



PREPARE

HEBREWS 9:28

Title: **PREPARE FOR HIS RETURN**

Date: DEC. 10, 2023

Leader's Notes:

1. Start and end the life group on time.
2. Facilitate discussions with your group and **give all attendees opportunities to share their thoughts**. Encourage participation.
3. Remind everyone that whatever shared in the group stays within the group.
4. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit if there's someone who you can lead to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Life Group Discussion Proper

WORSHIP: (15 mins)

Option 1: In person - Home gatherings

Suggestions: Assign someone to lead worship or play two praise & worship songs from You Tube.

Option 2: In person gatherings at a public place (at the park, school campus or café) or Online home gathering (via Zoom or other online meeting platform)

Suggestions: Ask three to four people to share testimonies of answered prayers or ask the question: Ask the group, "What are you thankful to God about this past week?"

WELCOME:(15 mins): IWC - Introduce yourself. Welcome guests/first-time visitors. Cheerfully call someone to do the same.

Ice-breaker: Ask the group and give time for participation.

> *Is there anyone who would like to share a verse you have memorized this past week?*

> *Is there anyone who would like to share something you received from your daily devotions this past week?*

WORD (30– 45 mins)

Main Text: Read Matthew 1:18-24 NLT

Intro: Christmas is a time to celebrate! Interestingly, it is celebrated all over the world but more than half of those who celebrate Christmas in the world doesn't even know why they are celebrating it. According to Forbes.com, Between November 1 - December 31, North American consumers will likely spend between \$957.3 billion and \$966.6 billion, an increase between 3% and 4% from 2022.

Christmas cannot make you happy! The presents/gifts under a tree will not bring you joy but only His presence in our lives will! That's the real message! That we're not alone in life because God has come to us, Emmanuel has come!

Q: What does CHRISTMAS mean to you personally?

Q: Would you be able to share some Christmas family traditions? How do you celebrate as a family?

HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR CHRIST'S BIRTH? HOW DO WE RESPOND TO CHRISTMAS?

1. Commit to live a life of obedience – v.24 -

When Joseph decided to take Mary as his wife, it was a lifetime commitment. Marriage is a lifetime commitment! The major part of his marriage was to parent and be the earthly father to Jesus! Both were an act of obedience to God. He made the commitment even with the knowledge of the situation of Mary's pregnancy and who their firstborn son is going to be. To Joseph, obedience to God knows no challenge, adversity or difficulty.

Q: If you were Joseph, would you have done the same?

Q: What characteristics of Joseph do we see that we can emulate?

Joseph's decision to obey God paved the way for God's help to enable him to do the great responsibility of parenting the Son of God, the Savior of the World. With the decision to obey comes God's grace to help us do what we can not do on our own. At the heart of Christ's coming is to help turn rebels into followers and in the process reveal the great love of God and His power to transform. He calls sinners to repentance and turn them into trophies of God's mercy and grace.

Continuation:

2. Commit to share the message of Christmas – v.v. 20-21 –

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Vv.20-21

Divine Intervention: An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, reassuring him and instructing him not to fear taking Mary as his wife. The angel provided the explanation that the child is conceived by the Holy Spirit and reveals the significance of the child's name—Jesus, meaning **“he will save his people from their sins.”** The angel from God was clear as to what purpose the child in Mary's womb will fulfill. Joseph became a willing instrument to make that purpose become a reality.

Q: Do you think without the angelic visitation, Joseph would still take Mary as his wife? Why or why not?

Those who have experienced the wonderful grace of God in Christ is being called by God to share it to others. Christ came to turn self centred people into agents of change to as many people possible through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Q: Conclusion: Read Luke 1:26-38 NLT

*34 Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”35 The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. 36 What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. 37 For the word of God will never fail.”38 Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.” **Luke 1:34-38 NLT***

Mary made the same commitment to God in order to make Christmas possible. Together (with Joseph) they raised the Son of God into maturity who someday would die for our sins and become our Saviour. It took commitment to a life of obedience for the message of God's love through his Son Jesus can be heard all over the world for all generations so that we sinners can find our way back to the God who loves us.

Q: How about you? Have you made such commitments to Christ?

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST TAKE-AWAY FROM THE LESSON?

Tell your group to partner with someone and ask this question to their partner.

Q: What impacted you the most from this lesson?

Q: How are you preparing to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas this year?

Practical Tips:

1. Express God's love through random acts of kindness, like being a good neighbor, etc.
2. Consider giving some time with your LG's and visit a homeless shelter, nursing home, etc.
3. Use Casual conversations as opportunities to share the story of Christmas.
4. Post on your social media about the significance of Christ's birth.
5. Invite friends, neighbors, or colleagues to attend our church Christmas service. Offer a ride when needed.
6. Offer forgiveness if you have anyone to forgive, ask for forgiveness if you hurt someone.
7. Take time to give/send Christmas Cards with your personal notes or message, include a Bible verse, or prayers.

Remember, the true meaning and real essence of Christmas is to spread the message of God's love, joy, hope and peace to those around us, but most of all the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ who came to seek and save that which was lost. Merry CHRIST-mas to all!

WORK: The Challenge & Closing prayer (15 mins.)

1. Memorize a verse from your devotions this week and be prepared to share it on our next gathering.
2. Please take time in your smaller groups to pray for one another. If there are specific needs, take time to lift them up to God in prayer as well. Ask each other, **“what can I pray for you?”**

Leader's Notes: Please remind your group the schedule for the next gathering and to invite people for the next gathering.