

Fear Not

**LIFE GROUP
LEADER PACKET**

**NOVEMBER-DECEMBER
2020**



Christmas season is here!

What a wonderful time of year...?

Have the events and experience of 2020 spoiled even Christmas? Or do we need this season now more than ever?

FEAR NOT! Jesus is coming!

Today, we live 2000 years after the arrival of Jesus, but desperately need to hear our King say the words, 'Fear Not.'

In this series we will see through the stories of Abraham, Isaiah, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus how to find true Peace and Joy. In unique ways we may need to face our fears with a healthy fear of the Lord, turn our fear to faith and favor, and allow it to produce life changing fruit in us. YES, God can do all of that with our fears. Allow the Christmas Story this year to reveal a Savior who was made like us, to redeem us and restore the world. He is able to help us and free the world of fear.

Look under the tree this year with all the burdens of 2020 and fear not. Wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger is our hope and salvation. Our Savior has come as promised and brought an unattainable and unquenchable peace, grace, rest, blessing and joy to those that trust in Him.

Let's come and worship!

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|------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Nov. 29 | Blessings Replace Fear | Genesis 12:1-9 |
| 2. Dec. 6 | The Fear of The Lord | Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7 |
| 3. Dec. 13 | Fear Becomes Faith | Matthew 1:20-21 |
| 4. Dec. 20 | Fearful or Favored | Luke 1:26 - 38 |
| 5. Dec. 27 | Fruit From Fear | Luke 2:41-52 |

**At Living Hope, we believe that we must be
connected relationally to grow spiritually.**

PURPOSE OF LIFE GROUPS

We exist to reach the world for Jesus, one person at a time. We feel that is best done in small, relational environments where biblical disciples can be made. Life Groups are the primary vehicle by which we carry out the vision and mission of Living Hope Community Church. We will be a church that makes disciples, who make disciples of Jesus.

Vision: The vision of our Life Groups is to provide a spiritual community where groups of people are transformed into the image of Christ, growing in their understanding of God's story, and living it out in the context of loving accountability and expected reproduction.

We believe that a definition of a disciple is found in Matthew 4:19: [And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."](#) Here is how we define disciple: (1) A disciple knows and follows Christ; (2) a disciple is being changed by Christ; and (3) a disciple is committed to the mission of Christ.

I Thessalonians 2

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments".

John 15:4-5

Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

We believe that we cannot grow spiritually if we are not connected relationally

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".

Acts 2:42-47

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

SAFE GROUP: We will strive to create an environment where everyone can be real, open, and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond, or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or questions being considered.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth; and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

USE "I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard (there are many others):

If someone sins against you – Matthew 18:15-20
Restoring someone in sin – Galatians 6:1-5
Forgive a sinner – Colossians 3:12-13
Reconciling differences – Matthew 5:23-26, Matthew 7:1-5

MODEL A LIFE GROUP

Step 1: Welcome:

- Members, visitors, and new believers feel valued and welcomed...
- Starts the moment someone arrives and ends when everyone is gone.

Step 2: Opening Prayer:

- Invites God's Holy Spirit into our presence to prepare our hearts for what God has for us.

Step 3: Purpose/Vision Casting:

- Encourages relationships with God and relationships with others.
- Expresses the purpose of meeting together as a life group and challenges one another to grow and multiply (Branching).

Step 4: Group Guidelines: (see page 5)

Step 5: Follow Up:

- How did last week's discussion impact your week? or
- What did you take away from the sermon? or
- What are you thankful for?

Step 6: Setting the scene:

- Discuss the background to today's passage and the target for today's discussion.

Step 7: Tell the story:

- Read or Tell the passage. Rebuild the story: have the group recreate the passage together.
- Ask if anything was left out?

Step 8: Debrief the story:

- Ask Head (what the Word says), Heart (wrestle with what we believe), and then Hands Questions (bring truth and belief into our everyday realities).
- Remember the 'discussion idea' to help you focus the direction of the discussion.

