



## A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Theme for Advent:	The First Christmas
Text for the Week:	Luke 2:8-18
Message for the Week:	The First Christmas: The First Visitors
Theme for the Week:	From shepherds to Shepherd

## Week 4

### 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?

How did you or how would you announce the birth of your child?

### 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 2:8-18](#) 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:

Out of all the possible people groups/vocations to choose from, why do you think God sent an angel of the Lord to the shepherds? Why do the shepherds go and visit the child?

If God were to send an angel to announce the birth of Jesus to a group of people today, to which group of people would the angel appear?

A shepherd's lifestyle often infuriated the rabbis. What type of lifestyle infuriates you?

How has the announcement of the angels impacted or changed your life? Who are you telling the good news that Jesus Christ is born?

When did the Christmas story take on real significance for you?

## “Try It!”

As you gather with family and friends to celebrate Christmas, share a story about how following the Christ child, our Shepherd, has shaped your life during both good times and difficult times.

## Prayer:

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

*O God, our loving Father, help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the praise of the angels and the gladness of the shepherds. O Lord, let your face again shine on us. You are the shepherd of your people. Lord, lead us in our way and guide us in our walk. In this Advent season we stand on tiptoe— Immanuel, invade our lives. Amen. —based on Psalm 80:1-7*

## 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 2:8-18**

### **New International Version**

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> 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.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

## **Luke 2:8-18**

### **The Message**

<sup>8-12</sup> There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them and God’s glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13-14</sup> At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God’s praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,  
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

<sup>15-18</sup> As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. “Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.” They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed.