

LUKE'S CHRISTMAS STORY

How to Use This Discussion Guide with Your Group

Start with a prayer and read the portion of the text from your Bible or an app (use whatever translation you're comfortable with, but we suggest the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV)). Then read the summary paragraph(s) and talk through the questions for that section. You can work through this guide in one session or spread it out over several – whatever works for your group. As you read and discuss, consider how what you're reading applies to your life today. Don't forget to close with prayer!

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

1. What is one way that your hometown is different now than when you grew up? Is it still “home” to you? Why or why not?

Read Luke 2:1-7.

Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph make the journey south—some eighty miles—because the Roman emperor has ordered a census. Bethlehem is King David's birthplace, and the registration point for his descendants. Here Jesus is born—with a manger as a makeshift cradle in the crowded town.¹

2. Look at Luke 1:30-35. In light of the promises to Mary, how might she feel as she awaits delivery in a stable? How does this tie into God's plan (Micah 5:2)?
3. Do you think Mary might have been hoping that the angels could have made 'accommodation arrangements' for them at Bethlehem? How do you cope when God fails to do what you have 'reasonably expected Him to do'?
4. Many times, our best plans are interrupted with inconveniences. Name each of the inconveniences to Mary and Joseph that are shown in this story.
5. Like many situations that we see as inconveniences, God turns them for His glory. In what way did God use the census as opposed to it just being a bad inconvenience?
6. Why do you suppose the Savior of the world was born in an obscure village and laid in a manger?
7. Do you think Mary and Joseph understood the full significance of the child they brought into the world?
8. How did God take a “hopeless situation” in your life and use it for good? What did that teach you?

¹ Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., pp. 473–474). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

Read Luke 2:8-20.

The first people to hear the news are some shepherds. They are usually the last to be told anything, because they are out on the hills with their flocks. Luke is telling us that this birth is good news for all kinds of people—not just for the great and the good, the clever or the religious. Heaven is split open as the angels sing God’s praise. Their joy is echoed by the shepherds—and reverberates throughout the Gospel.²

9. How does the shepherds’ experience with the angels compare to that of Zechariah (Luke 1:8-9) and Mary (Luke 1:26-27)?
10. Of all the people the angels could have visited, why did God send them to the shepherds? How does that relate to Mary’s song (1:46-55)?
11. God appeared to Zechariah, Mary, and the shepherds when they were just being themselves. What does that imply about what it means to be “spiritual”? How has God spoken to you in the ordinary flow of life?
12. If you were to spread the word about what Jesus has done for you, with whom would you speak first?

² Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., p. 474). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.