



**Discussion Guide** — 12/07/2025

**Series:** *Around the Manger: Stories of Advent*

**Message:** *Joseph's Story*

**Scripture:** Luke 2:1-5 (NRSVUE)

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## Opening Prayer

Holy God, as we sit with Joseph's story, quiet our minds and open our hearts. Teach us to notice Your presence in ordinary responsibility, to love steadily when it costs, and to see those who feel alone. Form us into a faithful family around Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

## Introduction & Context

Luke's brief report (2:1–5) sets Joseph and Mary on a hard, very human journey: a state-mandated registration, late-term travel, family history in David's town, and no easy place to land. Behind the census and lineage is a man choosing steady, quiet faithfulness—walking, registering, finding shelter, staying. This week we entered the scene through “Six-Word Advent” lines that might fit Joseph's perspective:

- *I need to focus on right now.*
- *He will have all my love.*
- *Surrounded by family, I felt alone.*

Joseph's story helps us imagine Advent from the ground: paperwork and road dust, fidelity and love, loneliness and presence. It invites us to pay attention to God-with-us in the ordinary—and to those who feel on the margins during the holidays.

## Read the Scripture (aloud)

Luke 2:1–5



## Discussion Questions

### 1) Scripture Observations — What do you see?

1. What concrete details about time, place, and movement stand out in Luke 2:1–5? Why might Luke include them?
2. How does the “city of David” (Bethlehem) connect Joseph’s quiet obedience to God’s larger story?
3. Where do you notice stress points in the scene (late-term travel, crowding, family dynamics, politics)? What might those have felt like?

### 2) Entering Joseph’s Experience — What might he have *felt*?

1. If you were Joseph, what decisions would weigh on you that night (timing, safety, shelter, reputation)?
2. Imagine making a cradle from a feed box: what prayers or words might run under your breath?
3. Try a six-word line of your own from Joseph’s view (e.g., “Doing next right thing, heart racing”). Share with the group.

### 3) Love that Stays — What does faithfulness *look like*?

1. Joseph’s choice to stay re-routes his life. Where have you seen (or offered) love that looks like steady presence over time?
2. How do you discern the “next right thing” when the options are imperfect? What helps you focus on “right now” rather than spiraling into *what-ifs*?
3. Joseph likely navigated whispers and misunderstanding. How does the gospel free us to be faithful without universal approval?

### 4) When Surrounded Feels Lonely — Who needs *family*?

1. Where do holidays amplify loneliness (grief, distance, complicated family systems, financial/health strain)?
2. How does Joseph’s story reframe loneliness—not as failure of faith, but as a place Christ meets us?
3. What simple practices create belonging in December (naming the empty chair, lighting a candle, one embodied point of connection each week)?



## Closing Prayer

Emmanuel, meet us where we are—tired, hopeful, unsure, or alone. Give us Joseph’s steady courage to do the next right thing and to love well. Gather us into Your family and make our homes places of welcome and peace. Amen.

## Key Takeaway

Advent often looks like ordinary faithfulness: doing the next right thing, loving steadily, and noticing those who feel alone—trusting that God is with us in the midst of it.

## Next Step — P.A.R.

**Pray:** “Lord, help me know You are with me so I can be present with others.”

**Act:** Show up in one ordinary way for someone this week—offer a ride, extend a simple invitation (coffee, errands, game night), or add a seat at your table.

**Reflect:** Where did you sense *Emmanuel—God with us*—in an ordinary moment? If you felt distant, what will you try differently to seek His presence?

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