



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Theme for Advent:	The First Christmas
Text for the Week:	Luke 2:6-7; John 1:6-14; Matthew 5:17
Message for the Week:	The First Christmas: The Child
Theme for the Week:	Eternity steps into the world

Christmas Day

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 Christmas all about for you?

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 2:6-7; John 1:6-14; Matthew 5:17](#) 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:

How has Christmas changed your life? How are you living / do you live differently on account of Christmas?

If you opened the gift of Christmas, what would you find inside?

Can you name some circumstances in your life that caused you to cry, circumstances for which God sent Jesus to come along side of you?

How do we sanitize (make it more pleasant than it really was) Christmas? What effect does this have?

Has anything you learned during this Advent season changed the way that you view Christmas?

“Try It!”

Create a nativity based on what we talked about this Advent season. What would it look like? Talk about what would be different and what would be the same as a “traditional” nativity.

Prayer:

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

Emmanuel, God with us, you are our heart's delight. Because of your amazing love, you came to earth, you became one of us, you reached out to us while we were lost, you rescued us from death, you brought us salvation. Your love is so high and wide and deep that it, and only it, could reach this suffering world. You came to bring an end to our sadness, to dry our tears, to still our fears, to give us hope. In deep gratitude we praise you. We worship you for dwelling among us. Amen

-From the Worship Sourcebook

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.

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Luke 2:6-7 New International Version

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and 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.

John 1:6-14

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Matthew 5:17

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Luke 2:6-7 The Message

⁶⁻⁷ 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.

John 1:6-14

⁶⁻⁸ There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

⁹⁻¹³ The Life-Light was the real thing:

Every person entering Life
he brings into Light.

He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.

He came to his own people,
but they didn't want him.

But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,

He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.

These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten,
not flesh-begotten,
not sex-begotten.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.

We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,

Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.

Matthew 5:17-18

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ “Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working.