

LC STUDY GUIDE

Advent

The Passage: Luke 2:1-7

December 12-25

Most groups are hosting a Christmas party this week (which is wonderful).

If you are using this study, we encourage you to do it more as a devotional, inviting people to imagine these 7 verses rather than using our normal analytical-communal approach. Consider being brief so you can enjoy some Christmas spirit with one another.

Intro:

We enter the season of Advent and finish the year 2016 with a wide range of thoughts and feelings. We look back to replay the thoughts and experiences of the year. And for many of us observing Advent, we also look forward in expectancy to the joy and meaning of the coming celebration of our Savior's birth.

We read these familiar verses of the birth of Jesus each year. And we read not merely out of tradition, but because it's the story of the One who brings our salvation, the one who loves us fiercely and unconditionally.

Tonight as we look at the birth story of Jesus, let us not approach the passage merely as a study. Rather, let us marvel at the One who loved us so much, that He chose to come near and become like one of us, so that we may know His forgiveness and grace.

Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ 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. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ 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.

O – Imagine you are Mary or Joseph, returning to Bethlehem to register for the census. Among other things, we know their year was filled with doubt, awe, fear of shame, and trust in God. What thoughts would go through your mind as you trek to Judea? Use your imagination to give some texture to this familiar story.

I – Traditional lore and popular nativity sets have been a bit misleading over the years. It is highly unlikely that Jesus was born in a stable apart detached from a house. Most likely, he was born in the lower quarters of the home belonging to a family showing Mary and Joseph hospitality (it was also highly unlikely the stable animals were present). Luke tells us that Mary puts Jesus in the manger (the feeding trough) not necessarily because he wants to highlight the humility of Jesus' coming (although we see that), but primarily to fulfill what the angel said to the shepherds in verse 12. ("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." Luke 2:11-12). How does Jesus being born in a home change the meaning of the story for you? What is Luke trying to communicate in these first 7 verses?

(In these 7 verses, Luke is highlighting historical context, Joseph's lineage, Jesus' birthplace of Bethlehem—thereby highlighting prophecy—and again, reporting the sign-miracle to the shepherds).

A – Though we are not called to be the virgin-birth mothers of the Savior Jesus, we do have an opportunity to be faithful and obedient to the Lord's leading. How are you encouraged by this faith-story? How can we apply this to the coming weeks and New Year?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
 - b. Complement these questions with "process questions" (what else? what more? what do others think?)
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into "teaching" rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.