

# Talk About It

Small Group Discussion Guide

## Holy Night

November 30-December 3, 2023

### Start Talking

Do you have a fear of heights, snakes, storms, flying, praying out loud?

### Main Idea

This week starts our Christmas teaching series "Holy Night". As we enter this Christmas season, we may be tempted to check out for a month and check back in January. Will this be just *another* Christmas season, or will it be a *new* Christmas season that waits to be discovered? To help rediscover Christmas and make this season new, some of us might first have some common obstacles to overcome—fear, inadequacy, or distractions. Mary felt fear when the angel came to her. Lowly shepherds were the first to hear the good news of Christ's birth. The three kings/wise men had to remain focused on their mission during a long journey. Whether it is fear like what gripped Pastor Jackson when he climbed Half Dome at Yosemite National Park, feelings of unworthiness from your past that still haven't been dealt with, or the busyness that the holiday season can sometimes bring, it is time to prepare our hearts and minds for what God wants to do in this *new* Christmas season! It is a new opportunity to get back to the Main Thing—the Savior who came for us long ago on that first Holy Night!

### Personalize It

1. Which of these three—fear, inadequacy, or distractions—do you struggle with the most? Which have you had to overcome, and how did you do it?
2. "Faith is not built in the absence of fear, but when you choose to trust God in the midst of fear." What does this mean? Do you agree? How would it help to remember that God is with you in those moments (see Psalm 56:3-4)?
3. When have you felt inadequate in life—maybe in school, a new job, as a spouse or parent, around certain people, or something else? What is a healthy way to deal with those feelings?
4. Who defines your worth? Who do we often let define our worth who isn't qualified to do it?
5. Regardless of how long you have been in church, what can you do to get back to basics this season to make it memorable and different from Christmases past?

### Let's Do It! Commit to a step and live it out this week!

1. Fear, inadequacy, distractions. Develop a plan to deal with what the Lord has laid on your heart—and start to deal with it. Is it getting into the Bible more so you can learn of God's character and promises? Is it to attend the weekly worship service more often to worship and hear Bible-based teaching? Is it to become more regular in attending Small Group and strengthen your life with a community of believers? Is it to cut out some noise that makes life crazy? Real change starts with a prayer and a plan. Pray and come up with a plan this week.

2. Seek God on a day-at-a-time journey this month to rediscover the Savior who came for you. What small practice can you do regularly this month to seek the coming Christ each day?
3. Reflect on your own story. When did Christ come to you? What led you to say "yes" to Jesus and cross from death to life in a life-changing way? Think about your story and put it into a 2-minute summary you can share. Share it with your group in a week or two to help get you ready to share it with someone whom God is preparing to hear it.

## Let's Pray

Father, we celebrate and praise You this month as we anticipate the celebration of the Savior who came for us! Help us to overcome anything in our hearts that would distract us from experiencing this Christmas season in a fresh way. Help us to overcome any fear that may be crippling us, feelings that lie to us about our truly immense worth to You, and the gauntlet of distractions that await us in the days and weeks ahead that would rob us of intimacy with You. Give us the wisdom to choose wisely and the discernment to hear Your voice above the noise as You seek to draw us close again. Lord, may this be a Christmas season where You do something in our hearts that changes the course of our lives and brings us back to the center of Your will for us. And may this be the Christmas season where You do something *through* us to reach someone who needs to experience You for the first time. We love You—that You had a plan to save us that first Christmas, and that You *have* a plan to renew and recreate us again this Christmas season. Have Your way in us! In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Key Scriptures

### Luke 1:26-30 (NLT)

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!"

### Luke 1:38 (NLT)

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

### Psalms 56:3-4 (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. <sup>4</sup> I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

### Luke 1:46-49 (NLT)

<sup>46</sup> Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. <sup>47</sup> How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! <sup>48</sup> For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.

### Luke 2:8-11 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup> That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup> The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

### Genesis 46:33-34 (NLT)

<sup>33</sup> Then he said, "When Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation, <sup>34</sup> you must tell him, 'We, your servants, have raised livestock all our lives, as our ancestors have always done.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the region of Goshen, for the Egyptians despise shepherds."

### Luke 2:15 (NLT)

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

**Luke 2:18-19 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

**Galatians 4:4 (NLT)**

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law.