

## Advent Week #2

### The Joy of God's Invitation

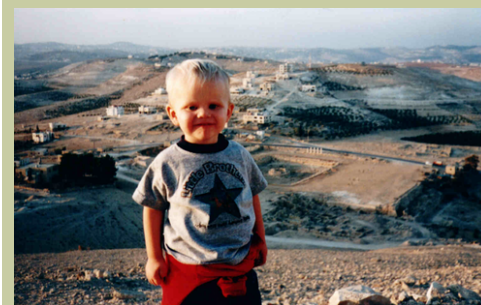
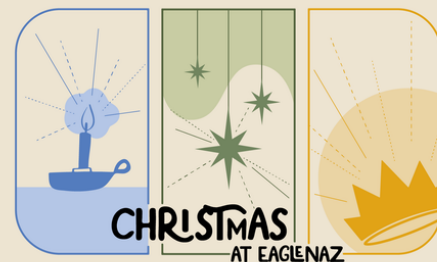
When the shepherds heard the announcement from the angelic hosts, they responded with joy. God still invites us to draw near to Him!

**1 - A gift of joy** - *What is a gift that you received that you still remember with joy? What about a gift you gave that gave you joy to give?*

**2 - Watch the Video for Advent Week #2 with Pastor Scott**

**3 - Read & Discuss the background on the shepherds of Bethlehem -**

- **The ones who didn't go to the manger!**
  - **Read Matthew 2:1-6** - The Magi (foreign scientists and astronomers), traveled the 6 miles south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, but what about the Priests and experts in the Scriptures mentioned here? Why do you think they did not make the journey to welcome the birth of their Messiah?
- **Check out the images from Bethlehem in the box at right >**
- The Lord's message to the "Shepherds" (Priests and religious leaders) of Israel who have neglected their duty:
  - **Read Ezekiel 34:1-6** - *What does the prophet Ezekiel say about the religious leaders of Israel? What had they failed to do?*
  - **Read Ezekiel 34:11-15** - *Who will the Lord send to care for His sheep / His people?*
  - **Read Ezekiel 34:23-24 & 30-31** - *What are the characteristics of "the shepherd" that the Lord will send? Who will He be like?*
  - **Now read John 15:11-13** - This passage makes a clear statement about the Lord's Shepherd that He would send...
  - **...and read Luke 2:4-20** - *How does this passage fulfill the prophetic images of Ezekiel 34? It seems God decided to find shepherds of His own to invite to the birth of the Good Shepherd! While the Priests don't show up at all, this group arrives with joy!*
- *How does God still invite us to draw near to Him? What are the obstacles in our world that keep us from responding to His invitation?*
- **Pray for your group members! How do these readings inspire you to think, pray, and live with deeper joy in God's invitation to draw near?**



The Judean Hill Country where David watched over flocks of sheep: Pastor Scott's son Josiah standing on the Herodium near Bethlehem



The Shepherd's Cave: Traditional site where the shepherds kept their flocks



Simons family buying a Christmas Tree in Bethlehem, Christmas 2000



**LIFE GROUPS**  
DISCIPLESHIP • COMMUNITY • OUTREACH