

The Gift

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea: God's angelic birth announcement to the shepherds reminds us that the Good News of Jesus is for everyone, and we get to be the ones to share that news with others.

Head Change: To consider whom we can bless with hope of Jesus.

Heart Change: To be thankful that the gift of Jesus is for each of us.

Life Change: To find others to bless with the Good News this Christmas.

OPEN

What is one meaningful gift that you received for a past Christmas? What made it meaningful?

The items that top our Christmas wish lists each year are nice, but the most thoughtful, unique, or sentimental gifts are usually the ones that carry the most impact. They may be expensive, but they do not have to be. A special gift that conveys another person's care brings tremendous impact.

In this session, Jason Turner, pastor of Mississippi Boulevard Church in Memphis, TN, focuses on the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angels to the shepherds. The gift of Jesus mentioned by the angels is the most meaningful of all, and it was not just for the shepherds. It is for all of us. We now get to share that gift with others.

READ

What ancient custom happened when a royal birth occurred?

DISCUSS

Instead of visiting aristocrats, the angels announced the royal birth of the King of kings to lowly shepherds.

How did God's value of these shepherds differ from society's value of them?

The birth announcement to the shepherds was not simply to them. The angel declared "good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

THE GIFT OF JESUS IS FOR ALL OF US.

Read Luke 2:10-11.

The Shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks, little realizing that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had come to watch over them. Mary gave birth to Jesus, and Joseph was His earthly father, but the angel said the Savior had been born "unto you." **How does this announcement to the shepherd's underscore God's desire for people to come to Him as they are?**

The shepherds were considered lowly, on the margins of society. **If Christ were born today, to which sorts of people on the margins of society might angels announce His birth?**

As Jason explained, "Jesus is the timeless, enduring, and eternal gift of Christmas." **In what ways is Jesus this gift to us?**

The shepherds went from feeling great fear to great excitement because of what the angel shared. Our emotions can be fickle. We may be cranky or anxious or sad. **How can the gift of Jesus adjust an emotion that you have recently been feeling?**

THE GIFT OF JESUS IS LIFE-CHANGING.

Read Luke 2:12-15.

Jason mentioned the shepherds were unclean and not allowed in the temple. The high priest in Israel was the only one able to enter the Holy of Holies in the temple to meet with God, and that occurred only once a year. **How does that religious rule add significance to the invitation the shepherds received?**

First century Jews were awaiting the Christ (same word for Messiah). Their expectations for the coming Messiah concerned military and political change. God's gift in

sending Jesus is, as Jason explained, what we ultimately need rather than what we expected. **What makes the gift of Jesus better than what we often think we need?**

Jason said, “There is no gift in the history of the world that is as life-altering as the gift whose name is Jesus.” **How were the shepherds changed by their encounter with Jesus?**

How has Jesus changed your life?

***Note:** To consider the change that has come to us through Jesus, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.*

THE GIFT OF JESUS IS WORTH SHARING.

Read Luke 2:16-20.

The shepherds shared the saying about Jesus that had been told them. This refers to what the angels told them in verses 10-11. After the shepherds saw Jesus, the Bible does not record them returning to their flocks; those plans had changed. **Why does an encounter with Jesus’ change people’s plans?**

As Christmas approaches, how can you be like the angels and shepherds who announced the gift of God’s Son to others?

Jason stated, “No matter who you are, whatever your racial or ethnic background is or without regard for the shame of your past, Jesus has come just for you – as the Gift that is the greatest expression of God’s love for the world.” The lowly shepherds were surprising recipients of the Good News of Jesus. **With whom you could show the hope of Jesus?**

***Note:** To further explore the gospel message that began to find fulfillment when Christ came, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.*

LAST WORD

Celebrating the coming of Christ to dwell with us is a wonderful time with family and friends each year, but we must reflect on the reason why Jesus came to earth. Jason shared his hope that you will “leave a review” to let someone else know about your experience with Jesus.

Describe with the group your plan to share a review with the person you named earlier. Consider when and where you might have the opportunity to do this and what you might say. As your group closes in prayer, pray for these specific people to be receptive to the unexpected, good news of great joy that you will share with them.

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Changed by Jesus

When people have been Christians for a long time, they often forget just how much they have been changed by Christ.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-12 and describe our situation before Christ came into our lives. We understand that our sin was so serious that we were irreparably separated from God and deserving of His eternal wrath.

Read Ephesians 2:4-9, 13, 19 and describe our new situation with Christ now in our lives.

The presence of Jesus – God with us – has brought us not only forgiveness but also full inclusion as members of God's family! Through Jesus, we have been conferred every hope imaginable and can look forward to experiencing the immeasurable riches of God's grace!

Take a moment to thank the Lord for the gift of Jesus.

2. The Christ Child and the Gospel

The Good News that leads to great joy is for everyone. Celebrating the Christ Child is a wonderful part of Christmas, but this wonderful coming of Christ only truly makes sense by understanding why He came.

Read the following passages and answer the questions.

- Romans 3:23. What is the status of every person before God?
- Ephesians 2:1. Where does our sinful status leave us in relation to God?
- John 10:10. Why did Jesus come to earth?
- John 3:16. What does God offer humanity through the gift of His Son?
- Romans 10:9-10. What does one need to do to place faith in Jesus?
- 2 Corinthians 5:15-21. What is lifelike for the one who places faith in Jesus?

If you have never placed your faith in Jesus, you can pray to Him now. That prayer can go something like this: *Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I know that you came to earth as a baby to live the human experience without sinning. As God in flesh, You later died to take the sins of the world on Yourself. I confess You as Lord of my life because I know that you were raised to life again. By faith I ask Your help to now live for You and share Your good news of great joy with others.*

If you have made this decision for the first time, tell someone! If you have already made this decision, share the hope with someone else.