



### Rethinking Christmas Reflection Guide – (by Vancouver Church)

**Read Luke 2:1-3** The author is clearly stating this to be a historic fact. Why do you think it's important to establish that Jesus' birth is not just an inspirational myth?

**Read Luke 2:4-7** This is likely the most famous scene from the Christmas account. Known as "The Nativity", it has been depicted in countless Christmas cards, front yards, and public squares. To us it has become a precious, nostalgic, and peaceful imagery. Yet, the biblical picture of Jesus' birthplace is one of poverty, stress, vulnerability, and rejection. The express purpose of this passage is to foreshadow so much that Jesus would go through. What are some of the events Jesus would later experience that echo these themes of struggle, strain, and rejection? How have you dealt with rejection in your own life?

**Read Isaiah 53:4-6** Jesus will one day return to rid the world of evil entirely. But his first arrival was to rid individual hearts of evil. Had he eliminated every trace of evil the first time he arrived, he would have had to destroy all of us. Yet, his desire was to save us. So he came and submitted himself to evil, so someday he can return and end evil without ending us. To do this, it was necessary for him to suffer in our place and take upon himself the consequences of our sins. As was mentioned, this great suffering was foretold in the circumstances around his birth. Which aspect of his suffering is most meaningful to you? What did you gain from that suffering of his? During the Christmas season, how can you thank him for this?

**Rethinking Weakness** God arrived as a defenseless infant. Yet, shortly after his ultimate "weakness" on the cross, Jesus defeated death, sin and the forces of hell. His seeming feebleness was a gift that paid off our sins, and made possible for us a brand new life. Now he invites us into this same kind of vulnerability. Remember, meekness appears to be weakness, yet is really the "presence of power, but the choice not to use it." This is the imagery of the manger scene: the all-powerful Creator took on human frailty so we might become strong; even strong enough to set down our own power for the sake of others. This Christmas, what is the power you need to "place in the manger?" What strength of yours is preventing others from experiencing God's love and truth through you? What will it mean for you to set that strength down this Christmas season? How will that allow others to experience Jesus through you?

**Read 2 Corinthians 12:10**, and then pray for each other.