Step 9: Close in prayer:

- Share personal prayer requests and give everyone an opportunity to pray.

4 KEY COMPONENTS TO MAKING DISCIPLES



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR RELATIONSHIP

The Bible alone gives a clear and complete picture of what God wants done—His mission—and how He wants it done—His methods. The purpose of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus who can make disciples of Jesus. We do this with the understanding that relationship is the key vehicle.



INTENTIONAL LEADER

An intentional leader understands that part of their role is to reach the lost, make disciples of Jesus, and create Christ-centered environments where disciple-making can happen. They understand where a person is spiritually and what is needed to help them grow.



RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

This is a group facilitated by a leader who is intentionally modeling spiritual fruit. They are doing life together with a kingdom mindset. The relationships go beyond just the group time. These relationships press into areas of privacy, transparency, and vulnerability.



REPRODUCIBLE DISCIPLE-MAKING PROCESS

This is the process for developing people toward Christ-likeness.

This includes three parts:

“My Part” the discipler; “Their Part” the disciple, and “God’s Part”.

Leaders understand the Stages of Spiritual Growth and can identify where a person is spiritually and help them mature and grow at each stage.

TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS: The following questions are examples that will help you have a base to begin with and will give you ideas for developing your own questions. Be intentional to ask all three types of questions (head, heart, hands) as you lead your discussion.

HEAD

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What do you see God doing, saying, or showing about Himself?
- Who are the people and what is going on with them?
- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What do you think the main point is?
- What does this show us about _____?
You can fill in the blank with - God/man/_____?
(Or the topic of discussion such as worship)

OBSERVATION

HEART

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- What do you see about yourself?
- Have you known anyone who is an example of this?
- What has it looked like when you have or have not known/believed/lived this in your life?
- What questions does this raise for you?

INTERPRETATION

HANDS

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- What is one way you can apply this to your life this week?
- What are you challenged to think/believe/do differently because of this passage and our discussion?
- How can you use this to disciple others?
- How does this impact you? Your relationship with _____?
(Fill in with: family, fellow believers, work-place or community.)

APPLICATION

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

Asking a question after hearing someone's response helps people process and gives everyone better understanding. Follow up questions come from a heart of being interested, curious, and seeking to understand and draw out. They are not intended to grill or corner people.

- What has brought you to that understanding?
- What would be an example?
- Explain a little more.
- What might be another way to look at it?
- How does _____ affect _____?
- What does it mean?

BEFORE GROUP STARTS – YOUR ROLE:

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Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

WELCOME: (Share a meal, snack, ice-breaker, game or story)

OPEN IN PRAYER

VISION CAST:

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FOLLOW UP & WARM UP:

- *Take time to hear how everyone is doing and what has been going on in each other's lives.*
- *What kind of holiday shopper are you: Black Friday? Christmas Eve? Yearlong hoarder? Explain.*
- *When you close your eyes and think of your 'happy place,' where is it?*

SERIES THEME: FEAR NOT

WEEK 1: Blessings Replace Fear

TEXT: Genesis 12:1-9

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, **6** Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. **8** From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. **9** And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

TELL THE STORY: Read Genesis 12:1-9

DEBRIEF THE STORY:

Spend time explaining the passage again in your own words. (The meaning of the author's terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere.)

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What do we learn about God from this passage?
- What do we learn about humanity?
- What promises does God make to Abram in these verses?
- What was Abram's responsibility?
- What has happened in Genesis 1-11 that brings us to chapter 12?
- How many children do Abram and Sarai have at this point?
- Where are they currently living and believing? (cf. Genesis 11:27-32, Joshua 24:2-3)
- What is God doing in this passage and why is He doing it?
- What do you know about Bethel and Ai? (Genesis 28, 35, Joshua 8, etc.) Where is the land of Canaan? About how far of a trip would that be from Ur of the Chaldeans? and from Haran?
- This passage is the heart of the Abrahamic Covenant. (See also 15:18-21, 17, 26:2-5, 28:10-17) Is this covenant eternal? Is it unconditional in regards to ultimate fulfillment?
- What is Abram's response in verse 7? What did this reveal about his faith?
- Who else is a part of this journey with Abram and Sarai?

