

## Emmaus Road

...and he opened to us the Scriptures (Luke 24:32)

It may go with out saying, but do you believe that God wants you to enjoy this year's celebration of Christmas. It seems like the Holiday's are more about stress, conflict and busyness than about the peace and joy in our Savior's birth. This year we are being more intentional about the joy of the Christmas season by entering into the story of his birth. We will visit the places, meet the people and live through the history of this world changing event with the hope that God would enhance our ability to see Christmas differently this year. To see it from his perspective and to really enjoy it as he has intended. Let's go with Luke on a journey back to a time and to an event that would change the world forever.

**Monday** - Read Luke 1:1-2:40 (come on... it won't take that long). Get a feel for what's happening here. Who are these characters and what do you observe about them? What are they expecting and how is their faith tested? Put yourself in each of their shoes, how would you respond, what would you say to the Angel if he said that to you? Let's enter into this story and try to see if through the eyes of the characters and their experience. Perhaps this might help us see something we never saw before.

**Tuesday** - Read Luke 1:14; 1:44; 1:47; 1:58 and 2:10. What is a common thread you can identify in all these verses? Why do you think this text is so full of joy and rejoicing when the circumstances seem so scary and confusing? What is God saying to us about this joy he wants us to experience? Over the next five weeks we are going to encounter a spectrum of people, young and old, rich and poor, religiously connected and the religious outcasts and we will see that what is common among them in a response of joy. May our response mirror theirs no matter what our circumstances are at the moment.

**Wednesday** - Read Luke 1:5-25 (see the story through Zechariah's eyes). When you understand that Zechariah was the religious "cream of the crop" what surprises you about his response in verse 12? Even a trained theologian like Zechariah had questions and doubts. What thoughts does that prompt within you about your spiritual journey? He even says in verse 18, How can I be sure? Can you relate to Zechariah? Have you been walking with God, serving him, even trust him but sometimes you doubt. Zechariah is being challenged to take what he believes, in spite of the doubts and fears, to a new level. One in which he simply takes one step at a time. Maybe that is where you are today. You don't have all the answers and God wants it that way. Pray and ask God to give you faith to take the next step, whatever that step may be.

**Thursday** - Read Luke 1:26-45. Mary is on the opposite end of the social spectrum from Zechariah. Can you identify how they are radically different? What would you do if you were in Mary's shoes, what questions would you be asking, what struggle would you have with all this? Mary asks one simple question, how will this be, since I am a virgin? Unlike Zechariah, Mary isn't doubting, she is looking for a simple explanation and that angel basically says, It will be a miracle! Where Zechariah was looking for proof of the miracle Mary simple says, let it be to me according to your word. What would happen if you and I were willing to respond to the Lord's instruction like Mary did! Is God prompting your heart in some way and waiting for you to respond like Mary did? Ask the Lord to search your heart and lead you to have a faith like Mary.

**Friday** - Read Luke 1:5-25 (see the story through Elizabeth's eyes). What do you observe about Elizabeth? What kinds of struggles do you think she has lived with (knowing that a woman without a child was looked down upon in this culture)? For many years Elizabeth has lived with shame, adversity and disappointment. Can you relate with her? Have your expectations not been realized as you look over the span of your life? Elizabeth comes to understand that the Christ child born at Christmas is the fulfillment of all her struggles. She even understands that her son is simply the forerunner of Mary's baby. This is only the work of the Spirit of God to redeem her shame and sadness. May you know that the Child of Christmas wants the same for you no matter how you are struggling or doubting. May the joy of Christmas be yours to the fullest!!

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