

## Small Group Guide: The Christmas Story - Joy in Humility



### **Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker**

**Ice Breaker Question:** Share about a time when something familiar became meaningful to you in a new way. How did your perspective change?

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### **Introduction**

This week's sermon reminds us that the Christmas story is far from the peaceful, comfortable scene we often imagine. Instead, it reveals a God who willingly entered into human suffering and discomfort to save us. The joy we find in Christmas comes not from our circumstances, but from the truth of what God has done for us.

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### **Key Scripture Passages**

- **Luke 2:1-20** - The birth of Jesus and the shepherds' visit
  - **Micah 5:2** - Prophecy of Messiah's birthplace (referenced)
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### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Part 1: Familiarity and Depth**

1. The message mentioned that familiarity with Scripture can cause us to lose awe, but it can also bring depth. How do you balance staying excited about familiar Bible stories while also growing deeper in understanding?

2. Can you share a time when a familiar Bible passage suddenly "came alive" for you in a new way?

## **Part 2: God's Sovereignty in Unlikely Circumstances**

3. Caesar's census was motivated by greed, yet God used it to fulfill prophecy. What does this teach us about God's sovereignty over human affairs and our current circumstances?
4. How does it change your perspective on difficult situations to know that "even when you think you're doing something for yourself, God ultimately is sovereign and in control"?

## **Part 3: The Reality of Jesus' Birth**

5. The sermon stripped away the "peaceful" veneer of the nativity scene. Why is it important to understand the harsh reality of Jesus' birth? How does this affect your view of God's love?
6. Jesus was born in humility—in a barn, laid in a feeding trough. What does this tell us about the character of God and His approach to saving humanity?

## **Part 4: The Shepherds' Role**

7. Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first to hear about Jesus' birth rather than religious leaders or royalty?
8. The shepherds were watching over sheep raised for temple sacrifice when they learned about the Lamb of God. What is the significance of this connection?
9. After seeing Jesus, the shepherds "made widely known" what they had heard. How does their response challenge us in sharing the good news today?

## **Part 5: Joy Despite Circumstances**

10. The angel said "Do not be afraid" and brought "good tidings of great joy." How can we experience genuine joy even when our circumstances are difficult or uncomfortable?
11. The sermon states: "Truth is more important than circumstance." How can this principle change the way we approach challenges in our daily lives?

## **Part 6: Advent Hope**

12. The sermon reminded us that Advent is not just about Jesus' first coming, but also His second coming. How does the hope of Christ's return affect how you live today?

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## Key Takeaways

1. **God enters into our suffering** - Jesus didn't come in comfort but in the midst of human hardship, showing that God is not distant from our struggles.
2. **God uses ordinary people** - The shepherds were everyday workers, yet they were chosen to be the first evangelists of the gospel.
3. **Joy transcends circumstances** - True joy comes from knowing the truth of who Jesus is and what He has done, not from comfortable situations.
4. **God's sovereignty works through everything** - Even secular decrees and human greed are used by God to fulfill His purposes.
5. **The Christmas story points to the cross** - Jesus came as the Lamb of God, born near the fields where sacrificial lambs were raised.
6. **Advent includes anticipation** - We celebrate Jesus' first coming while eagerly awaiting His second coming to establish His kingdom.

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## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

#### Option 1: Reframe Your Circumstances

- Identify one difficult circumstance you're facing
- Journal about how God might be sovereign in this situation
- Pray for eyes to see His work even in challenging times

#### Option 2: Be a Shepherd

- Like the shepherds who "made widely known" what they had seen, share the gospel with someone this week
- It doesn't have to be elaborate—just share what Jesus means to you with a friend, family member, or coworker

#### Option 3: Cultivate Advent Joy

- Each day, write down one truth about Jesus that brings you joy
- Focus on how these truths matter more than your current circumstances
- Share your list with your small group next week

#### **Option 4: Study the Shepherd Theme**

- Do a personal study on shepherd imagery in the Bible (Psalm 23, John 10, Ezekiel 34)
- Reflect on what it means that Jesus is your Good Shepherd
- Consider how Jesus both shepherds us and became the sacrificial Lamb

