

Overcoming the Obstacles to Vision 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 is something unexpected that happened to you in 2018?
2. In general, do you like surprises? Explain.

Read the following passage: Luke 2:1-7.

The way the birth of Jesus unfolded could not have been what Mary expected. She was in a crowded Bethlehem, ninety miles away from home, in an awkward, half-married state. Mary's example is a reminder that every vision will face obstacles. Although we are often surprised by the obstacles we face, God is never surprised and he will help us overcome them.

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

1. When Mary was informed she would give birth to the Son of God, her mind was spinning. We, too, often encounter mental barriers when we contemplate vision. What are some examples of mental barriers we may face when considering a particular vision? (Think beyond the obvious examples of time and money.)
2. How can the examples of others help us break through mental barriers? Has anyone else's life been a helpful example to you in some way? Explain. Is there anyone that is serving as a helpful example in your life right now?
3. The angel assured Mary with the words, "No word from God will ever fail" (Luke 1:37). How is your daily life impacted when your heart and mind are filled with God's Word? To what degree is your thought-life currently being shaped by God's Word?
4. When we get wrapped up in a vision, it can be easy to neglect relationships. In your life right now, would you say you are more mission-focused, or more relationship-focused? Explain. Does anyone else know about your current goals? Are any of these goals team goals that you share with others?
5. When we consider the Christmas story from Joseph's perspective, it is clear he had to face multiple unanticipated circumstances: Mary's pregnancy, the Roman census, the threat to Jesus by King Herod, and the danger presented by Herod's son, Archelaus. (See Matthew 2.) What can we do to better handle the unanticipated circumstances that will surely present obstacles to vision?
6. Given its significance, the birth of Jesus took place in remarkably humble circumstances. We don't know what Mary had been imagining, but it probably wasn't giving birth 90 miles from home and placing her son in an animal's feeding trough because the house was so crowded. Sometimes when we start walking in the vision,

it doesn't feel how we imagined it would. What place should our feelings have in our lives? How can we tell when we're allowing our feelings to have too great of an influence on our decisions and behavior?

7. Do you take time to celebrate small "wins"? Why is this important?
8. Sometimes the vision God has for us isn't exactly what we imagined. For example, Jesus' role as Messiah didn't play out how any first-century Jew would have expected. How do we recognize when God is adjusting our understanding of the vision? How do we know when we need to make a change, and when we need to persevere along the same path?
9. What do you feel is the biggest obstacle to vision in your life right now? What can you do to begin to address it?

Pray