



## A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Theme for Advent:	The First Christmas
Text for the Week:	Luke 2:4-7; Micah 5:2
Message for the Week:	The First Christmas: The Place
Theme for the Week:	The place of Jesus birth is an amazing gift to us and our world

## Week 1

### Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

What is the city/town/place that you were born known for?

### Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

### Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Luke 2:4-7 and Micah 5:2](#) out loud.

(Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.)

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

## Respond / Reflect:

What misconceptions did you/do you have about the Christmas story?

Why is it important for us to get the story of Christmas in Luke 2 correct?

What places are important to you on your spiritual journey?

What about the true Christmas story, for example the connections with the OT (Micah 5:2), blows you mind?

## “Try It!”

Read one of the minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) and see what connections you can make to the Christmas story.

## Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you.

*God of Love, your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us. He is a sign of your love. Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent, as we wait and prepare for his coming. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.*

## Missional/Spiritual Practice for the Month: Intentional Conversations

During the month of December, practice Intentional Conversations. [Intentional Conversations](#) challenge us to slow down and go much deeper than transactional conversations. This approach to conversation invites us to connect with others at a deeply personal and authentic level – to understand this practice as deeply spiritual where we begin to encounter the presence of Christ that dwells within the soul of each person we meet. As you engage in conversations throughout the day imagine you are greeting the risen Christ during each conversation. Listen deeply and seek to be fully awake to the presence of Christ that dwells deep with the soul of each person you meet. This way of living begins to profoundly impact the care and thoughtfulness with which we approach each conversation as though we were in conversation with God.

### **Luke 2:4-7**

#### New International Version

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

### **Micah 5:2**

#### New International Version

<sup>2</sup>"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans<sup>[a]</sup> of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,  
from ancient times."

### **Luke 2:4-7**

#### The Message

#### The Birth of Jesus

**2** <sup>1-5</sup> About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So, Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.  
<sup>6-7</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

### **Micah 5:2-4**

#### The Message

<sup>2-4</sup> But you, Bethlehem, David's country,  
the runt of the litter—  
From you will come the leader  
who will shepherd-rule Israel.  
He'll be no upstart, no pretender.  
His family tree is ancient and distinguished.

Meanwhile, Israel will be in foster homes  
until the birth pangs are over and the child is born,  
And the scattered brothers come back  
home to the family of Israel.  
He will stand tall in his shepherd-rule by God's strength,  
centered in the majesty of God-Revealed.  
And the people will have a good and safe home,  
for the whole world will hold him in respect—  
Peacemaker of the world!