

5

Season of Wonder

Jesus' Birth

Luke 2:1-20

Waking Christmas morning and knowing that the magic day has come. Running downstairs to discover what's under the tree. Opening a package and finding something special that was selected just for you. Christmas is a day of delights that we can always approach with fresh wonder.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What do you like best about the way you currently celebrate Christmas?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. You may or may not have had idyllic Christmases as a child, but as you think back over your past Christmases, what are you thankful for?

Try to read and reflect on Luke 2 as though for the first time, looking at the unfolding scenes through the wonder-filled eyes of a child. *Read Luke 2:1-20.*

1. The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 70 miles. What would it be like to be Joseph taking that weeklong walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

What would it be like for Mary?

2. If you were in Mary and Joseph's place, what kinds of conversations with God might you be having during this time?

3. Luke's account of Jesus' birth reads like a newspaper article (vv. 4-7). What key facts do you learn?

What overall impression does Luke leave you with?

4. What, for you, is the significance of the place and circumstances around Jesus' birth?

5. We like to see shepherds on Christmas cards or in a children's pageant. But back then they were an outcast group. So, what in the angel's message would be incredible to them (vv. 9-14)?

6. What do you notice about the shepherds' response to what they experience (vv. 16-20)?

7. God had been preparing the characters of Mary and Joseph to be Jesus' earthly parents. From all that you have seen of them so far, what qualities of strong character do you perceive?

8. What aspects of their character would you like to emulate and why?

9. We see in the passage how the shepherds rush off to share the good news and then how others respond with amazement. What can you do to nurture the experience of the holy wonder of Christmas for your friends and family?

Ask God to re-create in you a childlike wonder as you ponder the miracle of his Son's birth.

Now or Later

Read Luke 2:21-52 for a number of important events from Jesus' early life.

6

In Search of the King

The Magi Meet Jesus

Matthew 2:1-18

I like to do lots of research when I'm planning a trip. I talk to people, read guidebooks, search the Internet and so on. For me, all of that research feeds into the anticipation of the trip itself; preparation helps me enjoy the journey and enhances my learning. But sometimes a guidebook overstates the beauty or intrigue of a particular spot, and I experience some disappointment with the reality of the trip.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Describe something you once strongly desired (for example, a car, television, stereo or a relationship with a particular person). When you got it, did it fulfill your expectations? Explain why or why not.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What are you currently waiting for or anticipating? How does it affect your thoughts during the day?

The nation of Israel waited for centuries for God's anointed king to be born. Jesus' birth, however, was not greeted with