

PART 2

CONNECT GUIDE

The
First
Noel



WALLACE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Composed By: Chase Campbell
Designed By: Jarred Morgan

AS WE BEGIN

A READING PLAN

WEEK 4

- Luke 1
- Luke 2
- Matthew 1
- Matthew 2
- Luke 1 and 2

WEEK 5

- Luke 1
- Luke 2
- Matthew 1
- Matthew 2
- Luke 1 and 2

WEEK FOUR

LUKE 2:8-20

DAY 1

Welcome back to part 2 of our Christmas study. It's been a real treat to hear so many different perspectives from so many different writers as we walk through these first chapters of Luke. This time of year can be really busy and with all the shopping, parties, family traditions, and celebrations the time for quiet reflection can often be overshadowed by "more pressing" needs. Let me urge you to carve out that time this year, and especially this week. I know that cleaning the house, and prepping the food, and making sure everyone knows the schedule seems important in the moment, but the real life long difference that can be made in this season comes from letting God reveal Himself to you through the Scripture.

In fact, choosing to listen to a message from God is a key part of this week's passage. No, the shepherds weren't caught up in constant barrage of Christmas obligations, because... well, Christmas didn't exist yet. It was, however, a busy time for them. Jewish property laws caused Caesar's census to be quite the migration for a number of people. There was no room in the inn for all the visitors, and we can also assume that many people had left Bethlehem to return to their ancestral property, so the whole town was probably shorthanded on top of being overwhelmed.

The Shepherds were probably enjoying their few moments of peace in the quiet of night when they got the unexpected message. It's not every day that angels greet you and announce the birth of the messiah, but just think for a second how easy it would have been to let all the obligations of a busy schedule rob them of one of the greatest moments in history. They could

have said "Sorry angels, we're shorthanded, have someone else go visit." They could have kept the news to themselves in fear that others wouldn't believe them. They could have refused to go because they didn't trust all the outsiders in their town not to steal the sheep. Instead though, they listened to God's message, dropped everything, and went to sit by the manger with Jesus.

So let me give you this challenge for the next couple of weeks: Forget the propriety of hosting and home presentation. Let someone else feed the corporate materialism culture for a few days. Maybe even skip one of the 2,436 parties with the same sugar cookies and the same conversation and instead just take some time to sit with Jesus. Read the Christmas story. Sit and think on it for a while. Take a cue from the shepherds and walk away from the busyness, sit with Jesus, then go tell someone about Him.

P. Chase Campbell - Pastor of Discipleship

DAY 2

Luke's original audience would have been very familiar with the work of a shepherd. The job was often given to the youngest son, who was responsible for keeping watch over the flock day and night, a role that involved a detailed level of care for each sheep. I imagine that chasing wandering sheep, helping them find food and protecting them from danger would be dirty, exhausting work. I love most animals, and I think that would get old fast. Yet, it was necessary. Sheep were valuable, and often used as an offering to the Lord. When a baby sheep was born that was spotless, the shepherds would immediately

wrap it in swaddling clothes to keep their fleece clean and set it apart for sacrifice.

With that context, Luke's account of the Christmas story is even more significant. Shepherds in a nearby field are the first to hear about the birth of Jesus. An angel told them they would recognize the Savior by this sign: a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found baby Jesus exactly as the angel had described. Luke tells us that when they returned, they glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen. Not only did an angel bring them "good news of great joy," but God had spoken in their language, using a symbol of sacrifice that they would know and recognize. Just like a spotless lamb, Jesus would become our sacrifice.

When I think about this, I can't help but wonder how many times God has done this for me - in ways I haven't even noticed. Is it that God is not speaking to me or that I am not listening? It's easy to feel like God is far away when we treat Him like he isn't invited. During a time of year that is anything but slow, how can you slow down and be more attentive to what God is showing you? How can you leave room for the Holy Spirit this Advent?

For me, this is going to mean committing to an Advent reading plan (like this one) - even on the busiest days - and asking God to help me be more aware of His Spirit in this season. Whatever this looks like for you, I pray that you'll take action to make space for it. As Christians, if we are not aligning ourselves

with the true meaning of Christmas and allowing God to speak to us, we risk missing our sign.

