



The Birth of Jesus

Week 3

How Did it Go? *(10 Minutes)*

Did you do any of these practices? If so, what effect did it have? If not, what got in the way?

- Did you think about ways the Holy Spirit is nudging you to be available and surrender to God's will like Mary?
- Did you serve someone in your community last week just by being willing to serve, and not worrying about whether you are "wonderful" at serving?
- Did you praise God for the wonderful ways He worked through fall Alpha at FPC?
- Did you pray that those who have recently completed Alpha successfully transition into FPC or another faith community?

Read

The story of Jesus' birth is probably one of the best-known stories in the Bible, both inside and outside of the church. As pastor and author Ken Bailey notes, "The more familiar we are with a biblical story, the more difficult it is to view it outside of the way it has always been understood" (Bailey, 25). Before we read such a familiar passage, we need to prepare ourselves to see it with fresh eyes and hear it with fresh ears. Take a few minutes before reading the Scripture together to share your recollections of the text, and what the commonly accepted narrative is. Be intentional about setting aside any preconceived notions you (or others) might have as we get into the text.

Before reading the text, pray that God would reveal something new to you from it.

Then read aloud the passages for this week, **Luke 2:1-7**.

Head *(15-20 Minutes)*

Observe the text and the author's main points.

1. Having set aside any preconceptions you had about this text prior to reading it, what is something you thought was there but wasn't?
2. What is something you missed in your initial recollections?
3. Our passage opens with the first Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, and ends with Jesus being born in humble, vulnerable circumstances. What does this tell us about the values of the Kingdom of God?

Heart *(15–20 Minutes)*

Envision how the text - when applied - might transform your inner life in terms of your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

1. In light of these values of the Kingdom of God, how does this affect the way we go about our own lives during this Advent season?
2. How might looking beyond societal "status" help us to see others as God sees them? How would this affect our relationships with others?
3. The Bible places great value on hospitality (see Gen. 18:1-8 and Heb. 13:2). Mary and Joseph were hosted in a typical peasant home. If those humble circumstances were good enough for the Son of God, how might that encourage you to offer hospitality to others regardless of what your own circumstances may be?

Hands *(10 Minutes)*

Apply the text by moving from inward reflection to outward action looking for ways to live the text out in our lives to serve others.

Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- This Advent season, as you hear familiar stories, read familiar Scriptures, and hear familiar songs, ask God to help you let go of your preconceived notions about all of them and see them with fresh eyes and hear them with fresh ears. Ask Him to show you something new in the familiar.

Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors

- Is there someone in your neighborhood, your workplace, or even in your own family who is in need of hospitality this Advent season? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to invite them into your life, even in a small way.

Reaching Beyond

- Find a copy of Ken Bailey's *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, and read more about the birth narrative.

Alpha Prayer Points

Thank you for praying! Your prayers have made a tangible difference.

- Praise God for sending 70 people to the fall Alpha. Praise God for the approximately 45 non-Christians or searching-Christians that attended—the highest number so far. This is a huge testimony to your prayers!

- As fall Alpha concludes, pray for the participants to remain connected in community, and to specifically get plugged into FPC or another faith community. This is an especially challenging transition (for all churches)—it is when many people tend to drop out or stall out in their faith journey.
- Pray that FPC covenant partners are alert and sensitive to the Holy Spirit during this Christmas season to build relationships and have spiritual conversations with visitors, non-Christians, searching Christians, doubting Christians, neighbors, and others.