

## Let's Go Group Studies

### Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. **Please do modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style.** For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who reads and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. **Be authentic.** If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. They give the participants a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page and to begin to discuss the relevance of the scripture to their needs.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Restate it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion and aren't intended to be read verbatim to the group. They may not be the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer. As part of your preparation, please add to and edit the notes to fit where you intend to lead the discussion.
7. A **Follow up question** helps participants open up a little more and look a little deeper and is meant to be asked after there has been some discussion of the prior question.
8. The last page is the participant handout.
9. Please remember that our focus, purpose and practice is to **Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.**

## The Lord of Breakthroughs - Witness His Majesty

- 1) Scripture: Luke 2:1-7; Micah 5:2; Romans 5:6; 1 Tim 2:1-6; Phil 2:6-7
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to list at least one thing for which they genuinely want to praise Jesus.
- 3) Resources:
- 4) Preparation:
  - A. Pray for guidance
  - B. Review Leader's Notes and read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
  - A. "Last time I asked you identify one obstacle to your believing God will do what He says that you could surrender to Him and that would make you happy. Could anyone share if they were able to do that and how it went for you?"
    - i) *If you closed last time's study with a different question or application, substitute your closing for this one.*
  - B. "Tonight, I'd like to take a fresh look at one of the most familiar passages in the Bible. Jesus and Mary travel to Bethlehem and Mary has her baby in a stable. Pretty basic stuff. Add a few Christmas carols, a covered dish to share and a white elephant gift and you have every Sunday School Christmas party ever. Instead, let's see a king who gives up almost everything that a king has and what God has. What does he get in return? A criminal's death and the sin of all mankind. Oh, and the people he loves get to live.
  - C. It's Christmastime and there can be a lot of pressure to feel joyful. Pressure to feel happy doesn't produce joy. Let's hit pause on the pressure and peacefully witness Jesus come as Immanuel, God with us. Let's see Him come not to judge us, but to walk with us and to redeem us so that we can walk in freedom with Him. When we are done, each of us should be able to list at least one thing for which we genuinely want to praise Jesus."
- 7) The study
  - A. Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.
    - i) "What would it mean to you in your everyday life if Jesus hadn't been born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago? What if we were still waiting for that to happen? What if Christianity hadn't happened yet? Since that is a bottomless

well of alternative history possibilities, focus on just two or three quick ideas about: how you would live your daily life, what your personal view of yourself and how you fit into this universe would look or how our world would order and govern itself?"

(1) *Would you have another faith, or no faith at all?*

(2) *How would or schools, government or healthcare function?*

(3) *What would hope look like?*

(4) *No need to go too far down the rabbit hole on this. Please help people see how different their life would be if Jesus hadn't come when He did. (See also Rom 5:6 and 1 Tim 2:1-6)*

B. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 2:1-7. *(If the picture in your head isn't of Linus reading this during the Peanut's gang Christmas play practice, we had a much different childhood.)*

C. Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem fully aware that Mary is about to give birth to the Messiah (Matt 1:20-21 & Luke 1:26-35). The heavenly choir of angels, the shepherds and the wise men are on the way, but right now it is just them. Given their knowledge of what was happening and their very unique involvement, do you think there was anything majestic about this event for any or all of the three of them?"

(1) *A humble birth for a humble Savior. A tiny helpless baby in a manger.*

(2) *A not-quite wed, teenage mother giving birth on the straw next to the animals.*

(3) *God has come, not just to our people, but to our family.*

(4) *Depends on what 'majestic' means to you.*

D. **Follow-up question** Ask "Take your best guess at this. Having come from heaven to a stable, what might be different about Jesus' perspective on majesty as compared to our own?"

i) *Which seems more noble to you, a king on his throne in his court or a king who comes down in the mud to redeem his people from their punishment? (See also Phil 2:6-7)*

E. Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Consider yourself a witness to the first seven verses of Luke 2. What has changed in your life because Jesus came to us as one of us?" *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants. If they struggle to answer...*

(1) *Feel free to let this run on into a praise session. Feel free to guide it that way. That would be a great way to come into the Christmas season.*

(2) *This would also be a great time to encourage anyone who hasn't done so to embrace Jesus as their Savior.*

F. Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. No need to share these in the group unless it seems helpful. You can end the lesson after you think everyone has had enough time to finish this.

i) "Please write down at least one thing for which you genuinely want to praise Jesus for each day this week. It could be the same thing every day or something different each day."

8) Summary:

A. Encourage your group members to apply the ideas or principles they developed from question 4. Plan on asking them next week about the results.

B. Close in prayer

# The Lord of Breakthroughs - Witness His Majesty

Luke 2:1-7

1) What would it mean to you in your everyday life if Jesus hadn't been born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago? What if we were still waiting for that to happen? What if Christianity hadn't happened yet? Since that is a bottomless well of alternative history possibilities, focus on just two or three quick ideas about: how you would live your daily life, what your personal view of yourself and how you fit into this universe would look or how our world would order and govern itself?

2) Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem fully aware that Mary is about to give birth to the Messiah (Matt 1:20-21 & Luke 1:26-35). The heavenly choir of angels, the shepherds and the wise men are on the way, but right now it is just them. Given their knowledge of what was happening and their very unique involvement, do you think there was anything majestic about this event for any or all of the three of them?

3) Consider yourself a witness to the first seven verses of Luke 2. What has changed in your life because Jesus came to us as one of us?

4) Please write down at least one thing for which you genuinely want to praise Jesus for each day this week. It could be the same thing every day or something different each day.

For next time... Read Luke 2:8-20