

## Literacy Check

- **Luke 1:26-38** - Mary's response to the unexpected.
- **Matthew 2:18-25** - Joseph's response to the unexpected.

## Let's Break the Ice

What kind of Christmas shopper are you: Black Friday? Cyber Monday? Christmas Eve? Yearlong Hoarder?

## Introduction

Life is full of surprises. This is almost cliché but it is in fact the reality of our lives. This week let's talk about some of the positive and negative surprises that we encounter in life and how we should respond to life's most unexpected.

## Heads Up!

Christmas can be a tough season. Mixed in amidst the joy and pageantry and pretty lights are reminders of loss, pain, and other difficult life "unexpecteds". Be ready to talk about some less happy topics as they relate to Christmas, but don't be afraid: God is good regardless of our circumstances!

## Things to Discuss

After reading through the conception stories found in Luke and Matthew, discuss some of the elements that stand out. Some questions that can help these types of discussions are:

1. What would this have meant to the original audience?
2. Is there an example or principle to follow?
3. Is there a promise to claim or sin to avoid?

If you find that your group is not engaging or the conversation is stalling you can ask for opinions on the text. For example:

- How do you feel about the statement in **Luke 1: 37** "For the word of God will never fail."?
- Why don't you feel "high favored" by God? (or why do you?)

To help your discussions, try thinking of a situation(s) that was unexpected in your life and how you reacted to it before group. It's ok if you didn't react as Mary or Joseph did. Sometimes our failings are far better teachers and outreachers than our successes. How can we apply Mary's and Joseph's reactions to our own situations? If they are willing to share, has anyone in your group had an unexpected event that changed "the plan"? How did it shake out?

## Wrapping Up

Take some time with your group to give thanks. This can take the form of specific areas you want to thank God, or can be as simple as thanking the hosts of your small group for giving of their resources and time. We all have something to be thankful for, and this time of year gives us a great excuse to express that to God and to one another.

