



the
THRILL
of
HOPE

Community Group Discussion Guide

December 29, 2013

Unwrapping Christmas
Luke 2:13-14

Read Luke 2:8-20 before answering the following questions.

Introduction

“Christmas” in the minds of most is synonymous with “getting.” Even beyond the gifts and presents, we look forward to getting a break—finding rest, peace, and fulfillment. But very often we trade the God-sent gift of “true peace” for plans and parties, then quickly bulldoze ahead to next year. We build an empire of expectations for this season, only to end up disappointed and left wanting more. There’s something amiss here. What if this year, after Christmas, it was the start of a whole new kind of year? ... a year more fulfilling and peaceful than we could have ever hoped for?

Questions for Study

1. What usually gets most of your attention during Christmas? What about this year? Where was your heart really at this year during Christmas?
2. On Christmas Day, after everyone has opened presents and the chaos has died down, what is the general attitude of you and your family? How does knowing that the holiday is over make you feel? Do you usually feel satisfied and ready to move on to the New Year?
3. Do you see our culture as one that is driven by consuming? Or by us as consumers? How do you feel about this? Is this unsettling for you or are you unbothered by it?
4. The verse we heard from Exodus 16:4 says, “*I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.*” How does this concept of God providing for us (and we trusting in Him) compare to the way we live around Christmastime? Does living with that kind of trust and reliance on God seem possible for you? Why or why not?
5. What does the word “peace” mean to you? Can you recall a time when you have felt peace? What did it feel like? What caused you to feel the way you did? Circumstances? People? Things? How did it change the way you behaved?
6. If Christmas is our call to be distinctive—to stand out from the world—what are some ways that you can do this? What are some changes we can make to show the world that we fully trust in the peace of God to provide for us?
7. As we head towards a new year, what classic spiritual disciplines can you begin implement in order to take on the character of Christ? (i.e. Bible study, prayer, fasting, Scripture memorization, solitude & silence, worship, fellowship (small group?), simplicity, etc.) (Remember, these are “effort,” not “earning.”)