

# Week 3

## JOY

*Prayer of the week:*

Almighty God, you have made us and all things to serve you: come quickly to save us, so that wars and violence shall end, and your children may live in peace, honouring one another with justice and love, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.

*Daily Prayer:*

Sustain us, O God, with the power of your love on our journey to meet the one who is coming: Strengthen our weak hands, Make firm our feeble knees, And open blind eyes to the dawning of your kingdom so that our hearts may rejoice as we behold the majesty of our God. We ask this through Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



Day 1

Today's reading is **Isaiah 35**

According to the NET verse 1 uses 3 different terms for desolate places: wilderness, desert and rift valley. (What does your version say?)

A wilderness receives less than 12 inches of rain a year. A desert here is not so much a Lawrence of Arabia kind of desert, but the most desert of the 3. The rift valley has a reputation of being dry and desolate.

All 3 are told to get their dancing shoes on! We live in Australia; we know the heartache dry times bring. The author and reader of this word would have known it also. Yet they are told to lift their eyes, lift their faith, and take heart.

Read the passage again from that perspective. A view of a coming day when everything is made right. Let your faith rise and celebrate the restoration of all things.

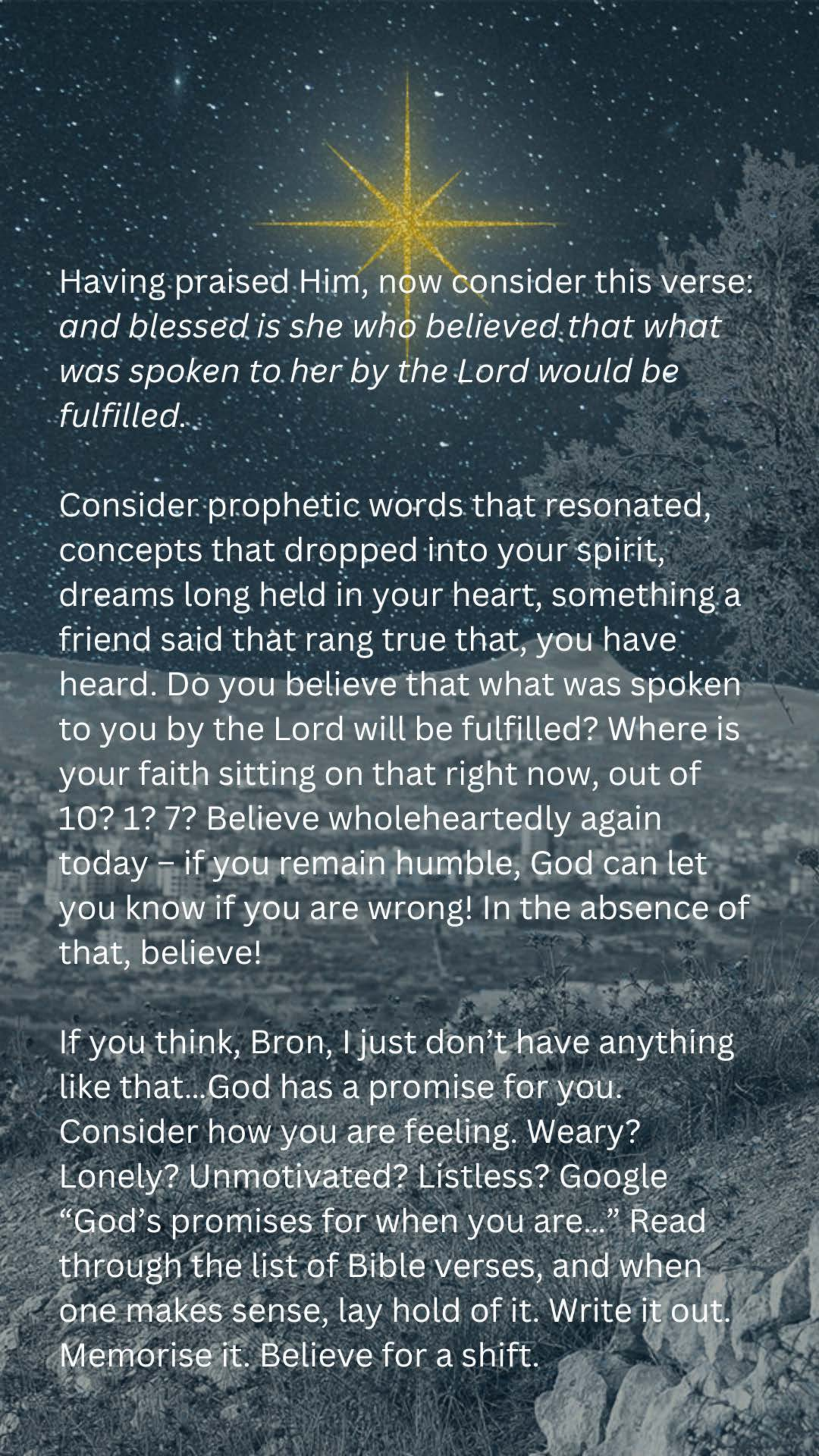
## Day 2

Today's reading is **Luke 1:39-55**

You might know a family like one I know – Amie, Amy, and Sarah. I imagine when they get together it is filled with the prophetic, and praise, and encouragement. This family reunion was supernatural: Elizabeth speaks prophetically by God's Holy Spirit. In response, Mary offers one of the few New Testament psalms of praise, known famously as the "Magnificat". In it, she praises God (v 46-47), then expounds on why from her perspective (v 48-49), then more broadly based on God's mighty, just character (v50-55).

Take time to pray your own "Magnificat" today. Start by praising outwardly, then praise from deep inside you. The Psalmists would instruct their soul to praise God. Now, praise Him for what He has done for you. Reach as far back as you like. Lastly, praise Him for what you see of His character, in the way He deals with the proud, in the way He looks after the downtrodden, in His faithful and steadfast love.





Having praised Him, now consider this verse:  
*and blessed is she who believed that what  