This season, look for the swaddling clothes.

Erin Smith - Member of Wallace Campus

DAY 3

In this passage, a messenger from Heaven announces the good news to a group of shepherds tending their flocks that the Savior, Messiah, and Lord has been born that very night. This is the only place in the New Testament where these three titles of Jesus are placed together. By those three words, this angel was proclaiming that Jesus was to be the Savior who would deliver his people from their enemy. Messiah brings the reminder of the promised deliverer in King David's line who would rescue and deliver God's people both spiritually and physically. Lord is a regal word used to describe God's sovereignty.

Savior, Messiah, and Lord is announcing Jesus is God Himself who will be the Savior and Messiah who delivers His people from sin and its consequences. Thus bringing about joy and peace. The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom, but its meaning is deeper than peace. It means bringing things back to the way they were intended to be. A rightness. Thus, in this simple announcement from a heavenly being we learn deep theology that Jesus is God Himself who has come to save and deliver

His people and will bring peace, not just to the Jews but to all people!

It is no wonder the shepherds were so excited by this news they ran to find this child who had been born. This is miraculous news! I do not have to live my life in fear of what will happen today or tomorrow. I do not have to worry about being busy enough and working hard enough or being good enough to earn my way into heaven. When hard things happen in life, I know I serve a God who loves me enough to have come to earth and rescue me! God is my rescuer from sin. He has done all the hard work for you and for me.

Shalom is a beautiful word. Don't we all long for peace? Christ's birth promises to bring peace! Our souls can rest because Jesus is Lord and He promises peace for those who belong to Him. This peace will one day bring everything right in the world and we can rejoice in that, but we can also experience this peace today. You and I can know that everything that happens to us is in Christ's sovereign control and one day Shalom will reign eternally.

Let us rejoice in the angelic announcement of who Christ is and what his birth brought into our hurting and broken world. The shepherds returned to their lives rejoicing and worshipping God at this news. How will you respond to the truth that Jesus is Messiah, Savior, and Lord?

Kristi Jett - Director of Women's Leadership Pipeline

DAY 4

Without question, Christmas is my favorite time of year. I'm an extremely nostalgic person; therefore, Christmas is filled with memories of decorating the tree, hot chocolate, Christmas movies, and of course presents under the tree. Some of my favorite memories are centered on the Christmas Eve services at First Baptist Church of Waverly, TN. Candles glowed all around, and in my mind, it created the perfect setting to sing carols proclaiming the birth of the Christ to shepherds in fields where they lay. I vividly remember coming home after these services and my mom turning on the record player while my dad lit a candle. We'd sit in the living room in the warmth of the lit Christmas tree and my brother and I would each open one present (this is a tradition that I continue today with my family). We would then read the Christmas story and go to bed with dreams of what would come in the morning.

As much as I love Christmas, can you imagine the very first Christmas? Angels coming to the lowly and proclaiming the birth of the One they've been waiting for. These shepherds experiencing this encounter with "a host" of angels, and having the wherewithal to hear what these messengers of the gospel were saying, THEN going to find this baby that was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a feeding trough.

But it's the reaction to the experience with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, that really grabs my attention. When they left, they returned to their work, "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard...". What a response!! In fact, it's the only appropriate response. When we encounter the

Messiah, we respond with praise and wonder. This is why we celebrate and make much of the Christmas story, so we can live in the wonder of how the Savior entered the world.

I'm also reminded every Christmas Jesus didn't remain in the manger. He grew up into a man who took on the sins for the world offering salvation to all who believe. I would encourage you to celebrate Christmas; it's a great time of the year and a reminder of how God remains faithful, but we can't leave Jesus there. May the manger, always point us to the cross and an empty tomb.

