



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 2: 39-52, Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 1:18-24,
Luke 1:26-56, Acts 2:42, Luke 9:1-6

DAY 1

Read Luke 2:39-52.

In this passage, Luke takes us on a journey to learn about the foundations of our faith as well as many traditions that Mary and Joseph practiced as a people of faith.

- What are some of the faith traditions your family honors during the Christmas season? In what way do they form/shape your story of faith?
- Why do you think it was important for Mary and Joseph to continue to go to Jerusalem each year? Perhaps it was more than just making an annual pilgrimage. What did this journey do for them as a people of faith?
- Why do you think God chose Mary and Joseph to bring about the miracle of Jesus?
- What does the scripture tell you about the way Mary and Joseph parented the baby who would become our Messiah?
- Reflect on the importance of Mary and Joseph being "common" people, even those who lived in poverty. What does this say about God?

DAY 2

Read Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24.

- Imagine for a moment what Mary thought when she first saw the face of God in the eyes of her newborn baby. How would you describe what she saw?

- Joseph had a lot to ponder as well. Matthew records that this a difficult time for Joseph. The woman he was betrothed to marry was pregnant and it wasn't his child. Think about the way Matthew describes Joseph's doubts. What gave him the confidence to keep his pledge and stay with Mary?
- Joseph is told to name the baby, "*Jesus.*" In Hebrew, this name is translated, "*God saves.*" What would you think if you were told you were to be the earthly father of the Son of God? How would you begin to fathom your level of responsibility?

DAY 3

Read Luke 1:39-56.

One of the things we note in this passage of scripture is that Mary journeyed to see her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was Mary's mentor. She helped Mary to understand her identity and that she was chosen by God to birth a miracle.

- Why is it important to be surrounded by seasoned believers? In what ways do mature Christians help your spiritual journey? Who are those you consider to be your spiritual mentor? What qualities do they possess that warrants this title? How have they shaped your faith journey?

Part of a spiritual mentor's role is to help you claim your identity. Too often our identities are shaped by people who don't pour good into our lives. Think about a time when someone didn't affirm who you were and perhaps told you that you were worthless. Now, compare that to the positive words of a mature believer.

- How did the mature believer help you to discover your life's purpose in the faith?

DAY 4

One of our greatest spiritual writers in modern Christendom was Henri Nouwen. Before he died, he wrote, "*The central question is, are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with an ardent*

desire to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty...to touch God's incarnate Word and to taste fully God's infinite goodness?" How do we ensure that our children and young people are men and women of God?

In his sermon, Pastor Bob mentioned that one of the great illusions if you are a parent or follower of Jesus is the belief you can nurture a child or someone else in the faith, even if you don't have faith yourself. In fact, it is impossible to give someone else what you aren't living out yourself. Children and youth learn not by what you say or tell them to do; they learn by what they see you doing.

When you picture the baby Jesus do you conjure up some sort of super baby, perfect and exempt from what normal babies go through? Jesus grew up like a normal child with many of the same difficulties and challenges that our children face. What we need to realize is the importance of Joseph and Mary's role as parents. Even as the son of God, Jesus was also guided by his human parents.

- How are you modelling the faith for our young people or those who are young in the faith?
- Think about your faith. What do you believe? How are you living this out?

DAY 5

When we become believers, we are like children in the faith and each day needs to be focused on faith development so that when we can grow into maturity. No matter how long we have been believers, there are always ways we can learn and grow.

- How are you working on your daily development of faith?
- [Read ACTS 2:42](#). What are the key characteristics of one growing in faith as defined by the ACTS 2 model?
- Are you living out these characteristics in your life?

One way we focus on spiritual development at St. Paul is through "Source Groups," small groups of people who

make the commitment to do life together in a way that goes beyond just attending a study together. Accountability, dedication to understanding Scripture, and fellowship with other believers make a difference.

- If you are part of a Source Group, how are you experiencing this? What impact does the group have on you?
- If you aren't part of a Source Group, can we help you connect with one? [Contact us](#) at the church office if you're interested in connecting with a small group of other believers.

DAY 6

[Read Luke 9:1-6.](#)

- Part of the disciple's life is witnessing. The scripture describes how Jesus sent out the twelve to do works in His name. How are you being a witness for the faith?
- What are some of the stumbling blocks that cause us not to witness? What can you do to overcome those obstacles and fulfill the mandate to "go make disciples?"
- Pastor Bob asked everyone to take one of our "Invite cards" and use it to invite someone to St. Paul for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Why do you think the Christmas season is ripe for new believers? What is it about this season that makes it easier to share the Good News with others? What are you willing to do to reach out?

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.