

# Week 1

## New Beginnings

*“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”*

**Luke 1:39-42**

How many of us can remember the excitement of that first day of school in the fall? We loved summer vacation, but the thrill of shopping for new school supplies and possibly a new school outfit, was invigorating. We looked forward to seeing our school friends again and meeting our new teacher. It's interesting that for many of us, September still brings excitement and even a latent desire to sign up for a class, pursue a new hobby or call an old friend.

When we are children, Bethlehem and Christmas seem afar off in September. The time span from September to Christmas seems shorter as the years pass and towards the end of our life, those months are but a flash. However, the resolve and excitement of a fresh start are still present. We are refreshed from the slower pace of summer and anxious to get back into a routine. Our minds are clear. The air is brisk.

September, the month of brilliant colors and fresh air is a great time for a fresh start! As we begin our Walk to Bethlehem, we can think of how Mary felt while she was carrying Jesus. Shortly after Mary was told she would bear the Son of God, she went quickly to the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The Scripture states that when Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant, Mary visited her and the babe leaped in Elizabeth's womb when Mary greeted Elizabeth. Mary's life would change radically after Jesus was born. Our lives also change radically with the birth of the Savior. When we are reborn in Jesus, life is never the same. We begin the walk of faith for a lifetime.

Just as we are transformed spiritually in our life of faith, The Walk to Bethlehem can also bring change and transformation into our lives. We can determine to take better care of the body God has given us. By beginning a physical walk with stated and measurable goals, we will find that we have more energy to accomplish those things that God has for us to do. Our physical, spiritual and emotional life will change positively and we will affect our world and those in our world in a positive way. As we begin our journey to Bethlehem, let's begin by examining those things that help and hinder our transformation.

### **Questions to ponder:**

What hinders me from living a disciplined life?

Are there areas in my life that are disciplined? Are they physical disciplines or spiritual disciplines?

Are there areas in my life that are not disciplined? Are they physical or spiritual?

Is there something in my life - spiritual, physical or emotional that needs change and transformation?

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