

STEP ONE PRAY for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Law and Gospel themes to you.

STEP TWO READ the Bible passage repeatedly until you can retell it in your own words.

Luke 2:1-20 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



STEP THREE REVIEW a Bible Commentary to understand the passage's common meaning.

All through Advent, we heard words of hope and newness proclaimed in the context of desolation, the wilderness, and finally humiliation. Now, at Christmas, God's gift of light is given in the darkness. That's where God comes to us--not on the heights but in the depths, where there is desolation, a wilderness of doubt and despair where there is darkness.

Christ was born for the shepherds, just as he was born for tax collectors and prostitutes. he was born, lived, and died for the downtrodden, the outcast, and the outdone of every shape, size color, and description. He said so himself (Mark 2:16-17; Luke 4:16-30). And he did so himself, shedding his light in the darkness to break its grip wherever it reigned.

But that's just the beginning of the good news. For this child, born in the darkness and laid in a trough, was destined to reign and reigns now as Lord of the worlds. He is the one of whom Isaiah sings, of whose government and peace "there will be no end," who establishes and upholds his kingdom "from this time forth and for evermore." He is the one of whom the angel says, "to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12).

For all of our celebrations of Christmas, we seldom catch the startling contrasts involved: that the holy angels should sing to some notorious shepherds, that the Lord of the universe should be tucked away in a cattle trough. But it is in these contrasts that the miracle of Christmas and all of its good news lies. The God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17), who "chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor. 1:28), has come into your darkness because he has chosen you. As they sang to the shepherds, the angels sing to you: "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"--the Lord of all the worlds.

STEP FOUR IDENTIFY GOD'S LAW

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How does God's Law in this passage point out what I am unable to do without Christ?* It may be helpful to underline those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Law. If God's Law is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Law: *As sinners, we are living in darkness where the life and light of God do not exist.*

God's Law message for me is:

STEP FIVE IDENTIFY GOD'S GOSPEL

As you reread the passage, keep asking...*How is God's Gospel (Christ crucified and risen) in this passage freely offering me a new life with God?* It may be helpful to circle those words/phrases that speak to you as God's Gospel. If God's Gospel is implied in the passage, what is the implication?

Possible Gospel: *God has come into the sinful darkness of our lives because he has chosen us to be saved by his appointed Savior.*

God's Gospel message for me is:

STEP SIX PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit might:

- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's death to change what I am doing or not doing.
- + Bring into my life the power of Christ's resurrection for me to live a new life with God.

Meditation Words: "Bands of cloth" (at Jesus' birth and death) "Christ" (meaning: Messiah)