

## **Embrace the Unexpected Small Group Guide**

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What was one surprise you experienced in 2017?
2. Do you like being surprised, or do you prefer to know what is going to happen?

**Read the following passage:** Matthew 1:18 - 2:23.

Joseph never could have imagined the unexpected turns his life would take during his first few years with Mary. His life is a helpful example of how we can learn to embrace the unexpected in our own lives.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What do you imagine Joseph was thinking and feeling when he learned that Mary was pregnant? Describe a moment when you have received bad news. How did you respond?
2. The Scriptures are filled with unexpected moments, both positive and negative. What are some reasons that God does the unexpected in our lives?
3. Respond to the following idea articulated by pastor and author Andy Stanley: "Innovation is often a result of circumstances we're trying to avoid."
4. Can you think of any difficulties you have faced that have turned out to benefit you in some way? Explain.
5. Even in the midst of difficult circumstances, Joseph tried to take the high ground and do what was right. (See Matthew 1:19.) Why is this often so difficult?
6. Although Joseph often didn't know what was coming around the corner, he consistently took action as the Lord directed him. What are some things you know God wants you to do right now in your life?
7. Joseph and Mary found themselves in a number of unexpected places: Bethlehem, a stable, Egypt, and back in Nazareth. Is there any sense in which you are in an unexpected "place" (i.e. nation, city, neighborhood, job, home, church) in your life? Explain. What are some ways you can better embrace your current "place"?
8. Joseph and Mary were helped along the way by a rather remarkable collection of people: Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, a group of shepherds, and Magi from the east. Have you had any unexpected people help you along the way? Explain. What are some ways we can recognize when God might be sending someone unexpected to

help us?

**Pray**