

Vartan has become the most outstanding hero of the Armenian nation. He, with his comrades in arms, together with millions of others following their example throughout Armenian history, laid down their lives so that the coming generations of Armenians might worship their Lord and God freely.

The war of St. Vartan was fought exclusively on the issue of freedom of conscience, and as such, it constitutes a glorious event in the struggle of humanity for freedom of religion. Vartan and his valiant men were the pioneers of freedom of conscience in the middle of the fifth century.

As a result of such battles in our history and the fine spirit which the Vartanians displayed, the Christian religion has survived in Armenia throughout centuries and under most trying circumstances. We are proud inheritors of this unconquerable spirit, so conspicuously manifested on the field of Avarayr. May God make us worthy of this glorious legacy.

– *Saints and Sacraments*  
*Archbishop Shnork Kaloustian*

## SOUL SEARCH:

### Weekly Scripture and Reflections for Teachers

*This issue of the Bulletin inaugurates a new feature. Teachers often express the need to read Scripture on a regular basis and understand it better. This is so important for any Christian but above all for a Sunday school teacher!*

*Soul Search will consist of weekly Scripture readings and a reflection that teachers can read on Sunday mornings before leaving for Sunday school or Saturday night or any time at all. You might even find them useful in the classroom. The readings will focus on the season or on special themes and will not necessarily be from the liturgical calendar. They will be specially prepared for the Bulletin or adapted from other sources. If you have ideas and would like to contribute (following the same format), send them in! This issue's readings are adapted from One Year with Jesus.*

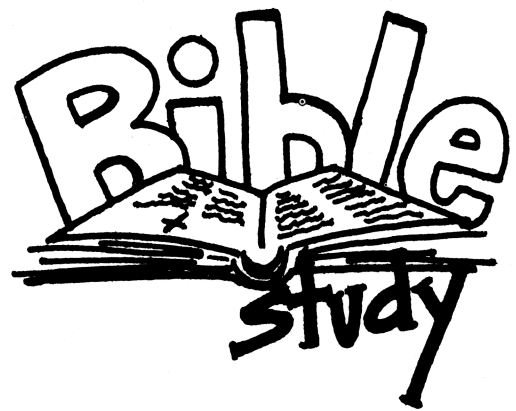
*Try the following routine. Open your Bible and read the day's verses. Sit quietly for a minute, reflecting on the text. Then read the commentary. End with a brief prayer.*

## JANUARY

### Week 1. Jesus is born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7)

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born; and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

***More Than a Baby***—This mention of the manger is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs (mangers) carved into the rock walls. Although our first picture of Jesus is as a baby in a manger, it must not be our last. The Christ child in the manger has been made into a beautiful Christmas scene, but we cannot leave him there. This tiny, helpless baby lived an amazing life, died for us, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will come back to this earth as king of kings. Do you still picture Jesus as a baby in a manger—or is he your Lord? Make sure you don't underestimate Jesus. Let him grow up in your life.



### Week 2. Shepherds visit Jesus (Luke 2:8-20)

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ are supernatural events beyond human logic or reasoning. Thus God sent angels to help certain people understand the significance of what was happening (see Luke 1:11,26; 2:9,13,19). Angels are spiritual beings created by God who live in God's presence and help carry out his work on earth.

When this great army of angels had returned again to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on! Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. The shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All

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