



The Book of James: Timeless Lessons on Perspective for Navigating Life's Trials

Paul Onifade

Some believers enjoy a life of relative comfort, shielded from the harsher realities of suffering that many around the world endure. Yet, this privilege has left us emotionally fragile and ill-prepared for the inevitable trials of life. For countless others, suffering is a constant companion. These individual struggles unfold alongside global crises of war and environmental disasters. Against this turbulent backdrop, the words of Jesus echo with clarity and comfort: *"In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). James' epistle speaks directly to those enduring hardship, offering wisdom and encouragement to persevere with faith and joy.

James: A Servant Transformed by Grace

James begins his letter with an extraordinary introduction: *"James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (James 1:1). While this may seem unremarkable at first glance, it is profound when we consider who James was. As Jesus' half-brother, he could have claimed familial privilege or leveraged his status as a leader in the early church. Instead, he humbly identifies himself as a servant, or more accurately, a slave. This is a remarkable transformation. In John 7:5, we learn that even Jesus' brothers, including James, initially doubted Him. Yet here, James declares himself utterly devoted to Christ who washes sinners' feet (John 13:14). The love of God had conquered his unbelief, and this defenceless love, embodied in Jesus, became the cornerstone of his identity.

We must ask ourselves, is Christ's love, so ravishing that it changes your very identity? True Christianity is to embrace this amazing grace.

James' Audience

James directs his letter to *"the twelve tribes—Jewish believers scattered abroad"* (James 1:1). These were not simply displaced individuals; they were refugees facing the harsh realities of poverty, discrimination, sickness and persecution. The poor, the outcasts, the failures, the sick, and the broken. Yet, it is precisely to these individuals that God, through James, speaks a message of hope and encouragement. In His boundless love for the lowly, Jesus repeatedly affirmed their value, declaring that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. *"Blessed are the poor... Blessed are those who mourn"* (Matthew 5:3-4). Similarly, James calls the poor to boast in their exaltation and the rich

in their humiliation (James 1:9-10). The Book of James reflects this divine heart, offering practical wisdom and spiritual fortitude to those often overlooked by society. He tenderly called them *"dear brothers and sisters"* 15 times in that short epistle. Through this letter, God reminds the downtrodden that they are not forgotten. Instead, they are seen and loved, and called to endure with faith, for their trials are shaping them for His eternal purposes.

Perspective: Suffering - An Occasion for Joy?

James begins his letter with a bold and counterintuitive exhortation: *"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy"* (James 1:2). At first glance, this seems puzzling. How can pain, uncertainty, and suffering be a cause for joy? Yet James reveals the profound truth behind this statement:

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ISAIAH 11:9 GNT
"On Zion, God's sacred hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil. The land will be as full of knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water."

HABAKKUK 2:14 GNT
"But the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the seas are full of water."

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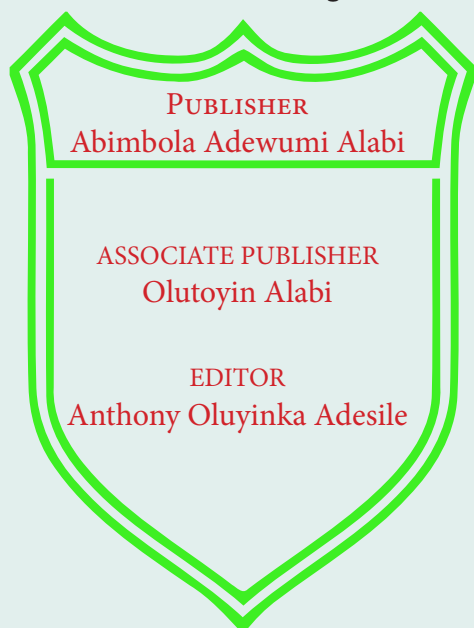
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Welcome to Panoplia.

The mission of Panoplia is to help believers develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. It emphasises spiritual growth and leadership.