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- Why do you think this passage is chosen first for this Christmas series?
- What are Abram's credentials and resume?
- Why would God start with a 75 year old fatherless man instead of an already existing nation?
- Has God asked anything of you that went beyond your limits and understanding?
- How might those who 'went along for the ride' including Sarai have felt during this journey? Do you think they needed faith and trust? Explain.
- With all the unexpected happenings of 2020 what promises and truths are you believing in and resting on so that your life is built on the Rock and your actions reveal His sovereignty and care? Can you also share the Scripture reference and exactly how it is bearing fruit in your life?
- Why is it important to see Christmas as something in the mind of God before 2,000 years ago? (how about even in Genesis 3:15 and the Beginning)
- What is scary about the implications of what God is doing in this passage? In your life?

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- Focus on one takeaway from this passage. What is God impressing upon you to say/believe/do differently in your life?
- What do you know that is true of God in your head but needs to bear fruit in your actions and feelings? Confess the disconnect and walk in repentance. Ask Him to reveal truth and give you the grace to walk in His love. Ask Him to show you His Blessing and the root of your fears.
- Share the true meaning of Christmas with someone you love and who needs to hear about God redeeming and restoring the world. Read the Story this year through this lens.
- Consider what God may be asking us to 'go from' in our comforts or traditions as a community this season to a people or place that needs to hear and see our Savior. Pray Together.

Close in Prayer

Bring to God the ideas and topics that you raised in the above questions. Listen to the Spirit as you pray.

Name	Praise/Request

BEFORE GROUP STARTS – YOUR ROLE:

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WELCOME: (Share a meal, snack, ice-breaker, game or story)

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VISION CAST:

Help everyone grow in their relationship with God and others. Remind everyone that spiritual maturity is growing into the image of Jesus and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Encourage everyone to grow in community, to reach out to one another and others through service and the daily rhythms of life. Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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FOLLOW UP & WARM UP:

- *What are you thankful for today? How did last time's discussion impact your week? Where did you step out in obedience this past week? What did you take away from the sermon?*
- *Finish this thought, "It wouldn't be Christmas without _____."*
- *Share something you have an irrational fear of that makes your spouse or friends laugh.*

SERIES THEME: FEAR NOT

WEEK 2: The Fear Of The Lord

TEXT: Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7,

7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

TELL THE STORY: Read Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7

Note: Check out these Messianic prophecies regarding His birth: Hosea 11:1, Jer. 31:15, Ps. 72:9-10, Is. 7:14, II Sam. 7:12-13, Jer. 23:5-6, Is. 11:1, Num. 24:17, Gen. 22:18, Micah 5:7, Is. 9:6-7, Mal. 3:1, Dan. 9:24-27

DEBRIEF THE STORY:

Spend time explaining the passage again in your own words. (The meaning of the author's terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere.)

HEAD

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What do these verses teach us about God and the Messiah?
- What do these verses teach us about humanity and our needs?
- What Messianic prophecies do you know? (22 just in Isaiah) Which ones do you know that are about the birth of the Messiah? (see note above in Leader's packet)
- Why is the Lord giving a sign?
- What is the meaning of Immanuel and why isn't anyone in the Bible including Jesus called Immanuel? What are the implications of this name on the person that it references?
- How can the child be born to a virgin?
- What does Isaiah 9 teach us about the Messiah? (share 5 things)
- What are His four names? What do they reveal about His character? How can the Son be an Everlasting Father?
- What or who will accomplish the Messiah's Kingdom?
- How does this Sign contrast King Ahaz, Isaiah's son, King David and even all humanity?

