



# Community Group Discussion Guide

December 21, 2025

Luke 2:1-20 | Good News. Great Joy. All People.

## MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: Whose was a birth announcement that brought you great joy? Why?*

## DISCUSS

A compelling part of the story of Jesus' birth is noting that God came through channels people thought were impossible—an old lady giving birth to a son named John (Luke 1) and a teenage virgin from a small town giving birth to a Son who would be called Jesus (Luke 2). God came through people seen as ordinary (Elizabeth and Zechariah; Mary and Joseph) and in places snubbed as unworthy (Nazareth and Galilee). God went to out-of-the-way places and spoke to unsuspecting people to prepare them to receive the Savior of all people. His birth changed history. This was all part of God's plan to redeem mankind and to provide forgiveness and salvation. Luke 2:1-20 ties the earthly and the heavenly natures of Jesus closely together while continuing the theme of God using earth's lowest to do God's highest.

⇒ *How has God used you in His continuing theme of grace? Were you surprised He used you?*

**Luke 2:1-3:** <sup>1</sup> *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* <sup>2</sup> *This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.* <sup>3</sup> *And all went to be registered, each to his own town.*

Luke moved from the miraculous story of the birth of John to the senate in Rome with an emperor seeking taxes. In this, Luke set Jesus' birth in world history. Luke had a Greek audience that would have been interested in the political situation concerning Rome. At the height of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus ruled as emperor over most of the civilized world and was considered to be the restorer of the world who offered peace and security. However, this chapter in Luke told of the coming One who would offer the kind of peace that was beyond the might of the most powerful man on earth.

⇒ *How did the Roman rulers, considered to be like gods, contrast with the tiny baby in a manger who truly was God in the flesh?*

⇒ *Why is the peace offered by God different than any peace the world has to offer?*

Rome took a census every 14 years for both military and tax purposes. Most Jews hated taking part in a census because they viewed it as sacrilegious since God alone was to number His people (see 2 Samuel 24). The Jews didn't have to serve in the Roman army, but they had to fill out a census as a means to register to pay taxes. Each Jewish male had to return to the city of his family line to record his name, occupation, property, and family members. God used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His Word in Micah 5:2. The decree went out in God's perfect timing and according to God's perfect plan to bring His Son into the world.

⇒ *How do Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:1 demonstrate that God controls all history and He moves in the affairs of nations to accomplish His purposes?*

**Luke 2:4-6:** <sup>4</sup> *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,* <sup>5</sup> *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.* <sup>6</sup> *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.*

Taxation followed a man's lineage, so Joseph had travel the 70-90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem in Judea—King David's birthplace. Joseph traveled with a pregnant Mary to whom he was betrothed. According to Matthew 1:24-25, they were living as husband and wife but abstaining from sexual relations until Jesus was born. The twist to their the story is that it is pagan authorities who served as the catalyst to bring Jesus to Bethlehem.

⇒ *What are your insights into the fact that Caesar unknowingly became the servant of God's eternal purposes?*

**Luke 2:7:** *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

Old Testament promises were fulfilled through the actions of the unlikeliest of people and Jesus entered the world in as mundane way as possible. For this moment on which the history of humanity pivots, Luke made a fairly barren statement about the birth of the Savior of the world—just a manger and animals and a too-crowded inn. Confirming her virginity, Luke states that Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, implying she would have more children. Following the practice of her day, Mary wrapped Him snugly in cloth to give Him warmth, protection, and a sense of security.

⇒ *What does Jesus' ordinary birth reveal about Him?*

Mary then laid Him in a manger—a feeding trough for animals. Mangers were not designed to hold babies; they were designed to hold food and to bring food up to the animal's level. This mention of the feeding trough is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable—a place where animals were sheltered. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs rather than the wooden structure displayed in typical nativity scenes. People also kept animals in their homes. Regardless, the surroundings were dark and dirty and everything pointed to obscurity, poverty, and even rejection as there was no room for them at the lodging place.

⇒ *Discuss this quote from the NIV Commentary on Luke (page 88): The most humble birth for the most exalted figure ever born shows that the key values of life are found in the life itself, not in the trappings that come with life.*

⇒ *Share your insights into this quote by Max Lucado: He looks anything but a king—yet here He is, majesty in the midst of the mundane. Holiness in the filth of sheep manure. Divinity entering the world on the floor of a stable, through the womb of a teenager and in the presence of a carpenter.*

**Luke 2:8:** *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

Shepherding had changed from a family business in David's time to a despised occupation. Shepherds were typically outcasts in Israel. Their work not only made them ceremonially unclean, but

it also kept them away from the temple for weeks at a time so that they could not be made clean. Many shepherds were accused of robbery and using land they had no rights to.

