

The (IM) Perfect Christmas



Small Group Discussion Notes
Sunday, December 11, 2016
"Getting ready for a Perfect Christmas"

Getting Started:

What do you still need to do in order for your Christmas celebration to come together as expected? Is it hard to modify your plans when someone close to you has different expectations for Christmas? Why?

Digging In/Digging Deeper:

This is a long passage. Read Luke 1:5-79. As you read, think about the parallels between Zechariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph. The questions for this study will investigate the similarities and differences.

1. Who announced the pregnancies to both couples? What was the immediate reaction of Zechariah and of Mary? Put yourself in their place. What would you be feeling if Gabriel appeared and spoke directly to you and you alone?
2. In their culture, what was the disgrace that both couples experienced; Elizabeth before becoming pregnant and Mary after? Both women would receive something from God; how is that alike yet different? Imagine living in that culture. What do you think would be worse, being childless and aged or being young, unmarried, and pregnant? Why?
3. What was it about Zechariah's response that the angel didn't like? How would you have responded if you were Zechariah? Do you think he was out of line? What about Mary and her response? How would you have responded if you were chosen to be the mother of the Messiah with the explanation provided?
4. Both Zechariah and Mary have long monologues about their feelings toward God. How did those feelings change from the time of their respective angel's announcement to the time of the births/fulfillment of the angel's promise? What are some of the common themes from those discords? Share if you have ever had an experience that makes you feel the same way toward God?
5. Read Luke 1:78-79 once again. Reflect on last week's message about the anticipation of the Messiah from the prophecy of Isaiah. How does this passage demonstrate the fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah 9:2,6-7?

Abide/Love/Bless:

In what way might God be leading you to do something that is outside your usual routine? How might this change in direction be a blessing to you and to those around you this Christmas?