

Christmas Journey Revisited

By Susan Vogt



The journey that Mary and Joseph made to Bethlehem right before Jesus' birth is well known. So also is their escape into Egypt after Jesus' birth. So well known that we might take these stories for granted and tune them out. Learn a new way to connect your family with the biblical journeys.

For
Adult, Couple

Season
Winter

Needed
Bible, memories of past trips around the Christmas holidays

Prepare in Advance
Decide whether you want to do this activity by yourself, with your spouse, or with your children.

Activity Plan
Many families travel during the Christmas holy days to be with extended family. Whether your trips be across the country or across town you can unite your journeys with those of Mary and Joseph around the beginning of Jesus' life on earth

1. As always begin with a prayer such as:

Dear God, we are waiting for you to come again into our midst. Help our family to unite with your human family as they traveled to the places of their roots and relatives. Amen

2. Refresh your memory of the travels that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus made at the beginnings of their life together by reading one or several of the following Scriptures passages (use your Bible or see text on last page):
 - The Visitation - Luke 1:39-41
 - Journey to Bethlehem - Luke 2:1-7
 - Escape into Egypt - Matthew 2:8-15
3. Call to mind past Christmas trips. Include your trips as a child if they were significant and if your children are willing to patiently listen. If doing this as a family, let other's tell their version of the trips they remember. For example:
 - What was your favorite Christmas trip?
 - Did you ever experience any hardships along the way (car breakdowns, cancelled flights, bad weather...)?
 - Is visiting your relatives a happy occasion or one of stress? Why?
4. Will you be traveling this Christmas season? If so, what do you look forward to? What do you fear?

5. Ponder what might be similar or different about Mary and Joseph's trips and yours.
 - Mary went joyously to see her cousin Elizabeth and share the news of their pregnancies.
 - Mary and Joseph were probably not all that keen on traveling to Bethlehem near the end of her pregnancy. It didn't help that the motel was full. There weren't many creature comforts.
 - The escape into Egypt must have been terrifying. Have you ever been scared on a trip? Did you ever fear for the safety of your children? What must it be like for undocumented immigrants in the USA to fear deportation?
6. How you can make any upcoming Christmas visits unifying for your family? How can you make the journey itself more peaceful for all involved?

The Visitation

Luke 1:39-41

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

Journey to Bethlehem

Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Escape into Egypt

Matthew 2:8-15

Then he sent them [the Magi] to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they [the Magi] had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, 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 about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