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trials test our faith, producing endurance and leading to spiritual maturity (James 1:3-4). Suffering, James argues, is not an unwelcome interruption but a refining process. This truth is echoed throughout Scripture. Jacob endured deception, bereavement, and familial strife. Joseph faced betrayal, false accusations, and imprisonment. David spent years evading King Saul's violent and relentless pursuit. Even Jesus, though sinless, experienced rejection, betrayal, and the agony of the cross. In every instance, God's providence proved faithful. The suffering of His people was not meaningless but became a crucible in which their faith was purified and strengthened. These stories remind us that God uses trials to accomplish His purposes in and through us. As Christians, we too are called to see trials not as intrusions but as opportunities for growth. This requires a radical shift in perspective. Christianity is not an escape from hardship but a call to face it with faith, trusting that God uses even our most painful experiences to shape us for His purposes. Let us, like James, approach life's challenges with humility and courage, allowing our faith to be refined and our devotion deepened as we serve Christ with joy and perseverance.

God's ways often defy human logic: *"Blessed are the poor... Blessed are those who mourn"* (Matthew 5:3-4). *"...Life of a man does not consist in his possessions"* Luke 12.15. *"...What is highly exalted among men is abomination to God"* Lk 16.15. Similarly, James urges the poor to boast in their exaltation and the rich in their humiliation (James 1:9-10). This reversal underscores the fleeting nature of worldly success and the eternal value of spiritual life. When trials come, we are invited to trust that God is working for our ultimate good, as Joseph declared: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good"* (Genesis 50:20).

By embracing trials as opportunities for refinement, we allow our faith to deepen, our character to grow, and our devotion to Christ to flourish. In doing so, we find a joy rooted not in circumstance but in the unshakable promise of God's goodness. Whether we face financial struggles, broken relationships, or health challenges, we can find comfort in knowing that God is at work as we learn to adjust your perspective. As James reminds us, suffering is a tool in God's hands for shaping us into the image of His Son. As a closing Reflection, ask yourself: How can I change my perspective on suffering? May we, like James, grow in wisdom and grace, steadfast in the hope of our Lord's return. *"So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing"*

Paul Onifade

Paul became a Christian in his early teenage years in Nigeria his home country. He was mentored by a British Missionary – Pa S G Elton. He together with his dear wife Yetunde, moved to the UK in 1990, shortly after their marriage. They have two adult children. Paul is a lay preacher, and he enjoys sharing the gospel – the good news of Christ is often his theme. He is a practising solicitor. He enjoys playing tennis, scrabble, and chess.



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EGG HUNT

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" — LUKE 24:5 NIV

CARRY YOUR BOOKS?

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. — I PETER 5:7 KJV

Thanksgiving 2024 Message

Rev Dr. Andrew Omotoso

There was a woman in the Bible, in Luke 13:10-17, who had been sick, bent over for 18 years. On a particular sabbath day, Jesus came to that synagogue where the woman normally worshipped. She was not expecting Jesus and might not even have known or met him before that day.

There was no special announcement that made that synagogue day any special. Obviously the bent-over woman was not looking forward to being healed. Healing was not a feature of the synagogue program that day or any other day in view of verse 14. Actually it was an infringement of proper church protocol for a sick person to allow himself or herself to be healed on Synagogue day.

So why was this bent-over woman with her ridiculous suffering bent-over body coming to the Synagogue anyway? Why not just stay away? She was not there that day because she had to.

I suggest this was because of her faithfulness to the Covenant. She was not coming in order to be healed. She was not coming in order to please anyone. She was coming in order to fulfill her part of the Covenant. Certainly not because she or anyone knew that Jesus would be there. She came, just as she was wont to do by reason of the requirement of the Covenant.

This reminds me of one of my favorite hymns in the Christian Secondary school I attended:

'My Lord, I love thee not because,
I hope for heaven thereby,
nor yet because who loved thee not
are lost eternally.

