

## what to do with the announcement

The angel made the greatest birth announcement ever. How should we respond to this news about Jesus? We can follow the example of the shepherds:

Then the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2 verses 15

The first thing the shepherds did was to go and check it out. That may be what you need to do. Can I urge you to have a serious look at the evidence about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

You may have all sorts of doubts about God. But all kinds of people have come to the evidence with an open mind and found real answers to their questions. And they have discovered so much more. This website is a great place to start: [www.christianityexplored.org](http://www.christianityexplored.org)

Why not pray the prayer opposite, and respond to the angel's birth announcement by starting a journey of discovery that could change your life now and for ever?



## a christmas prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for this Christmas time, and for the times that I will share with family and friends.

And thank you for the angel's message that the birth of Jesus is GOOD NEWS of GREAT JOY for ALL PEOPLE.

Please help me to understand the truth about Jesus as I look into the Bible.

And help me to find for myself the love, joy and peace that you offer to us through the Lord Jesus.

Amen

If you would like to find out more about what it means to be a Christian, please contact the church or person who gave you this leaflet, or visit: [www.christianityexplored.org](http://www.christianityexplored.org)

© The Good Book Company 2012. ISBN: 9781908762221 (single); 9781908762238 (pack of 25)  
Bible references taken from the New International Reader's Version.

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# Mary & Joseph



## announce...

When a baby is born, it's usually a cause for wild celebration. Dad wants the whole world to know how wonderful his new child is. Mum probably just wants painkillers and a good sleep...

I've received some strange birth announcements in my time—from rather gory and explicit photos of a Caesarian-section in progress, to a blunt text from a friend that just said: “09.43am. 3.6kg. m. dan.” He's an engineer.

But perhaps the strangest set of announcements of all time are connected to the birth of the child we celebrate at Christmas—Jesus.

### the big announcement

I don't know what you think an angel looks like. The ones that we stick on the top of our Christmas trees, or who pop up in the school nativity play are often cute, lovely and fluffy. Kind of like a puppy from heaven.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

An angel is quite simply a messenger from God. And every time an angel appears, it's a terrifying experience for those who see them.

Here's the reaction of the shepherds on the hillside outside Bethlehem:



There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were looking after their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. Luke 2 verses 8-9

Not “Ooohs” and “Aaahs” like you might hear from parents at a nativity play—but utter terror as heaven touched earth, and they saw how small and grubby they were compared with the greatness and glory of eternity.

But the message this angel brought was designed to strike hope into our hearts, not fear:

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2 verses 10-11



Notice three pieces of great news in this angelic baby announcement.

### good news

Many people today think that Christianity is bad news—that it is something that will put us in chains and limit our lives. If that has been your impression of the Christian faith, then, sadly, you have seen a warped

version of it. Because, correctly understood, it is the best news that anyone could ever hear. Millions of people past and present can say that being a Christian has brought them purpose in life, and a freedom from “chains” like guilt, failure, bitterness and fear.

### great joy

Again, many people think of religion as dull and boring. But the angel tells us that this is not what Jesus was born to bring to our world. When Jesus taught, people sat there astonished and electrified for hours on end. He brought healing and renewal to every life he touched. Jesus pictured the new life he was bringing into the world as fabulous vintage wine, not the sour-tasting plonk of dull religion.

### all people

You may think that you are not a “religious kind of person”—that Jesus is great for others, but not very relevant to your life. But the birth announcement urges us to think again. Because what this baby brings into the world is for “all people”—and that includes you and me.

To discover *why* Jesus is such **good news** that should fill us **all** with **great joy** we need to find out exactly who Jesus really is, and why he came.

