

Equipped to make room for Jesus

Are you one of these people who leave holiday arrangements to the last minute? Perhaps you make a spur-of-the-moment decision to go away for the weekend and don't bother to reserve somewhere to stay; instead, you decide to take a chance on finding suitable accommodation when you arrive at your destination. That can work quite well sometimes, but at busy times of the year, you can't guarantee there will be any vacancies in local hotels or motels. If you've ever found yourself in a situation like this, you'll know how frustrating it can be to check out various types of accommodation, only to find they're already full up.

When Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, they weren't trying to get away for a relaxing weekend. Their journey was one of necessity, because the Roman emperor had instructed that a census should be taken and this meant the head of each family had to travel, with his household, to his home town. The 70-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have taken several days. Not only that, but Mary was pregnant and very close to giving birth. Who knows what both were thinking as they travelled?

Perhaps thoughts of looking forward to a good night's sleep in comfortable surroundings when they finally reached Bethlehem filled their imagination. If so, they were going to be disappointed because "*there was no room for them in the village inn*".¹

For many of us, that's a familiar statement. Perhaps we've heard it several times as we've listened to the Christmas story, yet we may not grasp the relevance of it for us today. After all, we've never said "*no room*" to Jesus, have we? But I find I can get so caught up in Christmas preparations that I'm in danger of crowding out the One whose birth I'm supposed to be celebrating. Can you relate to this? I've discovered that one way to guard against this tendency is to be intentional about making room for Jesus in the middle of all my busyness. Here are some suggestions you might find helpful.

- Make a deliberate choice to focus on Jesus by reading Bible passages that speak about His birth. Spread these out over the Christmas period and make a point of reading them at specific times during the day - for example, at mealtimes, when you can include others in the family. Try using a version of the Bible different from the one you normally use so that familiar stories stay fresh.
- Think over the significance of various details in the account of Jesus' birth, for example: Why was it necessary that Jesus was conceived by a virgin? What is the relevance of Jesus being wrapped in strips of cloth? Why did the angels reveal themselves to shepherds? You might find that thinking about your answers to these questions gives you a whole new appreciation of Jesus' birth.
- Take time to praise Jesus using His royal titles - Wonderful Counsellor; Mighty God; Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace.² Spend some time thinking about what these descriptions mean and how they can make a difference in your everyday life.

In all our busyness this Christmas, let's make a conscious choice to make room for Jesus!

¹ Luke 2:7 (NLT)

² Isaiah 9:6