Jarred Morgan - Pastor of Creative Design, College Students, and Communication

DAY 5

The emphasis of Luke 2:8-20 is often put on the marvelous, supernatural experience that surrounded the angelic delivery of the message to the shepherds. It's certainly amazing and worth considering, but I want to focus on the commendable response of the shepherds to the message in verses 15-17. They received the message with faithfulness (v.15). They reacted to the message in faithfulness (v.16). They reported the message for faithfulness (v.17). Each action centers on a different aspect of faithfulness to God (with, in, and for). The reaction of the shepherds to the message sets a pattern for us to follow as the Church: hear the message, act on the message, and then spread the message.

Mary's own response to the message the shepherds are spreading

is also worth contemplating (v.19). Keep in mind, she had her own angelic experience before this in Luke 1:26-38. Unlike the others who wondered over the shepherds' message when they heard it (v.18), Mary's response was to treasure and ponder it in her heart. This was a surprising message for others, but it was an affirming message for her; that's why she treasured it. Additionally, the message previously given to Mary (1:26-38) is being informed by this new message from the shepherds; that's why she pondered it. Pondering the shepherds' message in her heart was an attempt at connecting the dots.

Alright, I've intentionally tried to overuse the words "message" and "shepherd" thus far. That's because those words ring certain bells in our spiritual vocabulary, touching different but related concepts within the context of the Church. "Message" is a term used to describe both the gospel and the weekly sermon. The gospel message is greater than the sermon, but the sermon itself is intimately connected to the gospel. The sermon is delivered, explained, and lived through the pastor, just as the gospel was delivered, explained, and lived through our Great Shepherd. "Shepherd" is a term used to describe both the Lord Jesus and the role of a pastor. The Lord Jesus is greater than the pastor, but the pastor is intimately connected to the Lord. The pastor speaks and preaches what he has heard from the Lord for others, just as Jesus spoke and preached what He heard from the Father for us (John 12:49). These conceptual connections and associations run deep and are worth pondering in your own heart.

Let's dive deeper. Do you see the relay race happening in this passage? It's all about spreading the message. God gives the baton to the angels to start the race. The angels run the first leg of the race

from heaven to earth, then they hand the baton to the shepherds. The shepherds run the second leg of the race, then they hand the baton to those they encounter at the nativity scene. The third leg of the race goes unwritten, but we know who was last given the baton. Some of those people continued the race by telling others, but some likely dropped the baton by doing nothing. This same relay race occurs for us every week. The sermon we hear originates from heaven, and the baton was passed to the pastor on earth. The pastor delivers the sermon, and the baton is passed to you. Just as it was in this passage, your part in the race is left unwritten. Will you continue the race? Will you pass the baton to others? ...or will you drop it?

Luke 2:8-20 describes a heavenly message that was entrusted to earthly messengers. You may never be a pastor or deliver an organized sermon, but as partakers in the Great Commission, you are entrusted and commanded to spread the gospel by taking part in this grand relay race of faith. You can run the race according to the pattern set for us by the shepherds (with, in, and for). We receive the sermon with faithfulness when we expectantly gather as the church. We react to the sermon in faithfulness when we put its action step into practice in our lives. We report the sermon for faithfulness in others by spreading the message of Christ. So, I encourage you to tell someone the true meaning of Christmas this year that they might also see the true value of Jesus. Run your leg of the race, pass on the baton, and faithfully return to church next week to get ready for your next lap. Be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer (James 1:22).

Nicholas A. Lakin - Associate Pastor - Cumberland Campus

DISCUSSION GUIDE: NOVEMBER, 21 2025

WEEK FOUR: LUKE 2:8-20

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

SERMON NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 1

- In almost every encounter with an angel, we see the humans involved fall to their knees in terror. Why do you think it's so scary to see an angel in person? How do you think you would react if you saw an angel?
- The Angel tells the shepherds that they are bringing "good news of great joy, that will be for all people." Why is Jesus' birth good news? How will it bring joy to all people? In our world it seems that many people are often opposed to Jesus and what He stands for; is it still good news for them?
- When the multitude of angels appear they claim "peace on Earth among those with whom He (God) is pleased." How does Jesus bring peace to Earth? There are lots of right answers to this question, so don't stop at one!
- When the Shepherds heard about Jesus they went and inspected the scene for themselves. It was only after they verified what they had seen that they told others. Many people in our world today have questions about Jesus too. What are the most common questions people have about Jesus in our time? How can we help people find answers about their questions concerning Jesus?
- After the shepherds met Jesus they went about telling everyone what they had seen. Who are you planning to tell about Jesus this week?