Not for the sake of gaining aught
nor seeking a reward
But as thyself has loved me
O ever loving God.....

So, this woman was coming to worship Jehovah because her faithfulness to the Covenant compelled her! I don't think she actually expected to be healed, any more than Ana the widow knew she would find Baby Jesus in the Temple the day of His dedication. Luke 2:36-38.

But then, that day, Jesus came! Jesus as He is wont to do, had compassion on her state and removed her 18 year old infirmity, the day and where the woman least expected.

This Thanksgiving day in America; this day anywhere we are on this planet earth, let us faithfully give thanks to God as He enjoins us to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Rev. 4:11 and other scriptures you can recall that requires us to offer sacrifices of Praise, in Faith believing. This is your day! Happy Thanksgiving. November 28, 2024

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Elections. What About It.



Abimbola Adewumi Alabi

There was once a Shakespeare Title. “Much Ado About Nothing” In almost every nation that election has recently taken place the Body of Christ had been left bruised battered broken divided and largely depopulated.

One group in the Precious Body of Christ see another group as a faction from Hell. Rather than being guided by the essential doctrines that the Bible says must be for believers, it is the manifestos of each party that has become the “Gospel” that they preach.

Some of us are saddened and burdened that the Church is not awake to the core purpose of the Kingdom. Winning Souls and Discipling them for the Kingdom.

We have literally surrendered our evangelism and living righteously to the legislation passed by the politicians.

Many Christians desire that the politicians can legislate people to be saved and given some sort of moral code to guide others to follow. Any breach of the moral standards they desire should be sanctioned by appropriate laws that will now make Christianity the in thing for the society.

They have clearly forgotten that the famous politician that they are routing for has never confessed his or her personal testimony declaring Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

It's is righteousness of each individual life that exalts a nation and not the laws and policies of the nation. God made it clear that the whole essence of Salvation is to reconcile man back to Himself in righteousness imputed through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

The politicians of whatever party in all nations are after their selfish interests which in most cases are tied to Satanic agendas. Again if we are conscious of the rapture and end times prophecies it will not be about how big your Cathedral is or how many followers you have it should be about how many we can reach and snatch from Hell before the time is over.

For instance many don't have the insight that the famous politicians have satanic agenda to weaken and undermine the body of Christ all over the nations of the world.

Let us keep praying that the eyes of our understanding be opened. Should Christians totally abstain from politics? No but across the Globe it is rare to see how the church has raised its disciples to do well in that domain. We have a long way to go to have men and women who are not bowing secretly to powers and money regardless of the front face they deceptively present.

All these elections are lining up to fulfill the end times prophecies. As the end-time is approaching Nations will form alliances to fight the Kingdom and agenda of God.

Do you as a kingdom citizen stand back to look at the Kingdom of God in totality and see where your stand has positioned you for His End-time movement.

However it looks like the satanic kingdom knows and are acting out their script but the Kingdom citizens are not even reading their lines not to talk about acting it out.

Never too late to wake up to your calling and election as a child of the Kingdom. Stop the endless debate and counter arguments about politics and politicians.

Preach the Gospel and raise incorruptible men and women who can serve God in all their God given dominion.

Let's us stop all this Much Ado About Nothing.

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New book by Abimbola Adewumi Alabi

Devotional For Youth



The young ones are the future of any society. You can tell what will become of a community or a nation by the way these young ones are raised. Many dysfunctional marriages are a function of two individuals whose foundation was distorted. That is the reason why the Bible says in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” But you may ask, what way should a youth go? How should a youth be trained with an assurance that he would not depart from it? Ephesians 6:4 answers it. It says, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Dr. Abimbola understands that raising a child in the teachings of Christ is the only way to secure their future and align them on the path of truth and eternity. Through this inspiring devotional, you will learn to study God's word daily and develop the character of Christ. So, open your heart to hear His voice which will set the sail for your glorious destiny.

