



THE CHRISTMAS STORY

DIGGING DEEPER

FOREVER HOME

DECEMBER 22

The birth of Jesus was the announcement of God's eternal love for everyone. The shepherds, the wise men, Mary and Joseph—all were invited into the story of redemption. The message of Christmas is that God's "Forever Home" includes everyone: those who are near, those who feel far, and those who, like the faithful, may sometimes feel forgotten. Everyone has a place in His family.

Work through the following questions and scriptures on your own or get together with your group, spiritual running partners, or family to talk through what you are learning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We heard the story of Jamal and Wanda's mix up for holiday dinner. If you accidentally invited someone to dinner, and they wanted to attend anyway, what would be your response, and why? Does your family ever have "strangers" over to break bread?
2. When you hear or read the Christmas story, which character of the story (Magi, Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth, or Shepherds) stand out to you most and why?
3. Read **Luke 2:1-20**.
Make some observations about this passage (What does the text say?):
 - What do you notice and what are you curious about?Make some interpretations (What does the passage mean?):
 - What do you learn about God?
 - What do you learn about humanity?Now make some applications (what's my response?):
 - How are you encouraged, challenged, or convicted by this passage?
 - What should be our response to this passage?

KEY SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-20 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **(Continued)** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

PRAYER

God, we thank You for the incredible gift of Your Son and the good news of His coming. We pray that we would embrace this good news each and every day, allowing it to transform our lives and guide our actions. May we respond to your good news today with faith, as expectant as the shepherds were that night. May their joy and wonder be reflected in us. You are a God who looks beyond outward appearances and social status, seeing into the heart. Align our hearts with Yours, Lord. We desire to be humble, faithful, and willing to share with others all that we have seen and experienced in You.

PRACTICE

1. The Shepherds couldn't contain their joy and wonder, eagerly sharing with others what they had experienced that miraculous night in Bethlehem. What would it look like for us to do the same—to become witnesses to the incredible ways God has worked in our lives? Who around us might be longing to hear about the hope, love, and grace that God continues to offer?
2. As Christmas Eve services approach, consider this: What if we took the next step in drawing others closer to Jesus? What if we made it a priority to invite someone to experience the beauty of Christmas through the services at each of our campuses? Let’s encourage one another to take that step, to reach out, and to share the invitation to encounter the Savior.
 - Daily advent readings (suggestions from Gateway Staff)
 1. [\(Practicing the Way Advent](#)
 2. [The Songs: Tell a Story](#)
 3. [Honest Advent](#)
 4. [Lectio 365: Daily advent](#)
 5. [First Born by Poor Bishop Hooper: musical/ visual story of Jesus](#)