WEEK FIVE

LUKE 2:21-38

DAY 1

Luke, the author of this account, was a doctor. He wrote "an orderly account" for Theophilus, who is believed to be a Gentile Christian of that time. This is significant because a part of scripture was written to those who did not grow up with Jewish tradition much like most of us. Proving the Gospel is for everyone.

Mary and Joseph had traveled to the temple for the time of purification, cleansing, and sacrifice. In the law of Moses, a purification offering was needed so a person could be named clean. They had also traveled to the temple to present Jesus as the firstborn as God commanded in Exodus 13:2.

According to the Law in Leviticus 12:8, a woman who bears a child, either male or female must present an offering. "And if she cannot afford a lamb then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering." So, in accordance they gave an offering of two turtledoves or two pigeons. Mary and Joseph were poor and could not afford a lamb. That shows the humble nature of Christ being that he was not born rich but poor. Isn't it interesting though that Mary and Joseph couldn't afford a lamb to give as a sacrifice, while Jesus was THE Lamb who was THE ultimate sacrifice.

Now Simeon, a man in Jerusalem,⁶ had been waiting for the consolation of Israel. Consolation means to give comfort to

those who have suffered, much like Israel had for years. Yet Simeon still waited. How amazing that amidst his waiting, the Holy Spirit guided him to the temple the same day Jesus was there! Simeon had looked forward to seeing the Messiah all his life. The passage says that Simeon "would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah" (v 26). Sadly, even though there was joy and praise, Simeon told Mary of Jesus going to the cross and that "a sword will pierce [her] own soul." Can you imagine being told that as a mother? Interestingly enough Mary was the only one recorded in Scripture to be at Jesus' birth and death. I don't think we can even imagine what that would be like. Though joyfully Simeon said that Jesus would be a light for revelation to the Gentiles (v 32). Meaning us! What a gift knowing that Jesus meant us when he said those very words.

Now why would we care about this?

First of all, Simeon waited so patiently to see Jesus. When you think of it most of us can't wait five minutes for the internet to work or we prefer going through curbside to receive groceries instead of going inside to look for them. We live in a society that likes things to be right when we want it. Simeon is an example of true patience and most important faith. Secondly, Simeon trusted God to keep his promises and to do what he said. His faith was so strong he expectantly waited to see Jesus. What an example for us to follow, knowing that the Lord will do what he says he will do.

As Christians this holiday season we need to learn how to wait with patience and have faith in the promises of God. For Jesus will come back one day and we should be expectant. What does waiting with patience look like for you? Maybe it's waiting for your parents or friend to answer that big question you asked weeks ago. Maybe it's trusting God has a plan for you when everything seems out of control. Maybe it's even getting on your knees and crying out to God saying, "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Patience is no easy task because we all want things right when we want them. But God being rich in mercy extends an abundance of patience and grace to us daily. Even though waiting is hard especially during the holidays, you never know what God could use at the right time he needs it to be at. He can turn your waiting into a tool for his glory. As a church we can live this out by encouraging one another, showing patience to our kids or parents when they get on our last nerve, or to just be expectant for God to use you where he leads.

With Christmas being on the horizon how are you going to live this out? One of my favorite songs is by a Christian artist named Lauren Daigle. She has a song called Let It Be A Hallelujah and one of the lyrics says, "Take my life and let it be, My soul devoted Lord to Thee, Take my moments and all my days, Make them endless praise." But then goes on to say, "With every breath that's in me, With every song and melody, Let it be a hallelujah, In every breaking moment, In every blessing that You give, Let it be a hallelujah." So even in the season of waiting we can turn sorrow and patience into a hallelujah by making Jesus first and foremost in our lives and dying to ourselves daily. Is Jesus first in your life when it

comes to waiting? Just like Simeon waited for God's promise to be revealed, we can be the ones saying to our Father, "I'm the one who'll be [expectantly] waiting for You." – Lauren Daigle

Lyndley Howard - Member of Wallace Campus

DAY 2

Today's passage tells how Mary and Joseph present Jesus in Jerusalem and how God keeps His promise to Simeon: Simeon would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah, and God fulfills that promise. Today's story is a great New Testament representation of how God keeps all His promises.