was spoken to her by the Lord would be  
fulfilled.*

Consider prophetic words that resonated, concepts that dropped into your spirit, dreams long held in your heart, something a friend said that rang true that, you have heard. Do you believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled? Where is your faith sitting on that right now, out of 10? 1? 7? Believe wholeheartedly again today – if you remain humble, God can let you know if you are wrong! In the absence of that, believe!

If you think, Bron, I just don't have anything like that...God has a promise for you. Consider how you are feeling. Weary? Lonely? Unmotivated? Listless? Google "God's promises for when you are..." Read through the list of Bible verses, and when one makes sense, lay hold of it. Write it out. Memorise it. Believe for a shift.

## Day 3

Today's reading is **James 5:7-11**

When we truly begin to anticipate the Lord's return, we require patience. You don't need to be patient for something you aren't expectant about. If we do not require patience for Jesus' return, if we aren't feeling a bit antsy, we probably aren't thinking about it enough.

BUT, once we begin to long for it, we will need to be patient. If we suffer persecution, we will need patience. If "down here" we are experiencing the trouble that Jesus told us in John 16:33 we would, we need patience. James compares us to a farmer waiting for rain. Coming from regional NSW, Australia, we get that we are a land "of drought and flooding rains". James tells us to not just be patient, but to strengthen our hearts, for the Lord's return is near. If that was the case 2000 years ago, it's a lot nearer now. How do we strengthen our hearts? Psalm 27:24 *says wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart.*





Isaiah 40:31 they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. The idea here is of patience and strength going hand in hand.

He gives us further instruction for “in the waiting”. Do not grumble against one another. Pause. How much would your life change if you fulfilled that one instruction? Just zipped your lip. Imma be honest. I would say a lot less.

So, we wait patiently, we strengthen our hearts, we don't grumble against each other, and we endure. We last. We stand. We make it. We see how good God truly is. He makes Himself known as the God full of compassion and grace to Moses when He passes by Him on the mountain. Jonah declared that that is who he knew God to be when He pardoned the city of Nineveh. This is the God who sustains us, and the God we will see face to face.