Awake! Put On Your Beautiful Garment.



Rev Anthony O Adesile

Imagine for a moment a battalion of soldiers who had carelessly let their guards down and gone to sleep unaware that the enemy was discreetly surrounding the camp. Suddenly, someone caught sight of the enemy's scheme and immediately sounded the alarm to awaken the soldiers for battle. Such is the situation Christians have found themselves today, with the alarm sounding with utmost urgency. Moreso, the situation is even more dire. It's like Samson on the lap of Delilah unaware that his strength had been taken from him and his garment defiled.

Awake, awake! put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, o Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you. Shake yourself from the dust, arise; sit down, o Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, o captive daughter of Zion! (Isaiah 52:1-2)

What is at stake here is the state of the Church at this time and the threat to the heritage we possess. And yes, the call still resounds, awake, awake! This call coming in the midst of the raging darkness speaks of redemption, hope and the promise of better things to come. Again, the call to the unguarded Church:

First, the state of the Church;

How the gold has become dim! How changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion, valuable as fine gold, how they are regarded as clay pots, the work of the hands of the potter! (Lamentation 4:1-2)

Second, the call;

He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily (Nahum 2:1).

And then, the promise;

For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel, for the emptiers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches (Nahum 2:2).

Let's start with the beautiful garment that represents the glory and honour of each believer and the Church. God told Moses

in Exodus 28 to make holy garments for Aaron and his sons, 'for glory and for beauty'. These garments were to be a reflection of the Church, arrayed in glory and beauty. Our garments were also the symbol of our strength and potential. In the call from Isaiah 52, it was obvious that recipients of the call were no longer putting on beautiful garments. Rather, they had become like Joshua the high priest, who was being relentlessly hindered by Satan from doing and fulfilling his life's purpose. Every time Joshua was to take a step or receive a blessing from God, Satan would be there to resist him. Unknown to him, his garment had lost its shine and become filthy.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. (Zechariah 3:1-3)

The truth is that the enemy is never satisfied with little victories; he has come to steal, kill and destroy! One victory against Joshua was another opportunity to do greater damage and Joshua was helpless and tormented, his soul crying out for redemption. His iniquity had stripped him of his glory and honour, and rendered him powerless against the enemy's onslaught.

Sin and compromises alienate us from God and when that happens, we lose the glory and honour that stand as our armour and strength. The filthy and crimson-like garment on Joshua was a sharp contrast to the priestly garment once adorned, and which derived its glory and beauty from God:

Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendour which I had bestowed on you," says the LORD God (Ezekiel 16:14)

Thank God the story of Joshua the high priest did not end in perpetual sorrow. God was merciful and gracious to him. He rebuked Satan! Notably too, He made it known to all that Joshua was a chosen vessel and one whom He had plucked out of the fire of affliction that Satan had condemned him. His hope was restored! His future was no longer bleak but assured in God

The story of Joshua resounds much more today, especially now when we are meant to 'remember' the birth and sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Yes, we are meant to remember but we are often caught up in the noise that the enemy has succeeded in using to replace the solemnity of the season. This season is a call to wakefulness; to reflection and appraisal. It's a call to the Church to examine her garment in order to see if it's still beautiful and being made perfect through the Splendour of the KING!

Therefore He says: "awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (Ephesians 5:14)

Now is the time for us to come out of the slumber that the enemy has stealthily lured us into through compromises and sin. Now is the voice of our Redeemer resounding in the ears of the Church. Now is the time to allow God to do what He did to Joshua who was clothed in filthy garment:

Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him (Ezekiel 3:4-5)

Let's try and understand this in more context. Joshua was no ordinary person; he was the high priest. He was a man whom people were to look upon for strength and direction. A man who was to be an example of a believer; a chosen vessel. He was a man who used to command the respect of many but had become a shadow of who he was. The enemy prevailed in turning his glory to nothing; his honour to shame; his wisdom to foolishness and his strength to weakness. As if these were not enough, the situation was even more dire when the man in this condition did not even know it!