The Old Testament is filled with God making promises, such as when He told Abraham that he would have as many descendants as the stars, or when He told Moses that He would deliver His people. Most importantly, David's bloodline would lead to the birth of Jesus. But in this story, God makes a promise with Simeon and fulfills it by letting Simeon see the Lord's Messiah. In Scripture, it is mentioned that Simeon was a great man and was guided to the temple by the Spirit. "When the parents brought in the child Jesus for him, that was customary under the law." Simeon then picked up the child and said, "Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace as you promised." This is an example of how God kept His promise to Simeon.

In conclusion, God's ultimate promise is fulfilled through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, offering us eternal salvation. If we believe in Him, we shall not perish but have everlasting life.

This story about Simeon encourages us to trust that God will keep every promise He makes to us.

Kirk Gordon - Member of Wallace Campus

DAY 3

Explanation of Passage

- This passage talks about three different things. First, Jesus is presented in the temple. Second, Simeon prophesies about Jesus as the Messiah. Third, Anna prophesies about Jesus.
- When Jesus was presented in the temple we learn that his parents were committed to their faith and to being obedient to God because they were following the law of Moses. They were presenting Jesus to the Lord as the Scripture said.
- Simeon had faith in God and the Holy Spirit told him that he would meet the Messiah before the end of his life. Simeon was listening to God and God led him to the temple where he met Jesus.
- Anna was also a prophet. She was so devoted to God that she stayed in the temple and worshiped Him day and night with fasting and prayer. Even though she had experienced hard things in her life she stayed faithful to God.

Meaning to original audience

- Jesus is the savior of the world because he is the Messiah. Luke is showing that God's faithful people, Simeon and Anna, knew right away that Jesus was the Messiah, even as a little baby. Luke is telling his audience that God called Simeon and Anna to identify Jesus as the Messiah, the savior of the world, even from the very beginning.

Application to us now

- Simeon was ready to hear from the Lord. We should be listening for God's call to us.
- God used these people to share the Gospel because of their strong faith. Anna told everybody that God sent the Messiah to save us. This applies in our life because we can share just as Anna did so that people may know the truth of the Gospel.
- Simeon's prophecy said that the Messiah, Jesus, is the savior of all nations - not just Israel. This tells us that God loves everyone and everyone needs to know Him.
- Praising God in all three of these sections. Mary and Joseph came to the temple to dedicate Jesus and praise God with an offering. Simeon and Anna both praised God because He sent the Messiah, the savior of the world.

Call to action

- We should be faithful to God because Mary and Joseph

were as they came to offer the sacrifice. Simeon and Anna were as they obeyed and worshiped.

- We should trust God to provide for us because he keeps His promises. God came to Anna and Simeon and kept His promise to show them the Messiah.
- We should share the Gospel because everyone needs Jesus as we are all sinful people. Simeon prophesied and said Jesus was the salvation that God prepared for ALL PEOPLE.

Ezra Hodge - Member of Wallace Campus

DAY 4

When Mary and Joseph arrived at the temple to dedicate Jesus to the Lord, they thought they were just following the Law. They were simple, faithful people, doing what had been asked of them. They didn't know that they would meet two prophets, Simeon and Anna, who would recognize their son Jesus, as the Messiah!

Simeon was a "righteous and devout" man who was told by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. The moment he laid eyes on Jesus, he immediately knew the child was their Savior. He praised God and told Mary and Joseph what wonders their child would perform and that he had come for all people.

Mary and Joseph also met Anna, a prophetess who never left the temple, praying day and night. She was widowed at a young age but served God faithfully for close to a century. When she saw Jesus, Anna thanked God and immediately began to share with others about Jesus.

