

Small Group Guide: The Covenant of Christmas - God's Perfect Plan

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by thanking God for His perfect plan of salvation and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and application.

Icebreaker

Share a time when something didn't go according to your plan, but looking back, you can see God's hand at work.

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus' birth was God's eternal plan from the foundation of the earth, not a backup plan after humanity's fall
2. The incarnation required Jesus to be fully God and fully man, born under Jewish law to fulfill it perfectly
3. God orchestrated world events, including Caesar Augustus's census, to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem at the appointed time
4. Jesus was born to poor parents in the humblest conditions so He could identify with all people and their struggles
5. God chose ceremonially unclean shepherds as the first witnesses to demonstrate the gospel is for all people, especially outcasts
6. Jesus' humble birth reveals that God's plans don't follow human logic or worldly standards
7. The phrase "fullness of time" means God's perfect timing, not just a random moment in history
8. Because Jesus lived as we do and was tempted in all ways yet without sin, He can sympathize with our weaknesses

9. God can use anyone—even those considered unreliable or unworthy by society—for His eternal purposes
10. The Christmas message is one of peace with God through Jesus Christ, available to all people

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Covenant (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read John 1:1-5, 10-14.** How does this passage frame Christmas differently than the typical nativity story? What does it tell us about who Jesus really is?
2. **Why was it essential that Jesus be born under the law as a Jew?** How does this fulfill God's righteous requirement?
3. **The message emphasized that Jesus' birth happened "when the fullness of time had come" (Galatians 4:4).** What does this tell us about God's timing in our own lives?

God's Unlikely Choices (15-20 minutes)

4. **God used Caesar Augustus (who called himself "Worshipped One") to fulfill His purposes.** How does this encourage us when we see ungodly leaders or difficult circumstances? Can you think of other biblical examples where God used unlikely people or situations?
5. **Why did God choose poor, humble parents for Jesus instead of wealthy, influential ones?** What does this reveal about God's values versus the world's values?
6. **The shepherds were considered "unclean" and unreliable, yet they were the first to hear the gospel message.** What does this tell us about who God reaches

out to? How should this shape our own evangelism?

Personal Application (20-25 minutes)

7. **Mary and Joseph had to change their plans completely when God called them.** Share about a time when God called you to change your plans. How did you respond? What did you learn?
8. **The sermon stated: "If God doesn't change our lives, we need to examine our lives."** How has knowing Jesus changed your life? What evidence would someone see that you've encountered Christ?
9. **Like the shepherds, we're called to share what we've witnessed.** What holds you back from sharing the good news of Jesus with others? How can this group pray for you in this area?
10. **Jesus was born in the worst possible conditions so He could identify with us.** How does knowing that Jesus understands your struggles and trials impact your relationship with Him? How does Hebrews 4:15 encourage you?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2)

Option 1: Reflect on God's Timing Journal about a situation in your life that doesn't make sense right now. Pray and ask God to help you trust His perfect timing, even when you can't see the full picture.

Option 2: Be Like the Shepherds The shepherds "made widely known" what they had seen. Identify one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus. Pray for them daily this week and look for an opportunity to share your testimony or invite them to Christmas Eve service.

Option 3: Embrace Humility Jesus came in the humblest way possible. Identify one area of your life where pride has crept in. Take a practical step this week to serve someone else in that area.

Option 4: Study the Covenant Read through the prophecies mentioned in the sermon (Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2, etc.). Create a list of how Jesus fulfilled each one. Let this strengthen your faith in God's Word.

Memory Verse

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Prayer Focus

- **Thanksgiving:** For God's perfect plan and timing in sending Jesus
- **Personal:** For those struggling this Christmas season due to loss or difficulty
- **Outreach:** For boldness to share the gospel like the shepherds did
- **Trust:** For faith to trust God's plans even when they don't make sense to us
- **Worship:** Praising God for loving us enough to send Jesus in the humblest way

Closing Thought

"God used the government, poor parents, a stable, and outcast shepherds to bring about the most important event in human history. If God can use all of that for His glory, He can certainly use you—right where you are, with whatever you have—for His purposes."

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to those experiencing their first Christmas without a loved one
- Encourage authentic sharing—the shepherds were outcasts, and we all have struggles
- Keep the focus on God's perfect plan and His great love for us
- End on time to respect everyone's busy Christmas season schedule