A man who is in honour, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish (Psalm 49:20)

Many of us in the Church today are in this condition of hopelessness and yet we carry the barge of Christianity with pride not recognising that we have lost the substance, grace and right of ownership through sin and compromises. This season calls for reflection and a return to wakefulness and watchfulness. God is already at work, bringing us grace and causing His mercy to speak for us. Hence the call to arise and embrace the light is now shining:

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you (Isaiah 60:1-2)

We can no longer allow darkness to continue to spread and cover the earth. We can no longer endure the influence of deep darkness upon the people. We cannot watch while still sleeping, hence the call to wake up and man the fort! We must awake and put on our beautiful garments! We must return to God in repentance and let His Splendour bring back the glory and armour of our strength. Let's note the urgency of the call again and as we do, let us;

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21)

Now is the time for change and for action. No longer to be complacent about our lives and the promise of our future. May we be bold and resolute in our resolve to rise above the tide and be that 'branch that has been plucked from fire'. May we arise and put on our beautiful garments. May we hear; may remember and may we put on strength and may the LORD restore back our excellence in Jesus' name!

He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily. For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel, for the emptiers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches (Nahum 2:1-2)

HE BECAME ONE OF US



Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane

On February 15, 1921, there was a doctor who performed an appendectomy. The doctor performing the surgery was Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane, who over his 37-year medical career had performed nearly 4,000 appendectomies, so this surgery was not at all unusual except for two things.

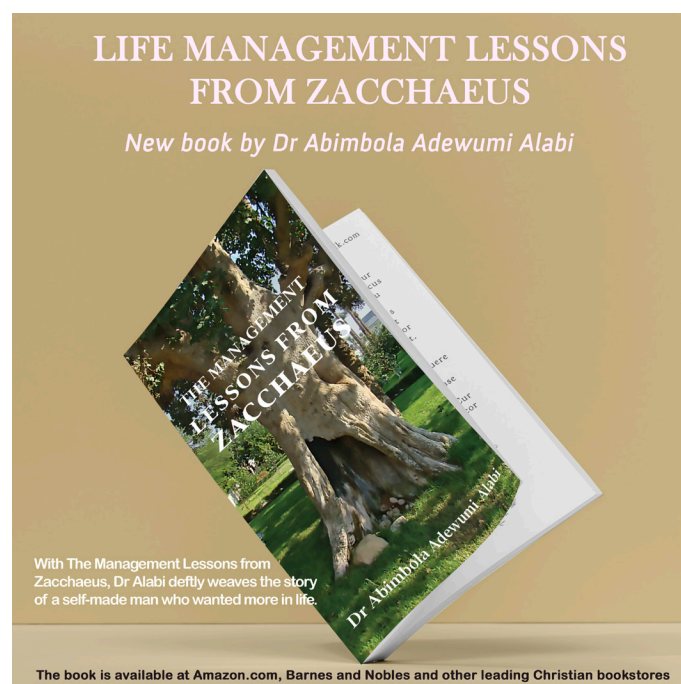
First of all, this was the first time that local anesthesia had ever been used in major surgery.

Dr. Kane believed that local anesthesia was safer than putting a patient completely to sleep. Most of his colleagues agreed with him in principle, but they wanted to see first if it would actually work.

So Dr. Kane searched for a volunteer, a patient who would be willing to undergo surgery while under local anesthesia. It wasn't easy to find one. Most people are squeamish at the thought of being awake during their own surgery. Others are fearful that the anesthesia might wear off too soon.

Finally, though, Dr. Kane found a volunteer, and on Tuesday morning, February 15th, the operation began. The patient was prepped and wheeled into the operating room. A local anesthetic was applied. And as Dr. Kane had done thousands of times before, he cut open the tissues and removed the appendix. The patient had only minor discomfort and recovered quickly, dismissed two days later.