OBSERVATION

HEART

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- Which name describing Jesus is standing out to you? Explain.
- How do you separate the First Advent and Second Advent? What are the similarities and differences?
- Why do we make Christmas all about us, our needs, our name, and our will? How do we not let this be the case? Share how you make Jesus the central focus.
- Is the fact that these prophecies were spoken 700 yrs before Christ encouraging? How can understanding the Bible as one redemptive love story increase your faith in God and allow you to focus on relationship? (relationship with God and others)
- What are the dangers of focusing too much on either Jesus as God or as Man?
- How do you let the reality of God being 'with us' transform your thoughts and actions?
- Is Christmas more about a celebration or anticipation for you? Explain.

INTERPRETATION

HANDS

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- Can you believe it is December? Start preparing your heart for Advent with either an Advent Calendar, Nativity, devotional, reading the story, prophecies, etc...
- Consider buying a cake for Jesus' birthday, ornament for the tree, house/lawn decoration, Christmas caroling, etc... Share what you or your families do to put Jesus first and honor His coming.
- Consider, if Jesus came to your house this year what would He believe?
- Share a struggle or burden that you feel this Christmas. Remember those that are no longer with us and care for the families that are figuring out what this holiday now looks and feels like.
- Schedule Rest. (not just shopping, wrapping, making, etc.) Make time for reflection and wonder.

APPLICATION

Lined writing area consisting of 24 horizontal lines.

BEFORE GROUP STARTS — YOUR ROLE:

Read through the curriculum and discussion passages. Be aware of what God is showing you personally. Pray for your group members. What do you see God doing in each of them? What is God's part and what is your part as you walk with them? Psalm 119:18
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WELCOME: (Share a meal, snack, ice-breaker, game or story)

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VISION CAST:

Help everyone grow in their relationship with God and others. Remind everyone that spiritual maturity is growing into the image of Jesus and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Encourage everyone to grow in community, to reach out to one another and others through service and the daily rhythms of life. Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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FOLLOW UP & WARM UP:

- *What are you thankful for today? How did last time's discussion impact your week? Where did you step out in obedience this past week? What did you take away from the sermon?*
- *What is the ugliest Christmas ornament that you have ever seen?*
- *If you were given a yacht for Christmas what would you name it?*

SERIES THEME: FEAR NOT

WEEK 3: Fear Becomes Faith

TEXT: Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

TELL THE STORY: Read Matthew 1:18-25

DEBRIEF THE STORY:

Spend time explaining the passage again in your own words. (The meaning of the author's terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere.)

Note: In Hebrew marriage customs, marriages were arranged by parents with a negotiation of contracts. There would typically be a betrothal period of about a year in which they were considered legally married but did not live together. This time of purity would last until the husband would lead a grand processional march back to his home. Failure to keep this time of purity could result in death by stoning.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- What does this passage teach us about humanity?
- What does this passage teach us about Joseph?
- How is Joseph a son of David?
- Why does this child need to be from the Holy Spirit?
- Why did this child need to be a son?
- What does the name Jesus mean?
- What do we know about angels and this miraculous conception?
- Where do you see fear and faith in this passage?
- Where do we see Joseph's love for Mary in these verses?
- How and when did Joseph obey the angel?

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- Can you imagine Joseph's initial feelings of rejection, betrayal, and anger? Resolving to divorce her quietly speaks volumes of his character and love. How do you respond when life and others treat you unkindly?
- What are some prophecies that Jesus fulfilled with His birth, life and death? How does that bolster your faith?
- Why does this part of the Christmas story rarely get told? When is listening to God and obeying His commands difficult for you?
- Why is sexual purity important to God and you?
- Is living against popular culture and opinion difficult for you? Explain. How do you handle verbal peer pressure that goes against your faith?
- How are the names 'Jesus' and 'Immanuel' similar and different? What is the significance of this?
- How might Joseph's actions have impacted Mary? What do you think they shared with Jesus?