Simeon and Anna's story teaches us that God's promises do not expire. That God's timing is perfect, even when we don't understand the wait. Neither of them gave up hope, even when the wait was long! We can trust that God will keep his promises. So, just like Simeon and Anna, we can choose to stay faithful, even when we don't understand why God hasn't answered us yet. Maybe you're praying for something, and it feels like nothing is happening. This passage reminds us that God is always working behind the scenes, even when we can't see it yet.

Think of one thing you've been waiting or praying for. Instead of giving up, turn it over to God again. Ask Him to help you trust His perfect timing. Then look for ways God is already working in your life.

- Pray and ask God to give you patience while you wait for your prayers to be answered.
- Pray that God helps you trust his perfect timing, even when it doesn't happen when we want it to.

Avery McGimsey - Member of Wallace Campus

DAY 5

One of the main aspects of Luke 2:21-38 is the Messiah being born and brought to Earth. This was a major event for many people back then who had waited years upon years for God to send his son down to Earth. For many years God had promised that he would send his son to save everyone from their sins and eternal separation from him. God had also promised some people that they would not die until they saw the Messiah. Specifically Simeon and Anna; two devout followers of God who rejoiced when they saw the young child. These two people represented everything someone should be today. Hopeful and trustful of God. They both strongly believed that God would keep his promise and they would meet Jesus.

This was an example for the original audience. These two people trusted God and never lost hope in him. They became an example of how trusting in God and putting their life in his hands is what someone should do. As a result they were given exactly what they were promised. God used these people to show what having strong faith was like. Simeon and Anna never lost hope in God's promise regardless of what happened throughout their lives. God fulfilled his promise because of their strong faith. Which is exactly what the original audience should have.

However, the message applies just a little bit differently to today's world. Jesus has already been crucified and come

back to life. And nobody today has been promised to see the birth of the messiah. So what do these verses mean today? They show us the joy and excitement in the birth of Jesus. They show us why we need to put our faith in God. God gave us this beautiful gift and we should be ever grateful for it. One of the key aspects of the verses is the fulfillment of a promise made by God. The verses show how God is trustworthy and loving. Meaning we should be ecstatic to go and give our life to God. Why shouldn't we?

One very important thing in a person is that they actually believe and do the things they say. So, if you say you have trust in God and follow his word, then you should actually do it. This is why application is so important. Like I said previously, a main aspect of this passage is having trust in God because of his fulfillment of promises. In our personal lives this looks like a wide variety of things. Whether it's consistently going to church when a loved one is lost. Or praying and staying faithful in times of financial struggle. Trusting in God isn't an easy thing to do. However, it is important to do and vital to have a strong faithful relationship with God. This is why Anna and Simeon had such strong faith.

To close out it's important to explain why this matters. God sent down his son to Earth to fulfill his promise. One of the greatest and most loving things someone could do. So why should we push him to the side and say we don't want to give our life to him. There is nothing that can even compare to the

love and compassion God has for us. Which is why he does all these things for us. Regardless of if we care about him or not he still does these things for us. It should be our number one goal in our life to make God the center and live for him. The difference it would make if we all lived for God would be so dramatic. People everywhere would be impacted. All because everyone decided to have trust and faith in God just like Anna and Simeon.

Fischer Watson - Student Intern - Wallace Campus

DISCUSSION GUIDE: DECEMBER 28, 2025

WEEK FIVE: LUKE 2:21–38

ACTION STEP _____

How will I live out the action step this week?

SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 2

- Why is it important that Jesus' parents did all the proper rituals for Him 8 days after His birth? What does this teach us about our responsibility for future generations?
- Simeon was overjoyed to see Jesus and finally experience what the Holy Spirit had told him. He had apparently been waiting a number of years to meet Jesus. What lessons can we learn from Simeon about being patient? What do we learn about the Holy Spirit and how He speaks to us?
- Read verses 33-35. How did Jesus cause many people to rise and fall in Israel? How did He reveal their hearts? What does it look like when Jesus reveals someone's heart today?
- When Anna the Prophetess recognized Jesus, she immediately told everyone who was "waiting." How can we identify people who are "waiting" for an answer? How can we share Jesus with people in a way that answers the difficult questions of life?

