



Week 8: Coaching Guide (repeating for emphasis)

Christmas season is here! **Why do we do all this again?!** This season is busy, and often stressful! Shopping, hosting, cooking, cleaning, partying, attending, supporting, giving, getting... the list goes on and on!

Slow down for just a second. No really, stop and take a deep breath.... Ah, okay --- The reason we do all of this is because of what Christ has done for us. Although we enjoy festivities, traditions, and family during this time of year, the real meaning is all about who Jesus is and who He has made us to be. While we enjoy the holidays, let's not forget to be men and women after God's own heart this Christmas season...

Leading [learn to facilitate your group more effectively]

- Your group likely has a few people who have lots of friends and family to spend the holidays with. Stay in touch with these people if they miss group. Let them know the group misses them, but that you are all happy that they are able to enjoy the holiday season with loved ones.
- There may be one or more people in your group who will feel extra lonely around the holiday season. This could be empty-nesters, the elderly, shut-ins, those in the hospital, people who have family out of state, homeless or low income families, etc.
 - When you think about cancelling a group meeting, think about these people the most! Don't make easy decisions that make your holiday season more relaxing. Give of yourself as you show love to those who need their group family this time of year!

Shepherding [know the sheep, feed the sheep, lead the sheep, protect the sheep]

- Consider how the Lord wants to use you to minister to the people who need their church family during this time of year. What can you do outside the group meeting?
 1. **Go caroling** with the available members of your group. Visit the shut-ins, hospitalized, those in nursing homes, etc. and bring them some Christmas cheer.
 2. **Deliver a gift basket.** Ask some of the people in your group who have a lot to give some to those who have little. Encourage those who have family out of state, the elderly, etc.
 3. **Invite others to join you during your family celebrations.** For years our family has included "adopted family members" during our Christmas morning celebrations and other family events. We have had a host of people join us as we unwrap presents, eat breakfast, and spend time together. Make sure they have a gift to unwrap if they are there for present time!
 4. **Send a card.** Sometimes just receiving a personalized note will warm someone's heart in a special way.

Developing [grow as a disciple yourself]

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (NIV, John 3:16).

Our God has a giving heart. God the Father gave up His one and only Son for us. God cares for and is generous with His children. If we are going to share God's heart, we must be prepared to give of ourselves.

The Father gave the Son for our sake. Don't turn family, the Christmas season, time-off of school and/or work, traditions, etc. into idols. What God has given you is for your enjoyment, but also for you to share. Remember to love others, especially during this time of year.

Merry Christmas!! Joy to the world, peace on earth, good will to all people.



Week 8 (December 20-26): Lesson Guide

Open In Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask the group to recall the guidelines for discussion that we use to create a safe environment.

Ask someone to retell last week's story from Luke 1:26b-38 (The Angel and Mary).

Ask someone on your team to read the Hook Question – Ask, “Share about a time when there was an opportunity that you decided to participate in that changed your life for the better.”

Ask someone from your team to read or tell the following background for the story:

Do you realize that the birth of Jesus was the climax of thousands of years of longing by millions of Jews? All throughout the Old Testament, prophets longed for and spoke of the Messiah, the One God would send to save not only the Jews, but the entire world. Jesus means Savior; the Savior had finally come.

Our story this week is the grand announcement of the Messiah's historic arrival; yet the announcement was not made to the rich, the famous, or the powerful. This glorious announcement was reserved for a few humble shepherds, reminding us once again that God delights in using “the least of these.”

Today's story takes place in Bethlehem of Judah around the year 4 B.C. It happened in the middle of the “tax season.” The town was packed, everyone was under stress, and all the inns were full. Mary and Joseph could not find a room in which to stay, and Mary was about to give birth. Finally, they found a man willing to let them stay in his barn. It was in this humble stable that the King of kings and the Lord of lords was born, and it is in this moment that our story begins...

Tell the story from Luke 2:8-20

Rebuild the story – (Group members retell the story based on what they remember)

Read Luke 2:8-20 – (Ask the group to read these verses)

Discuss these questions:

- What do you like about this story, and is there anything you dislike?
- Why do you think God decided to reveal Himself like this to these shepherds?
- What do you think would have happened if the shepherds wouldn't have gone to see Jesus after receiving this announcement from the angels?
- What change took place in the shepherds when they met the Savior?
- What change took place in your life when you met the Savior? Was it like the shepherds?
- God turned the shepherds into prophets. How does God want to do this in your life?

Head
Questions:
Quicker
tempo.

Heart Questions:
Slow down & wait!

Ask for a volunteer to retell the story one last time.

Ask for a volunteer to tell the story next week.

Prayer Requests (ask someone in the group to take notes so you can email the requests to the group)

Pray and Dismiss