

Slow Down and Ponder

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An Invitation to Rest

In the final days of the year, we are presented with an invitation to rest, sit, and take a breath. While life can become "crazy" with transitions and responsibilities, the present moment offers a chance to talk about Mary and the "glossed over" sections of the Christmas story.

Mary: A Faithful Ponderer

[Luke 2](#) notes that Mary "pondered these things in her heart. The Greek word for ponder, suggests a deep, active mental engagement

- Ponder (Greek: symbolō): to combine, analyze, converse internally, and preserve a moment.

The 90-Mile Journey

Mary's trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem was a 90-mile journey on foot while she was imminently pregnant. While traditional depictions often show her on a donkey, scripture notes the couple offered turtle doves for sacrifice—the "poor man's sacrifice"—suggesting they likely did not have the resources for a donkey. This long walk provided significant time to ponder.

Lessons from the Road

Based on the most reasonable route, Mary and Joseph likely passed through significant biblical landmarks that served as physical parables for what Mary was carrying:

- The Mountains of Blessing and Cursing: Walking between Mount Gerizim (blessings for obedience) and Mount Ebal (curses for disobedience), Mary carried the "get out of jail free card"—the grace that allows humanity to be excused from the law.
- The House of the Lord: Passing through Bethel, where the Ark of the Covenant once dwelt, Mary carried God Himself, who would one day make His home within all believers.
- The Path to Jerusalem: She walked past the very region where, 33 years later, the "sword would pierce her heart" at the crucifixion.

Salvation is Reconciliation

It is important to recognize that Jesus did not come to earth solely to forgive sins; forgiveness is a means to an end. The "end" is a reconciled relationship and eternal life with the Father. Mary carried a promise of permanent right standing with God.

The Reality of the Manger

The birth of Christ was not a sanitized, "holy" scene with halos and heavenly choruses; it was a messy, stinky barn. The absence of halos is proven by the fact that they were sent to a manger; if they had appeared "holy" in the traditional sense, the inn likely would have made room. In this mess, Mary was confronted with both her own humanity and the first knowledge of the Savior.

A Call to Slow Down

"All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone".

-Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

We often take on commitments, like reading the Bible in a year, out of a sense of pressure rather than a desire for meditation. True growth comes from slowing down to ponder, as "anything worth doing is worth doing right" and taking the time to do so.

A Challenge for the New Year

Be intentional about slowing your pace, meditating on God's word, and pondering it in your heart like a puzzle.