

A pair of hands, likely belonging to a person of African descent, are held open with palms facing upwards. The hands are positioned at the bottom of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The background is dark and moody, with some light rays or smoke-like effects emanating from behind the hands, creating a dramatic and spiritual atmosphere.

*You*

## How Will You Respond?

*As many as received Him, to them He  
gave the right to become children of God,  
even to those who believe in His name.*

—John 1:12

# Ordinary People, Extraordinary Savior



During this Christmas season, as you consider the spiritual example of each of the characters featured in the nativity scene, ask yourself, “How will I respond to the Christmas story this year?”

- Like Mary, will you be *available* to God—no matter what others may say?
- Like Joseph, will you be *obedient* to God—even when you don’t fully understand what He is doing?
- Like the angels, will you *worship* Jesus—and make Him the center of your life?
- Like the shepherds, will you be *humble* to admit your sin—and be used by God?
- Like the wise men, will you *sincerely seek* to know Jesus—and receive His guidance and light?
- Most of all, will you *believe* in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, for the forgiveness of your sins?

What a tragedy it would be to go through this Christmas season without receiving the greatest gift of all—God’s gift of forgiveness. God doesn’t force it on you, and He doesn’t automatically bestow it on you. You have to receive the gift.

No gift is a gift unless you receive it. Jesus said it is the same way with salvation. We have to believe in Him and trust in Him. You may ask, “How do I receive that gift of forgiveness?” God made it so simple that even a child can understand.

Like the shepherds, we must admit our need for forgiveness: “God, I’m a sinner. I know I deserve punishment. I’m sorry for my sins.” We have to admit our sin, and then we put our faith in what Jesus did for us, believing that when He died on that cross two thousand years ago, in some inexplicable way He took the punishment from God so that we could experience heaven. We can’t receive God’s gift of forgiveness by being a good person, by joining the church, or by having godly parents or grandparents. No, we receive the gift of salvation only by trusting in Jesus. More than anything else, Christmas tells us that God loves us. It doesn’t matter who you are, and it doesn’t matter what you’ve done. God loves you. In the Bible, God said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

God loves us, but we have wandered away from God. We have allowed other people and other things to take His rightful place in our lives. But even though we have spurned God’s love, even though God has every right to write us off and to begin again, He didn’t do that. God so wanted a relationship with you that He sent Christ to take your punishment so

# God with Us



that you could spend eternity with Him in heaven. God's gift is based on His unparalleled love. Such a thought is beyond our comprehension. That's why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"