

GOD HAS A PLAN

LESSON 173 → Luke 2:1-20

Grandfather's gift and loving explanation helped Dakotah to overcome his grief.

For a few moments, he had almost forgotten.

In the excitement of the family gathering—the hugs, the greetings, the noise, and then the opening of presents—Dakotah had shrugged aside the grief that had pressed down on him for the past three months. But when he had opened the beautiful wooden puzzle Gramps had made for him, there had been an instinctive reaction to show it to Dad—a feeling so strong he had held it up and half turned around from his spot on the floor before he remembered. Dad wasn't here this Christmas. And he wasn't ever going to spend another Christmas with Dakotah.

A lump came up in his throat. Hurriedly he picked up his gifts and ran from the room. A concerned look crossed his mother's face and she shifted some boxes from her lap and started to follow him. But Dakotah's grandfather stopped her. "Let the boy go, Cindie, he needs a few minutes to himself. We knew this Christmas was going to be hard for him—for both of you. I'll go up and have a talk with him in a while."

Up in his room, Dakotah set his presents down on the bed and stood looking at them unseeingly. He couldn't have stayed there in the living room for another minute . . . it brought back too many memories of other Christmases. He decided to stay in his room till everyone left. Picking up the puzzle his grandfather had made for him, he thought longingly about last Christmas. His thoughts were interrupted by a light tap on the door. His grandfather opened the door a crack, and asked, "Mind if I come in?"

"No, of course not." Dakotah responded with a weak smile. He gestured with the puzzle box which was still in his hand. "This sure is a neat



puzzle, Gramps. I can tell you spent a lot of time making it. Each piece is just perfect."

"Thank you, Dakotah. I enjoyed making it for you. And there was a special reason behind it. You've had some hard things to go through during the past few months." He sat down on the edge of the bed and gently pulled Dakotah down beside him. "I've been thinking of how the different things we go through in life are a little like the pieces of a puzzle. We can't see much of anything in one piece, but when it's all put together, the picture is complete."

Dakotah looked perplexed. "Yeah, well I don't . . ." His voice trailed off.

"The death of your father is a hard thing for you to understand and accept, Dakotah. But it is



JESUS' BIRTH WAS PART OF THE PLAN.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
— Luke 2:11



a part of God's plan for your life. It's a dark piece of the puzzle, yes, but God has a place for the dark pieces as well as the light. And can a picture really be complete without any shadows or deeper tones?"

He paused for a moment, and then continued. "I had a reason for giving you this puzzle at Christmas, rather than for your birthday two weeks ago. God had a plan for the birth of His Son too. There were some dark pieces in that plan also. His Son had a manger for a bed, and straw for a pillow. Mary traveled many miles from her home in Nazareth, and her baby was born in a strange city. The king of the country wanted the child killed."

Dakotah looked a little disbelieving. "Oh, come on, Gramps. Those things couldn't have been part of a plan. They just happened that way! Why, Jesus wasn't supposed to be born in Bethlehem. He was born there because Mary and Joseph had to go there to pay their taxes. Otherwise He would have been born someplace else."

"Oh, no, Dakotah," his grandfather said soberly. "The fact that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem was prophesied hundreds of years before it ever happened. Many of the details concerning the birth of Christ were. God worked out every detail, including the king's decree which caused Mary and Joseph to have to travel to Bethlehem at that particular time, so that everything fit into His divine plan for the redemption of man." He stopped for a moment and then smiled gently at his grandson. "God's plan for your life is perfect too, Dakotah."

Dakotah sat in silence for a moment. He thought he understood what his grandfather was trying to tell him. If God's plan for His own Son included some dark places, then maybe he should try harder to accept the difficult things that came his way.

Slowly he stood up. "Maybe we should go back downstairs now, Gramps, and join the rest of the family. I think I smell something good cooking!"

NO SURPRISE!

Jesus' birth should not have been a surprise to the people. God had let them know in Old Testament times where Jesus would be born and into what family He would be born. When they really thought about this they finally asked . . . Well, you figure out what they asked. Each letter of the coded verse below represents the letter that comes BEFORE it in the alphabet. Example: B=A, C=B, etc.



IBUI OPU UIF TDSJQUVSF

TBJE' UIBU DISJTU DPNFUI

PG UIF TFFE PG EBWJE'

BOE PVU PG UIF UPXO PG

CFUIMFIFN' XIFSF EBWJE

XBT ?

“AND HE SPAKE
A PARABLE . . .”