



Sermon Discussion Guide for Cumberland Fellowship Church Sermon Series: Thrill of Hope: Week 1 (December 3, 2023)

*This guide is a supplement to the weekly sermon. We encourage families and groups to use it. When we hear God's Word, we need to do more than listen. The bible says, "Be doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22). Step 1: **GATHER** with your family or group. Step 2: **REVIEW** and **DISCUSS** the key points and scriptures from the sermon. Step 3: **PRAY** for the prayer requests shared by your family or group.*

DISCUSSION STARTER

What is one food that you would say you "love"? Why do you love it? How do you think our culture would define love? How is this different than how you think Jesus defines it? How is the Christmas story a demonstration of God's love for you?

DIGGING DEEPER 1

Read Luke 2:1. Using a good Bible Study tool like *Bible Hub* (biblehub.com) or *Blue Letter Bible* (blueletterbible.org), study through this scripture before responding to the following questions. In addition, the following websites can help you to study and dig deeper: gotquestions.org; enduringword.com. Who is "Caesar Augustus" (Luke 2:1)? Who is Octavian? What does the name Caesar Augustus mean? How did the Roman people see him? Why is he significant in the story of Christ? Why was it important to Luke that the reader knows this? How does God use a man who is seen as the political savior of the Roman world to orchestrate the birth of the true savior of the world? How does God demonstrate that His authority and plan always prevails no matter how much we elevate ourselves? What did Caesar Augustus do that was important to the story of Jesus? Why did Caesar Augustus order people to be "registered" (Luke 2:1)? The census of 8 BC covered just the Roman Empire, so why does Luke 2:1 say that Caesar Augustus ordered "all the world" to be registered?

DIGGING DEEPER 2

Read Luke 2:2; Acts 5:37. Using a good Bible Study tool like *Bible Hub* (biblehub.com) or *Blue Letter Bible* (blueletterbible.org), study through this scripture before responding to the following questions. In addition, the following websites can help you to study and dig deeper: gotquestions.org; enduringword.com. What's interesting about this detail? When was Jesus born? How does Luke 2:2 relate to when Jesus was born? What is the controversy? What is the answer? How long before 4 BC was Jesus born? Can this range be further narrowed? Then what about "Quirinius" in Luke 2:2? Who was "Quirinius" (Luke 2:2)? Why would Quirinius lead military campaigns in Cilicia from Syria? Who were the resident Roman governors of Syria during this period? Then where does Quirinius fit in? Why do Roman records date Quirinius' governorship of Syria to 6-12 AD? Why isn't there an explicit secular corroboration that "Quirinius was governing Syria" (Luke 2:2)?

DIGGING DEEPER 3

Read Luke 2:3. Using a good Bible Study tool like *Bible Hub* (biblehub.com) or *Blue Letter Bible* (blueletterbible.org), study through this scripture before responding to the following questions. How powerful is Caesar Augustus? It is an impressive thought; one man, in the ivory palaces of Rome, gave a command — and the whole world responded. Was he really that powerful or was he just a tool in God's hand? Explain. God had promised that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and that promise would be fulfilled. So how does one get a young couple from Nazareth down to Bethlehem when they might not be inclined to travel? Why would he send everyone to his own city?

DOING THE WORD

In these first 3 verses of the Christmas story, we see God's providence at work. We are waiting while God is orchestrating. Don't give up, God has a plan, even when you don't see it. Many times, we don't see what God is doing because like Caesar we are focused on building our own kingdom rather than preparing for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. God's plan will prevail! Examine yourself and see if you have been trying to be God instead of just surrendering to the one true God. What do you need to surrender control of because you are not letting God lead. Maybe God is already speaking, maybe God is already orchestrating things in your life, but you can't hear him or see him working because your pride causes you to focus on your situation or circumstance. It's time to let go and let God. Close by submitting and surrendering everything to our providential God.