



Life Group Guide

A GUIDE FOR LIFE GROUPS, FAMILIES OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY



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VIDEOS

“FEAR NOT! -THE ANGELS OF ADVENT | SUNDAY, DEC. 12 AN ANGEL’S REASSURANCE

ADVENT 3 (JOY)

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, we hear your words to us, “do not be afraid.” Yet we sometimes fear and doubt your will and your ways. Forgive us, Lord, and reassure us of who you are – Immanuel – “God with us” – the God who comes to save us. Indeed, you love us, delight in us, and rejoice over us with singing! In thankful response we lift up our hands, our hearts, and our voices in praise, singing “Joy to the world, the Lord has come!” In the comforting, joyful name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

CONNECTING QUESTION

Talk about a time when God changed your plans to his plans. Were you a willing participant? Was fear one of your feelings? What helped you follow God’s plans?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God’s Word: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Matthew 1:18-25

WATCH VIDEO

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Although a Jewish couple were forbidden to have sexual relations during their engagement, they were referred to as husband and wife. Their relationship could only be broken by divorce. What do you think Joseph initially thought upon hearing Mary’s news about his bride-to-be? If you were in Joseph’s shoes, how might you have responded? How did Joseph plan to handle this situation? What would have been the response of society at that time to Mary’s pregnancy and Joseph’s solution?
2. If you had been Joseph, what thoughts would have been keeping you awake at night? How did the angel address Joseph in his dream? Why was Joseph’s ancestry significant? (see Matthew 1:1 and 16).
3. What directions did the angel give Joseph? Who would Jesus be? What did his name mean?
4. This title of Jesus refers to both his deity (GOD with us), his nearness to us (God WITH us), and his personal involvement (God with US). In what ways is God with us? How have you experienced Jesus as Immanuel recently?
5. Paul Harvey, radio news broadcaster and writer hosted a program from 1976 to 2009 called “The Rest of the Story,” in which he shared backstories and events unknown to most people. He would end each episode by saying: “Now you know the rest of the story.” The angel was telling Joseph “the rest of the story” about Mary and her situation, and the decisions he was pondering. When is it helpful for us to know the “the rest of the

story?" How can we respond when we don't clearly know the rest of the story as Joseph did?

6. How did Joseph respond to the angelic message? This wasn't the only time Joseph heard from an angel. Read Matthew 2:13-14, 19-21 to discover when an angel came to him again. What do you learn about Joseph from his responses? What qualities of Joseph would you like to see more of in your life?
7. Read Zephaniah 3:14-20. Why don't we have to fear? What reasons do we have to rejoice? What phrase in this passage is significant for you today?

FOLLOWING JESUS

In his book, *Angels*, Billy Graham said: "Though the angel could not preach to Joseph, he struck at the root of the matter, when he proclaimed, 'He shall save his people from their sin.' Here was the gospel in all of its beauty, simplicity and purity. According to the witness of the angel, sins can be forgiven. There is someone who can forgive sins. This is Jesus the Christ."

Sometimes we make the Gospel – the Good News - more difficult than it should be. Write down in one sentence what you think is the simplest, purest form of the gospel. With whom and how can you share that this Advent and Christmas season?

CLOSING PRAYER

Praise God that he has all things in his hands. Not only did he send an angel to speak to Joseph about his plans, but he can direct us in his ways as well. Pray for an obedient heart that is faithful and trusting to follow God. Ask God to reassure you of his presence, remove your doubts, and make you less fearful when you face difficult decisions and situations. Pray for God to show you ways to share his love and care with others every day.

Our Father...