



Advent 2014: Rediscovering Identity

1. How our history shapes our identity

Preparation

It is important to set aside an Advent space, however small, where your materials and notes can remain undisturbed for the Advent season.

Materials

Bible
pen and notebook
matches
candle (you will use this same candle every week)



Begin

Calm down. Adjust to the setting. Acknowledge your relationship with God. Light the candle to remind you that you that this is devoted time; set apart. Place the candle in its dedicated Advent space where it can remain for the week.

Contemplate

The world around us: our location, time in history and culture all play a role in who we are.

Read [Luke 2:1-20](#) and [Matthew 2:1-18](#)

Reflect

Write down all the different characters in these two stories and answer these questions.

- : what do you know about them or what can you find out?
- : what unique role does each character play in story of Jesus?
- : what locations are given and how might each have been significant to who Jesus was?
- : what events were taking place in Jesus' country at the time of his birth?
- : how was Jesus a product of his history?

Respond

Find or make two symbols and place them by the candle in your Advent space.

- : the first should represent the people, places, and events Jesus was born into.
(a nativity scene is one example, especially fun with children)
- : the second should represent the people, places, and events that have shaped your life.

Prayer

Lord, disclose to my heart and mind how you understand my identity. Remind me this week of those placed throughout my life who have shaped me; of events both difficult and beautiful that you've seen me through; of the places where my identity has taken root. May we walk together down the path of this Advent season. Amen.

Follow-up

Now and throughout the week, consider these questions.

1. Who have been significant people throughout your life that have shaped who you are?
Write down their names and how they have impacted you.
2. What is/has been important about where you live?
Write down different homes, cities, schools, jobs
What memories stand out for each?
How are you different because of them?
3. What have been some of the major events in the world and in your personal life
Give positive and negative examples and describe how they've affected you.

Luke 2:1-20 / Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In the same region there were shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for

you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Matthew 2:1-18 / The Visit of the Magi

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and

have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having

been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

"A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she refused to be comforted, Because they were no more."