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#### **Prayer Focus**

**Praise:** Thank God for humbling Himself to become human and enter into our suffering

**Confession:** Confess areas where you've allowed circumstances to steal your joy or where you've forgotten the magnitude of what Jesus did

#### **Supplication:**

- Pray for those facing difficult circumstances this Christmas season
- Ask God for opportunities to share the good news like the shepherds did
- Pray for renewed awe and wonder at the familiar Christmas story

**Anticipation:** Thank God for the hope of Christ's second coming and pray "Come, Lord Jesus"

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#### **Closing Reflection**

*"There is nothing to react to that with anything other than joy and glorifying God, because what He did for us is absolutely remarkable."*

Take a moment of silence to let this truth sink in. Then close by reading Luke 2:20 together:

*"Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them."*

## 5-Day Advent Devotional: The Humble King



### **Day 1: God's Sovereignty in Unexpected Places**

**Reading:** Micah 5:2-5

#### **Devotional:**

God's plans unfold even through the greed and ambition of earthly rulers. Caesar's decree, motivated by taxation and control, became the instrument that fulfilled ancient prophecy. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, just as Micah predicted centuries earlier. This reminds us that God is sovereign over every circumstance, working His purposes through both the willing and unwilling. When your life feels disrupted by forces beyond your control, remember that God sees the bigger picture. He can take the most mundane or even oppressive circumstances and weave them into His redemptive story. Nothing catches Him by surprise. Today, consider what difficult circumstances you're facing and ask God to help you trust His sovereignty even when you can't see His plan.

## **Day 2: The Humility of the Incarnation**

**Reading:** Philippians 2:5-11

### **Devotional:**

The Creator of the universe left His throne to be laid in a feeding trough. There was no comfortable inn, no royal reception, no earthly glory—only a cave, animals, and exhausted parents. This wasn't an accident but a deliberate choice. Jesus didn't distance Himself from human suffering; He entered fully into it from His very first breath. His birth declares that God understands your pain, your discomfort, your disappointments. He's not a distant deity unmoved by our struggles. When you feel forgotten or overlooked, remember that Jesus chose the most humble entrance possible. His humility invites us to embrace our own limitations and trust that God's power is made perfect in weakness. How might God be calling you to embrace humility today?

## **Day 3: Good News for Ordinary People**

**Reading:** Luke 2:8-14

### **Devotional:**

The greatest announcement in human history wasn't delivered to kings, priests, or scholars—it came to shepherds in a field. These were ordinary workers doing their everyday jobs when heaven broke into their night. God consistently chooses the unexpected and overlooked to carry His message. The shepherds weren't special because of their status but because they responded to God's invitation. They left their sheep and went to see what God had done. You don't need credentials, education, or social standing to encounter Jesus or share His good news. God meets you in the midst of your ordinary life and invites you into His extraordinary story. Today, consider how God might be speaking to you in your everyday routine. Are you listening for His voice?

## **Day 4: The Good Shepherd and the Lamb**

**Reading:** John 10:11-18

### **Devotional:**

The shepherds watching over temple sacrifice lambs received news of the ultimate Lamb of God. Jesus would become both the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and the sacrificial Lamb who takes away sin. This beautiful paradox reveals the heart of the gospel. Moses and David both moved from positions of privilege to become shepherds before God used them mightily. Jesus, the King of Kings, came as the Good Shepherd. He knows your voice, calls you by name, and willingly gave everything for you. Unlike hired hands who flee when danger comes, Jesus stays. He fights for you, protects you, and guides you. Reflect today on what it means that Jesus knows you personally and chose to die for you specifically.

## **Day 5: Joy in His Coming—Past and Future**

**Reading:** Revelation 19:11-16

### **Devotional:**

The shepherds returned glorifying God because their hope had arrived. We celebrate Christ's first coming with joy, but Advent also points us forward to His second coming. David won his first battle as a shepherd but later conquered Jerusalem as king. Similarly, Jesus came first as the suffering servant but will return as conquering King. The baby in the manger will return on a white horse. This dual perspective transforms how we live today. We're not waiting hopelessly but expectantly, knowing that the One who loved us enough to be born in a stable will return to make all things new. The peace announced at His birth will be fully realized when He establishes His eternal kingdom. Today, let both His first and second coming fill you with joy and hope.