

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

FOR ALL PEOPLE

DECEMBER 6, 2023

Week 1 of a 3-week series
about the Good News
of Christmas

BOTTOM LINE

God is with us.

SCRIPTURE

*But the angel said to them,
"Do not be afraid.
I bring you good news
that will cause great joy
for all the people."*

- Luke 2:10 NIV

*All this took place to
fulfill what the Lord had said
through the prophet: "The
virgin will conceive and give
birth to a son, and they will
call him Immanuel" (which
means "God with us")*

- Matthew 1:22-23 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students know,
believe, and look for God's
presence with them this
Christmas season

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: As you're leading through this series and holiday season, keep in mind that you're talking with students from all kinds of backgrounds and perspectives when it comes to things like faith, God, and even Christmas. Some of your students may have limited knowledge of the Christmas story. Even if they know it, they may not have connected the dots for what Jesus' arrival to Earth thousands of years ago means for their lives today. So, be sure to land on what Jesus' birth means for us—the physical representation of God with us on Earth. Of course, the concept that God is actually with us may be hard for students to grasp as well. As concrete thinkers, the idea that they can't see or experience God tangibly in front of them is challenging to understand for students. With that, it's all about feelings in this phase! Whatever they feel to be true is fact to a middle schooler. So, when they don't feel like God is with them, they struggle to see how it could possibly be true! Encourage them to practice looking for God in their everyday lives, both at Christmas and beyond.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What are three things you love most about Christmas?
- When did something not go as planned at Christmas? Tell us about it!
- Have you ever felt like God's love for you changed based on what you did or didn't do? What are some things to try to do (or not do) to please God?
- Why do you think people believe God's love might be based on the way they behave?
- Out of all the options, why do you think God chose to send Jesus as a baby? How would you have done it if you were God?
- Who is your favorite person to spend time with? Why? Why do you think God wants to be with us?
- What might change about your faith if you believed that it was really about God being with us?

DO THIS:

Hand out red and green note cards. On one color, ask students to write ways they'll spend time with God this Christmas season. On the other color, have them write down how they'll spend time with others. Stick the notes on a wall in the shape of Christmas tree or star as everyone discusses what they wrote.

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS

FOR ALL PEOPLE

DECEMBER 6, 2023

Week 1 of a 3-week series
about the Good News
of Christmas

BOTTOM LINE

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SCRIPTURE

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GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students know,
believe, and look for God's
presence with them this
Christmas season

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: The Christmas story is pretty familiar to most of us, right? Well, even if your students know the story, they may not have connected the dots for what Jesus' arrival on Earth means for them personally. That's why it's important to focus your conversation on the fact that Jesus' birth marks the physical representation of God with us on Earth. That's the point of the story. That's the meaning of Christmas. So, encourage your students to practice looking for God in their everyday lives this holiday season as a way to remember the point of the story: God is with us!

TRY THIS:

As you lead this Christmas season (and really, in any season), find ways to make it fun! Get creative and incorporate some different holiday-themed games, treats, or activities during your group time. Though Small Group is designed to be a space to learn, grow, and develop spiritually together, it's also a place to have fun! So find ways to incorporate more of that as you head into Christmas this year!

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's your favorite thing about the Christmas season?
- When it comes to this holiday season, what kind of expectations do you have?
- How does it feel when those expectations aren't met? Share about a past Christmas when reality fell short of your expectations.
- In what ways do we put expectations on God? What is something you are expecting (or even just really hoping) that God will do for you this Christmas? In 2024? Sometime in the more distant future?
- How might our faith be impacted if those expectations aren't met? Can you share a specific example of this happening to you in the past?
- How was Jesus' birth different than all the expectations people had for God?
- What does Jesus' arrival show us about God?
- How can you look for 'God with you' and in the world around you this Christmas season? How have you seen it already?