## Day 4

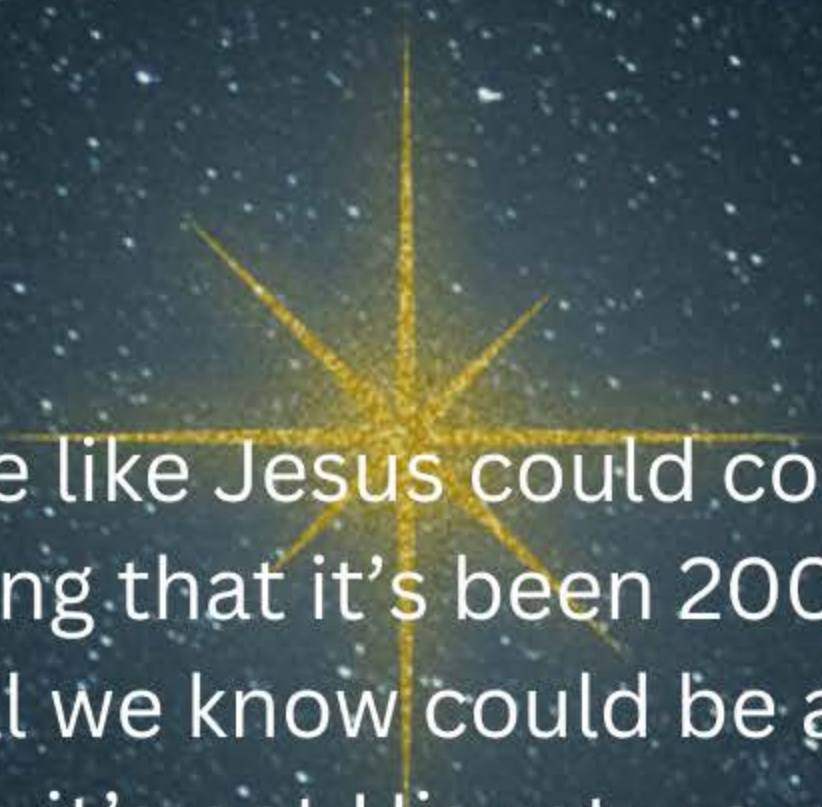
Today's reading is **Matthew 11:2-11**

John, imprisoned and knowing the hatred he is facing has him in an incredibly precarious position, sends a question to Jesus: are you the one?

Having seen John's confidence in John 1 and 3, and Matthew 3, it might seem odd that there are questions now. Did John have doubts? Maybe. It could also have to do with John preaching the judgment to come. Jesus is here – but it's John in prison, not Herod Antipas who was living in an adulterous relationship with his brother's wife.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul encouraging the believers to not stress about those who have died. It hadn't entered their minds that they would die – Jesus said He was coming back! Their expectation was immediate fulfilment; perhaps John's was too. The lack of such can cause discombobulation, disorientation, even discouragement.





We are to live like Jesus could come back today, knowing that it's been 2000 years so far and for all we know could be another 2000. Maybe it's not His return you are waiting for, but the immediate fulfilment of another word or promise you are believing for. Perhaps your temptation is to ask – is this legit, or should I be seeking something else?

This advent, let us attend to the preparation of our hearts, and apply what Jesus sent back to John: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them – and blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me”.

Journal what Jesus could write to you, perhaps something like “look around. People are getting saved. People who thought they would never have a baby are holding their baby. People without hope now have hope. I am breaking through in miraculous ways. My Holy Spirit lives in you. Stand firm, don't give up, don't get offended with me. I will finish what I started in you.”



## Day 5

Today's reading is **Isaiah 40:1-11**

I received a prophetic word in a regional event this year.

I want to just say this to you: You're not going to walk on a tightrope. You're walking on a road. A flat broad road. Full of peace, full of joy, full of more than enough. The last 8 months you've been walking on a tightrope. God says I'm going to start healing you and restoring you. Other people would have packed their bags and gone to a beach somewhere in California, but you've stood the ground. You've stood it and God says, daughter today, I'm putting ring on your finger and I'm establishing you, on a level you've never been before.

The 8 months he was referring to had indeed been very real, and 2/3 of the room knew it: the word felt very apt.

Over the next 3 months, that tightrope season came to an end, and I eagerly looked forward to the flat broad road, full of peace, full of joy, full of more than enough season.





A few weeks later I broke my neck. Since then, I have continued to look forward to my flat broad road. I remind myself that to most of the population of the world, I am in a streets of gold season. They would long for the life of an average Australian. But...it's not a flat broad road for me. Not yet.

This passage reminds me that not only would these exiled Israelites return to their land (the hope of which comforted them greatly), not only would Jesus arrive on the scene, bringing salvation, but one day: every valley must be elevated, and every mountain and hill levelled. The rough terrain will become a level plain, the rugged landscape a wide valley, the splendour of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it at the same time, for the Lord has decreed it.

This is what is coming for us. We are all going to be in a flat, broad road season. He is going to bring it.





If that return makes your heart nervous, commit yourself to Jesus, who like a shepherd He tends His flock, He gathers up the lambs with his arm; He carries them close to His heart; He leads the ewes along.

I look at what God has done for me, but in the light of what He has revealed for all of us. I believe for my broad flat road while knowing one day I will receive it in full. I believe for a healthy body, while knowing one day I'll get a new one. I believe for peace, knowing one day peace will be all I know.