited is this. God never shows up at a good time and He doesn't show up on our time. He shows up at the best time. So much of life is about waiting and God on His own choices to wait. He is never in a hurry. If you are tired of waiting on the God who waits, don't forget what God is doing while He is waiting.

#### 2. God Is Watching For The Right Time

Although we don't know the exact day when Jesus was born, we do know it is a day that God had marked on his calendar. It was a set time. Jesus was never Plan B, and Jesus was no accident. From the time God hung the first planet in space, lit up the sun and put the first breath in a human being, God had this day highlighted in his iPad that said, "Birth of Jesus." When you see the time and the world that Jesus was born into, you realize just how right and perfect it was.

The timing of Jesus' birth was culturally perfect, politically perfect, and spiritually perfect. God orchestrated so many things to happen so that the atmosphere and the circumstances of humanity at that time were all in the perfect place for Jesus to come. Coincidence? No. Because, while God is waiting for the best time, God is watching for the right time. God and his timing is always perfect.

#### 3. God Is Working In His Time

When God shows up, and He always will and He always does, He shows up in His time to do what is best for you and what is right for you. That is what He does now, and that's what He did back when He sent His Son Jesus

### NOTES

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# A WAY IN A MANGER

## WEEK 1: The Way In: The Right Time

*Galatians 4:4-7*

to earth. God is always working and the work that he loves to do, delights to do, and wants to do in every human being is to redeem them from their sin. We did the crime, but Jesus paid the fine. Because of that, we can live in spiritual freedom.

So be encouraged. You need God to show up? He will. He always does. You say, "But He is waiting, and He seems to be taking forever." While that may be true, He is also watching, and He is also working. Waiting for the best time, watching for the right time and working in His time.

### NOTES

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### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is something you're waiting for right now that God seems to be waiting to give you?
2. Can you think of an example in your life where God's timing proved to be better than yours?
3. How can you see God working right now in the midst of your season of waiting?

### NOTES

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# A WAY IN A MANGER

## WEEK 2: The Way Out: Follow The Leader

Colossians 1:15-10

### OVERVIEW

Unfortunately, we are living in a world where lying is common, practically expected, and seemingly just the way we do business. But at the end of the day, character is still important, and it still matters. It matters not just morally, ethically, and spiritually, but practically. We began by saying that the foundation of character is integrity. In this message, we are going to learn that the first fruit of integrity is honesty. Integrity is more than just honesty, but there can be no integrity without honesty. There is a man in the Bible who exemplified this trait in an incredible way, and that is Samuel. What elevated Samuel, both in the eyes of God and in the eyes of his people was his absolute, unfailing, uncompromising honesty. What distinguished him was not the high positions that he held, but the honest person that he was.

### KEY POINTS

#### 1. We Worship Jesus As The Lord Of The Universe

He calls Jesus the Son, because he wants us to understand he is talking about the human Jesus who was born just like we are, but He wasn't the spitting image of his earthly mother; He was the spitting image of His heavenly father. The Greek word for "image" is the word "eikon" which gives us our word "icon." It refers to a perfect replica, a precise copy, an exact reproduction. The plainest way to say it is, Jesus was God in human flesh. Jesus Christ the Son is just as much God as God the Father.

Jesus was fully God. He was not fractionally God. He was not partially God; He was fully God. There was a time when Jesus was not a human being. There has never been a time when Jesus was not God. If you need God, you go to Jesus. If you come to God, you come to Jesus. If you love God you love Jesus, because He is fully God.

That baby who was laid in a manger by the hands of His earthly father was in fact the God who holds the whole world in His hands. In fact, He doesn't just hold you and me in His hands; He holds the whole universe in His hands. He is the glue of the galaxies. He is the cement of creation. He is the Lord of the universe that we worship.

#### 2. We Follow Jesus As The Leader Of The Church

Jesus is the head of the church. He is not just the head of the church, but the head of every church. No believer on earth, no matter what His title may be is the head of the church. The thing with no head is dead and the anything with two heads is a freak. The church only has one head and that is Jesus. The church is called the body and there is a reason for that. A body is to do what the head tells it to do.

Jesus should have that kind of authority in our lives. And with that authority, He should be our top priority. Jesus should have first place in your life. He

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# A WAY IN A MANGER

## WEEK 2: The Way Out: Follow The Leader

*Colossians 1:15-10*

will not take second place. He will never be second in line or second in importance. We follow Jesus as the leader of the church.

### 3. We Come To Jesus As The Link To God

Do you know what every human being that has ever been born needs in order to have a relationship with God? Reconciliation. Now do you know what reconciliation is? Reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship. When two people are separated because of their differences they need to be reconciled. Though you didn't realize it at first, from your first breath, you were separated from God by your sinful nature. The only remedy for separation is reconciliation. The moment that Jesus died on the cross, He brought peace between God and humanity and He signed in His blood a peace treaty between God and the world that lasts forever.

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### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is a verse in Scripture you can begin memorizing you that Jesus is Lord over not just your life, but over all the universe?
2. Is Jesus top priority in your life, or has He fallen into second place behind someone or something else?
3. What is one thing you can do every day to practically prioritize your relationship with Jesus?

### NOTES

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# A WAY IN A MANGER

## WEEK 3: The Way Up: Son Down To Son Up

*Philippians 2:5-11*

### 3. We Will Confess The Sovereignty Of Jesus

There is a name that is above every name and it is not Jesus. That was a very common name back in that day. The name that is above every name is "Lord." Jesus is His earthly name and "Lord" is His eternal name. Jesus is His human name. Lord is His heavenly name.

We all have a date with deity, and it is not a blind date. When you keep that date, you will know exactly who He is. You won't stand Him up. You won't refuse the invitation. Every person who has ever drawn a breath is going to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. He is unescapable, unavoidable and inevitable. When that meeting takes place, every knee is going to bow and declare that Jesus is the sovereign Lord, and oh what a marvelous day that will be!

### NOTES

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### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is one practical step you can take this week to conform to the Spirit of Jesus?
2. Have you taken the time to consider the kind of sacrifice Jesus made for you? Are you living in light of that sacrifice?
3. If someone looked at your life from a distance, would they be confident that you believe and live according to the sovereignty and lordship of Christ?

### NOTES

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