Shepherding was also a lonely occupation, particularly at night, as a shepherd stood his watch, making sure sleeping sheep did not wake up and wander and that predators did not attack the sheep. Yet, shepherds had a tender side, counting the sheep constantly, lifting the weak on to their shoulders, and creating pens where the sheep could sleep. Since sheep used for temple sacrifices were kept in fields outside Bethlehem, there is a possibility that this group of shepherds were caring for flocks that would provide for sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

⇒ *Why is it fitting that shepherds were an important part of the story of Jesus' birth (see John 1:29 and John 10:1-18)?*

**Luke 2:9-10:** *<sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.<sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

By appearing to the shepherds, the angel of the Lord revealed the grace of God toward humanity. The shepherds added a sense of everyday living. It is to these men God brought the news of His Son's arrival. For centuries the Jews had waited for this, and when it finally happened, shepherds heard first. In the most unlikely place amid the most unlikely spectators, God provided the world a reason for joy: the gift of His Son to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept Him.

⇒ *Why is "great fear" a fitting response to the appearance of the angel of the Lord?*

⇒ *Why is it good news that God still breaks into ordinary lives?*

⇒ *Using verse 10, discuss how this represents the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Good news. Great joy. All people.*

**Luke 2:11-14:** *<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

The angel announced that "this day in the city of David" was born "a Savior, who Christ the Lord." The angel used three titles, all steeped in Old Testament Scripture:

a. Savior: The title denotes a healer and a deliverer, implying the call of Jesus to deliver His people. Some Jews were waiting for a savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped that a savior would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus ultimately came to deliver from sin and death.

b. Christ or Messiah: Both words mean "anointed"-- to be set apart for some special purpose as in the Chosen One to rule as King in fulfillment of God's promises to David.

c. Lord: This is the holy, personal name of God and indicates the divine nature of the One who was born.

⇒ *Which title is the most significant to you? Explain your answer.*

In Verse 12, the angelic revelation of a sign implies the angels wanted the shepherds to go and see the child for themselves. This baby in the manger was God Himself, with all the power and authority of heaven. This caused a host of angels to suddenly appear, praising God and giving Him glory. The angel host also declared “and on earth peace”—a worldwide gospel of peace to people who are the objects of God’s good will and to whom He graciously reveals His truth.

⇒ *How does it encourage you to know that God’s favor rests on you?*

**Luke 2:15-16:** *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.*

The shepherds received by faith the message God sent them and then responded with an immediate decision to go to Bethlehem to see what God had reported to them. It shows God’s audacity that He would use society’s lowest occupations and it’s most meager resources to begin His awesome work of salvation. Although God has unlimited power, He chooses to work through frail human beings. The shepherds couldn’t have gotten through the doors of a palace or wealthy home—but they could go inside a stable. And, after a search, they found what they knew to look for: a newborn Baby wrapped in cloths and laying in a manger.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: This is a King in disguise, the King of Heaven brought down to human size, born into a cold night, and laid in a rough, wooden manger. He could have been born in a palace. He could have entered history as a grown man—spared the indignities of babyhood. But doing any of these things would have obscured His message that His Kingdom really is for all of humanity, even the poor and oppressed. The greatest King of all was the one capable of stooping to the lowest level.*

⇒ *How does the ordinariness of Jesus’ birth prove that He came to turn our value system, everything about us, upside down?*

**Luke 2:17-20:** *<sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them*

It wasn’t enough for the shepherds to just see Jesus. They were compelled to share the story and what had been told them about this child. Shepherds were not permitted to testify in court, but God used these humble men to be the first human witnesses to share that prophecy had been fulfilled and that the Messiah had been born. These were changed men going back to the same job with a new song of praise in their hearts. What God had said, God had done.

⇒ *What does it teach you that shepherds became Jesus’ first evangelists?*

⇒ *We have become so accustomed to this story that we are just not as moved as we were when the story was new to us. How can you find new joy in the story of Jesus’ birth?*

Verse 19 indicates Mary treasured these experiences in her heart, deeply reflecting on all that God was doing, and who her Son would grow up to become.

⇒ *What are your thoughts when you reflect on the birth of Jesus?*

## **TRANSFORM**

Sometimes we accept Jesus' audacious claim without question. Sometimes we wonder what difference it should make to our lives that a baby was born 2000 years ago. Yet, we are drawn to Jesus because He positioned Himself as the dividing point of life—our lives. According to Jesus, what we think about Him and how we respond will determine our destiny for eternity.

- ⇒ *When did Jesus become "good news" in your life?*
- ⇒ *Have you experienced "great joy" through Him?*
- ⇒ *How will you take the good news of Jesus to the world?*