

**1. A founding principle.**

Genesis 12:2b+3b (NLT) - "I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.<sup>3</sup> All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

**2. The same principle today (conclusion of DNA series).**

Matthew 10:8b (NLT) - "Give as freely as you have received!"

Statement from the Pledge - "The welcome mat is out and our arms and hearts are open to "freely receive and freely give."

**3. The same principle forever (beginning of Advent).**

Matthew 1:20-21 (NLT) - As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Mary's hope was founded upon the One who was growing inside of her; exactly the same as it is for every believer.

## **Study Guide**

1. Can you think of an instance in which you hoped for a long time that a certain thing would happen, and it did? How was the experience of waiting? How did you feel upon fulfillment of the hope?
2. Conversely, can you recall a circumstance that you hoped would turn out a certain way, and then it did not? Same questions above: how did you process it?
3. The Christmas Story is an odd story to focus on hope, for it is written in such a bleak time; and yet, it is historically the first remembrance and notice of Advent. What does that messaging say to you today?
4. At the end of the day, hope is more likely when it is embraced apart from circumstances improving (though that is not an incorrect consideration). The Christmas Story directs our attention and focus to a Person - Jesus. How does that affect your understanding and direct your energies?
5. Take some time to slow down and ponder this first week of Advent. Ask the Lord to birth in you a new sense of hope...