Dr. Kane had proven his theory. Thanks to the willingness of a brave volunteer, Dr. Kane demonstrated that local anesthesia was an alternative, even a preferred alternative.



But I said there were two facts that made this surgery unusual. I've told you the first: the use of local anesthesia. The second unusual thing was the patient -- the patient was Dr. Kane. You see, in order to prove his point, Dr. Kane operated on himself. The doctor became a patient in order to convince the patients to trust the doctor.

As unbelievable as that may seem, it is insignificant compared with what Jesus Christ did for us. The Great Physician voluntarily became one of us. He placed himself in our shoes. He left the glories of heaven to live on this earth as one of us -- to suffer our pains and feel our fears. Why? So that when you hurt, you will know that you have someone who understands -- your Great Physician -- and you will have confidence to go to him for healing.

"... He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:7-8)

"Because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18)
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"I Almost Missed A Christmas Miracle"

Bethlehem, 2000 - The excitement was building. We were standing in the Shepherd's Fields just outside of Bethlehem. We were ready to go into the Shepherd's Caves and sing Christmas Carols. Some members of the tour group had done it with me on previous trips. For others, it was their first time - but everyone was excited. Bethlehem... Christmas Carols... Shepherd's Caves... Who wouldn't be excited?

We had always done it. We had always sung carols in these Shepherd's caves - Because once you did, you were never the same. So, I planned it so that everyone could experience it. My plans were about to be fulfilled. We would sing Christmas carols inside the Shepherd's Caves in the hills of Bethlehem.

There was a problem. It was crowded. The year 2000 had bought more groups than ever to Israel. The Shepherd's Caves were full! We waited... and waited... No groups were leaving the caves. Our time was growing short. We were about to miss out on our chance.

I was disappointed. I knew what a blessing our group was about to miss. I expressed my disappointment to God. "God, we've always sung in the caves. No one is ever the same after they do! We have to do it, Lord. We've always done it that way. If we don't, our group will miss out on the blessing of Bethlehem. Can't you work it out to open one of the caves for us?"

None of the other groups left the caves. We didn't get to sing carols in the Shepherd's Caves. Disappointed, I led the group to the top of the hill - to a small chapel called "The Chapel of the Angels". We would sing there - but I knew it wouldn't be the same. It couldn't be, because we had always done it only one way.

Once inside the "Chapel of the Angels", we started singing carols. Most of the group had tears in their eyes as we sang "Silent Night". For them, Christmas already had a new meaning.

A MIRACLE - Then, it happened. A group from Germany entered the chapel. While we were singing "Silent Night" in English, they started singing it in German. Two other groups entered as well. There were now four groups singing Christmas Carols. Every time I started our group in a song, we were joined by an "International Choir" singing in German, French and Spanish!!! There was not a dry eye in the chapel. Everyone called it a "Christmas" miracle.

I almost missed out on that "Christmas Miracle" - me, the "spiritual leader" of the group. Why? Because I was so intent on doing it the way we'd always done it. If we didn't follow the same traditions of Bethlehem that we'd always followed, I just knew that we wouldn't be blessed.

What about you? Does God have a special blessing or a miracle for you this Christmas? If you're so intent on making sure that you follow the same traditions, that you do exactly the same things that you always do each Christmas, you may miss out on a special blessing or a Christmas miracle.

Two thousand years ago, the people of Bethlehem were doing things the way they'd always done them. People were working, shopping, visiting and worshipping. Due to the census, extended families from far-away places had returned home and were visiting with their friends and families - swapping gifts and memories. In the midst of their traditional way of doing things, God performed the greatest miracle of all - the birth of his Son, Jesus Christ.

With the exception of some shepherds, the introduction of God's Son almost went unnoticed. Don't miss out on a miracle this Christmas just because "We've never done it that way before".

By David Langerfeld

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'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.'

ACTS 10v 38

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