



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Think about it! The Son of God, who fashioned the atoms and molecules that comprise creation, took on our frail humanity and came down to save us—sinful, shortsighted human beings. What a joy-inspiring truth! Each year, Christmas reminds us that *joy* should characterize our lives. But in reality, often it does not.

It's so easy for the songs of the season to leave us tone deaf to the real tune of Christmas. This holiday season, let's saturate our senses with the melody of the incarnation and the joy of welcoming God's Son.



Getting Started: God's Greatest Gift

Poor and dirty, chasing stubborn sheep for a living, the shepherds in Luke 2 might have questioned their worth in society and their importance to God. Maybe you can identify. Most of us live simple lives far from the spotlight, often struggling to overcome the monotony of daily life. Let's look at how God graciously showed His love to a few obscure shepherds on a starry night outside Bethlehem and transformed their lives forever.

If you have a Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia, look up *shepherd*. Take a few minutes to read carefully the information provided. As you do, jot some notes on a separate piece of paper. Often these dictionary entries can become excellent building blocks for lesson points or sermon illustrations.

What was life like for a first-century shepherd? Picture yourself as a shepherd, spending most of your time living outside among animals. What sights, sounds, smells, and feelings do you think you would have experienced?

Quotable

Jesus is the One who came. He's the One who is the King of Glory. He's the One the shepherds paused and worshiped.

— Charles R. Swindoll



Read Luke 2:8–9. Write down several adjectives to describe the setting and mood in verse 8 (in the left column below) and in verse 9 (in the right column below). Focus your adjectives on the contrasts between these two verses.

| Luke 2:8 | Luke 2:9 |
|----------|----------|
| | |

Read Luke 2:10. What were the angels' first words to the shepherds? Why are these words significant?

Your Turn in the Scriptures

Into the dark night God's glory beamed, illuminating the sky above the shepherds. In that day, these often nameless farmhands meant little to the world around them. Yet the birth narrative shows how they were known and loved by God. Let's listen in as the angels herald God's news!

Read Luke 2:10–14, and pay close attention to the angels' announcement. What do these words say about who Jesus is?



If your life had a theme song, what would the title be? Does your theme song reflect the joy of the angels' praise chorus in Luke 2:14? Why, or why not?

Read Isaiah 57:15–19, keeping in mind the announcement of Messiah's arrival described in Luke 2. What do the prophet's words teach about the character and nature of God?

Read John 1:1–5 and Luke 2:11–12. Compare and contrast these passages. Remember: Correlation helps you confirm and clarify the meaning of the passage you are studying.

How would you define *humility*, based on these passages?

Take some time to read Luke 2:15–16 and 2:20. *Specifically*, how did the shepherds respond to the angelic message? If you had been on the hillside that night, what might your response have been? Why?



Does Jesus occupy the center place of worship in your Christmas celebrations? Why, or why not? Write down two practical ways you can keep your focus on Jesus this Christmas.



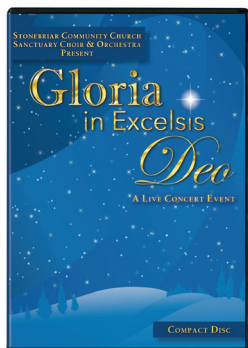
A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for showing me Your unconditional love by sending Your Son to be born, live, die, and rise from the grave to make me Your child. Please help me to live with circumstance-transcending joy. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, amen.

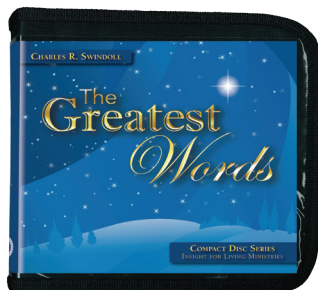




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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts.



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