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- How does this story impact you this Christmas? What steps of faith may God be calling you towards?
- What fears do you have this Christmas? God is active in His creation in ways that prove His sovereignty, control, power, and goodness. Confess those fears and walk in repentance and surrender to Him. Trust Him
- How can you use this passage to disciple someone?
- What needs can you or your group meet this season? A phone call, text, or card can go a long way to encouraging someone this holiday season.
- Try one of these Bible studies... Angelic visitations Matthew 28:2, Acts 5:19, 8:26, 10:3, 12:7-10, 27:23, Rev. 1:1 - Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah - 'just' or 'righteous' in Matthew... 1:19, 5:45, 9:13, 10:41, 13:17, 43, 49, 20:4, 23:28, 29, 35, 25:37, 46, 27:19

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FOLLOW UP & WARM UP:

- *What are you thankful for today? How did last time's discussion impact your week? Where did you step out in obedience this past week? What did you take away from the sermon?*
- *How are people making birth announcements (reveals) today? How would you do it? Who would you invite to be there?*
- *Share your favorite Christmas song or carol. Why do you like it so much? Do you know all the words? Who sings your favorite rendition?*

SERIES THEME: FEAR NOT**WEEK 3: Fearful or Favored****TEXT: Luke 1:26-38**

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. **30** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." **34** And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" **35** And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God." **38** And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

TELL THE STORY: Read Luke 1:26-38

DEBRIEF THE STORY:

Spend time explaining the passage again in your own words. (The meaning of the author's terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere.)

HEAD

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- What does this passage teach us about humanity?
- What does this passage teach us about Mary? (her family, credentials, character?)
- What does this passage teach us about angels?
- What does this passage teach us about the baby? (name, origin, witness, etc...)
- What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit?
- What is Mary's question and why is it important?
- What does Mary's reply in verse 38 teach us? What do you think Mary was feeling?
- Where do you see the cosmic and human story connect? What is the significance of mentioning the two men Jacob and David? What are the promises to Mary?
- The descriptions of the setting/people/place/time point to a very common birth. Meaning?

OBSERVATION

HEART

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- How does understanding Mary's role and lack of credentials (age, culture, virgin birth) give you hope and promise?
- Do you think Mary knew her limitations? Will God take her beyond her limitations? How is God leading you into the impossible with only Him as your resource? How difficult is it to trust Him during such times?
- Why do you think we want to find favor with God so much because of our own works and not His sovereign grace? How does this keep you humble and living in the Gospel?
- Since Jesus came to a time, place, person, etc. in unexpected and common ways, He may still do that with you. What common and neglected parts of your life may Jesus want to arrive & reveal in His presence?
- How important is sexual purity to God? How can we talk about this in a constructive way?
- The uniqueness of Jesus and a virgin birth for many are unbelievable. How do you wrestle with the faith and facts and communicate the true Hope of Christmas?

INTERPRETATION

HANDS

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- Focus on one takeaway from this passage. What is God impressing upon you to say/believe/do differently in your life?
- Keeping the wonderful tension of the Christmas Story in balance is important (common yet extraordinary beginnings) as well as the tension surrounding the holiday (decorations, gifts, traditions and Incarnation). Share how you keep the focus on Jesus this season. Share creative ideas, activities, and thoughts for doing this. With no Living Nativity this year at LH how can you and your group share the story or the love found in the story to our community?
- "Let it be to me according to your Word," reveals a submissive and trusting heart to God, our Father and Sovereign Lord. Confess and Repent and ask God to make this true of you and us this holiday season and every day.
- Allow His undeserved favor to overwhelm your fear or feelings of inadequacy and shame!

