



*The Journey*  
Week of 12.06.09

## Different Routes to the Manger: The Realist

By Charlie Louvau

This week you will read in Luke 2 how Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable and "...placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." This part of the Christmas story captures my attention on many levels.

My first thought comes as I remember vividly the anguish I felt shortly after I finished my time in the Marines. I had returned to my home town and found a job. Then came the day I went to work to find the gate to the company was closed. I had no money, no rent, and no roof. Well that's not exactly true—I was living in my little LeCar, (a car that makes a clown car seem large). The Bible study group I was involved in at the time referred me to a college ministry group at U.C. Berkeley. These guys had an opening in their house and were looking for someone to fill the room.

I was put to the vote along with other candidates for the room. I overheard their conversation—that I was high risk... a long shot. It was not realistic because I had no funds. These were all applied science grad students, true nuts-and-bolts objective nerds. Fortunately, one of them had compassion and made the appeal of what would Jesus do. I got the room. Life changed. Hope came.

My second thought comes as I consider the times that I have been overly rational and closed my heart to people that needed my help and other opportunities to show compassion. Ultimately, I was placing a sign on the door to a room of my heart — a room Jesus wanted to enter. I was telling him he didn't fit the requirements. I don't think I'm alone in this. My prayer and thoughts are that our hearts be softened toward those in need, encouraged in the face of risky opportunities, and quickened to acts of compassion this season and always.

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

## **monday, 12.7.09**

Read: [Luke 1](#) (pg.700)

## **tuesday, 12.8.09**

Read: [Luke 2](#) (pg 701)

## **wednesday, 12.9.09**

Read: [Luke 3](#) (pg 702); [Psalm 46](#) (pg.387)

## **thursday, 12.10.09**

Read: [Romans 12](#) (pg.776); [Matthew 22:34-40](#) (pg. 676)

## **friday, 12.11.09**

Read: [Matthew 25:31-46](#) (pg.679)

**Grow** (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)
- [Sacred Pathways](#) by Gary Thomas
- [God is Closer Than You Think](#) by John Ortberg
- [Magnificent Defeat](#) by Frederick Buechner

**Go** (action steps)

- If you picked up an Angel Tree or Heartland Heart ornament, be sure to bring your gift(s) to church on Sunday, 12.13!
- Learn more about our **Day of Mercy on 12.12** sponsored by Heartland's Singles Ministry – coats and cookies for the homeless — by clicking [here](#) and then scrolling down
- **Tell your Reverse Offering story:** click [here](#)
- **Sign up to serve:** email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **Sign up to grow in a small group or 1:1 spiritual mentorship:** click [here](#) to email Britton Gregory

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. Take your spiritual pathway test by clicking [here](#). Ask others to challenge or confirm whether they see such pathways in you.
2. Have you ever felt insecure, experienced envy or compared your spiritual walk to others? How so?
3. Given your pathway(s), what are some specific ways that you can practically grow through it?
4. Given your pathway(s), what are some ways that you can easily get stuck?
5. Does the concept of spiritual pathways help you better understand/accept someone else in your life?