

## **A TIME FOR FAMILY**

**December 1**

Mary Jane Downie

Some of my greatest memories growing up are times spent with family. They are pretty simple memories too, nothing extravagant, laying on the beach at the lake, water skiing, tubing, having a sleepover in an old milker's cabin at my grandparent's farm, to name a few. I mean, let's be honest, not all family time was amazing. I had my fair share of wishing I were an only child or being exasperated by siblings, but for the most part, my memories of growing up with siblings and tons of cousins are very happy!

Now, being a parent, I get to witness the other side of things. Being a mom defines who I am in almost every aspect of my life. I have a feeling that I am not alone in my feelings, but nothing hurts me more than when my kids are angry at each other. I just want them all to get along flawlessly all the time! I have faith that despite having some rough moments, one day, they will appreciate each other for who they are despite their differences.

Cousins are important too! Just like I loved the time I got to spend with my own cousins growing up, I love that my kids get to spend time with their cousins. In fact, just this last month we took a trip to Manitoba for a family gathering where we got to spend a weekend with my aunts, uncles, cousins and their kids. It was so amazing how even though we don't see each other very often, the kids all played together like they were long lost besties! What an amazing tie family has.

### **Please read Luke 1:5-25**

This passage focuses on Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were followers of God and longed for a child and family of their own. In those days, it was even more tragic for a couple to be without children as they would have been looked down on by their peers. Others would have looked at them as sinful assuming God was punishing them by not giving them children. Imagine how joyful and thankful they would have been when they were given the news that they would have a child! Let's take it one step further. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was Elizabeth's cousin. After all the dust settled around the scandal of Mary's pregnancy, I would imagine that Elizabeth and Mary, would have been so thrilled to be able to share the birth of their baby boys together! It turns out that Elizabeth's child would be Jesus' cousin! So, Jesus, like you and me, had cousins too! Gabriel was very specific about how Elizabeth and Zechariah would need to raise their son John, just as Gabriel was specific with Mary and Joseph that Jesus was the Son of God. What a fantastic detail God had worked out, that both these mom's, with important jobs to do, would also have each other to rely on for support!

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus it is easy to get caught in the miracle of it all! The Son of God, came to earth for us. Sometimes it seems too unrelatable, doesn't it? I mean, my sons are just regular old kids! I can't relate! That's just the point, Jesus was born into a regular old family, like mine and yours, with siblings and cousins and all the fun and chaos that goes with it! The point is that despite being the Son of God, he CAN relate to us because he also lived it. How amazing is that? He was born into an earthy family, but also to welcome us into his heavenly family!

Spend some time praying for your own family today. Pick a sibling and a cousin to pray for during the week ahead. And, if you are really ambitious, send them a text or give them a call, just to let them know what you prayed for them!