APPLICATION

BEFORE GROUP STARTS — YOUR ROLE:

Read through the curriculum and discussion passages. Be aware of what God is showing you personally. Pray for your group members. What do you see God doing in each of them? What is God's part and what is your part as you walk with them? Psalm 119:18
Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

WELCOME: (Share a meal, snack, ice-breaker, game or story)

OPEN IN PRAYER

VISION CAST:

Help everyone grow in their relationship with God and others. Remind everyone that spiritual maturity is growing into the image of Jesus and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Encourage everyone to grow in community, to reach out to one another and others through service and the daily rhythms of life. Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

LIFE GROUP GUIDELINES:

You don't need to read this every week but initially, when someone new comes, and when the series or topic changes is a good time to reorient yourselves to the guidelines. This helps set the tone for the group and helps everyone have clear expectations for each other.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

See the weekly email, bulletin, or website and choose the top 2-3 connections that would benefit your group. Also use this time to give any connections that are specific to your Life Group.

FOLLOW UP & WARM UP:

- *What are you thankful for today? How did last time's discussion impact your week? Where did you step out in obedience this past week? What did you take away from the sermon?*
- *What are your New Year's plans this year? Is there a special memory or tradition that you have around this time of year?*
- *Share a time when you lost something very important to you? Did you panic or worry? Did you ever find it? How and when?*

SERIES THEME: FEAR NOT

WEEK 5: Fruit From Fear

TEXT: Luke 2:41-52

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. **42** And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. **43** And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, **44** but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, **45** and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. **46** After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48** And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." **49** And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" **50** And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. **51** And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. **52** And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

TELL THE STORY: Read Luke 2:41-52

DEBRIEF THE STORY:

Spend time explaining the passage again in your own words. (The meaning of the author's terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere.)

Note: Passover was one of three festivals that was required for the men to attend in Jerusalem. This trip would have taken about three days from Nazareth and began in late March or early April. People would travel together for protection and community. Jewish boys entered adulthood at age 13 but would see their training amp up when they were 12 yrs old.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

- What does this passage teach you about God?
- What does this passage teach you about humanity?
- What can we learn about Jesus from these verses?
- Why did it take three days for Mary and Joseph to find Jesus?
- What was the reaction of those that listened to this kid?
- Share why the parents had a major anxiety attack and anguish.
- The key verse in this passage is verse 49 and Jesus' pronouncement. What is significant about it? What does it teach about Jesus' priorities, spirit, and mission?
- What do you think were some of Jesus' questions that He asked in the temple?
- Why do you think dad and mom didn't understand what Jesus told them?
- What does Jesus do after this incident? What do you think His obedience looked like?
- What does Jesus increasing in wisdom and stature mean?
- What does it mean to 'treasure things in your heart?' What is Mary doing here?

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

- What would have been especially difficult in being parents of Jesus?
- In what relationships, similar to Jesus, have you been submitting and subordinating your will in obedience?
- How do you work through your biological family commitments and bonds with your spiritual family commitment and bonds? Which is more important? Explain.
- Why is having a driving passion for God's Word, God's people, spiritual growth, and time with God essential? How can you keep your 'focus on Jesus' as your top priority?
- Have you ever been mad at God or question His action or lack of actions? Explain How can this passage be helpful to understanding Jesus' heart and example.
- What must it have been like for Jesus to now wait 17 years before is official ministry would?

These questions help us bring truth and beliefs into everyday realities.

- Focus on one takeaway from this passage. What is God impressing upon you to say/believe/ do differently in your life?
- Is it your top priority to love and serve God and others?
- What young kids can you invest in and mentor? They are the church too! Trust them and give them opportunities to lead and serve this upcoming year. You may be surprised.
- How can our church and this group not isolate and be loving our community?
- Consider serving in a ministry at church or on a Sunday morning. Check our website out for opportunities. <https://www.livinghopepa.org/living-hope-hub/>
- Say Hello to 2021 with a grateful heart and a submissive heart. Pray and ask Him to fill you with His love this New Year! May this be the year of the Lord!

Close in Prayer

Bring to God the ideas and topics that you raised in the above questions. Listen to the Spirit as you pray.

Name	Praise/Request



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