

Unexpected Christmas — Mary 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. Do you have any favorite Christmas memories?
2. What are your three favorite holidays?

Read the following passage: Luke 1:26-38.

The first Christmas was completely unexpected, especially for Mary. Nobody had ever experienced what she was experiencing. Mary's confidence in the goodness of God was an anchor in a vast ocean of unknowns. Her relative Elizabeth was a safe place for her to process what God was doing in her life. And her posture as "the Lord's servant" helped her to see the bigger purpose beyond her personal concerns. Mary's story shows us how to navigate our own unexpected Christmas.

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

1. Why might Mary have been "greatly troubled" or "afraid" at the angel's greeting? What was God communicating to her about his intentions toward her? Are you confident that God's intentions toward you are good? Explain.
2. What does the angel say about the son Mary is going to birth? How do the angel's words prepare us for what we will read in the rest of the Gospel?
3. What is Mary's response to the angel's message? Why is it appropriate and important for us to adopt a similar posture toward God? How, in particular, might such a mindset help us more effectively navigate disappointments and unexpected turns in our lives?
4. Look through the words spoken by various people in Luke 1-2. What do we learn about God's bigger work of redemption through these words? Why is it important to keep the big picture in mind when life goes in unexpected directions?
5. Read Luke 1:39-45. Why was Elizabeth an important connection for Mary after the angel's visit? Do you have people you can "hurry" to when God is doing new or unexpected things in your life? Who are those people? Do you play that role in the lives of any of your friends?

Pray