



**1/2/2022**

**Dear Students,**

Think of something you did for the first time in 2021. What did you like about it? Or what did you learn from it?

Now think of something new you would like to do or try in 2022. What can you do to make it happen? What stumbling block could be in your way?

The Bible says that Jesus can be like a stumbling block - an uneven stone in the floor or on the road that makes you trip or fall.

Can Jesus ever be a stumbling block to something you want to do? Why or why not?

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah warned the people not to turn their fears into stumbling blocks that would keep them from following God. Isaiah writes:

**Isaiah 8:11-15**

**11** The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does. He said, **12** “Don’t call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don’t live in dread of what frightens them. **13** Make the Lord of Heaven’s Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble. **14** “He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall... **15** Many will stumble and fall, never to rise again. They will be snared and captured.”

If you get caught up in following other people and worrying about what they think, you can easily get trapped in fear or false beliefs. Legalism (making up more and more rules for what it means to be a good person or live the right way) can trap you the same way:

**Romans 9:31-33**

**31** God's people, who were seeking a law that would put them right with God, did not find it. **32** And why not? Because they did not depend on faith but on what they did. And so they stumbled over the “stumbling stone” **33** that the scripture speaks of: “Look, I place in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall. But whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.”

Look at that last verse again. “But whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.” That’s good news!

The story of Jesus being born is the story of how not to get tripped up. Almost everyone knows the first part of the story - Mary and Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, a baby boy sleeping in a stable, on a bed of hay. Today we’ll look at what happens next, just a month and a half after Jesus was born:

### **Luke 2:22-38**

**22** The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, **23** as it is written in the law of the Lord: “Every first-born male is to be dedicated to the Lord.” **24** They also went to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons, as required by the law of the Lord.

**25** At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him **26** and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah. **27** Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required, **28** Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

**29** “Now, Lord, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace. **30** With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, **31** which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: **32** A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel.”

**33** The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him. **34** Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, “This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against **35** and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.”

**36** Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. **37** Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and

prayer. **38** She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Simeon and Anna didn't live to see the end of the story - Jerusalem isn't totally safe even today, and the world we live in hasn't been fixed and made perfect yet. But they saw Jesus, and that was enough. Why? Why did they praise God for little Jesus?

Because they could see with their own eyes that God had entered the world. They could see the process. If you're really really hungry and you walk into the kitchen and see your mom or dad cooking dinner, it's easier to wait - you haven't eaten yet, but you know something good is already happening for you.

It's like that with Jesus.

Paul and Isaiah warn us not to think we can solve the world's problems by ourselves, either by blindly following rules, or by making up our own excuses for doing whatever we want. You can't make the world right by doing wrong!

God promises us that if we keep our faith in Him, we won't be disappointed. Just like Simeon and Anna trusted in God and got to see Jesus.

Only God can fix the world, and we can trust His promises. That's what Anna and Simeon want us to know.

When you put your trust in Jesus and follow him, you're also helping to fix the world!

**Challenge:** When you notice things that aren't right, ask Jesus to fix them! And keep trusting in God while you wait.

**Close in Prayer:** "Dear Jesus, please help us not to trip ourselves up but to follow you with confidence. Please fix the world! Show us how to help, and help us trust you while we wait. Amen."

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