

The Christmas Experience

Week 4: This Is God's Plan?

1. The circumstances of Christ's birth have been softened by the passage of time, until we see them with all the nostalgic quaintness of a Hallmark greeting card. Does this video presentation depict the way you've typically viewed the scene of Jesus' birth, or are there differences? How so?
 - Read Philippians 2:1-11.
2. What does verse 5 tell us about Jesus' nature? What do you learn about his attitude?
3. What does it mean that Jesus made himself nothing (some versions say he "emptied himself")?
 - Since Jesus was equal with God (he possessed and expressed the fundamental nature of the Godhead), he had the "right" to receive adulation and praise from those he created. But he gave up those rights to become not only fully human, but also a humble servant.
 - What did Christ give up to become human?
4. In verse 4, what is the connection between Jesus' humility and his obedience?
5. Why do you think Jesus came to earth in such humble circumstances? (Choose all that apply)
 - He wanted to become one of us so he could understand our pains and struggles in life
 - He was teaching us by example to live in humility
 - He didn't just want to teach us from his throne room in heaven how to live, he wanted to come near to us and show us how to live as servants
 - He was testing the faith of his earthly parents
 - If he would have been born in the king's palace, people would have accredited his ministry to money, political power, or fame.
 - But because of the way he came into the world, all people can say is, "Look at what God can do!" (v. 9).
 - God is a mean kid with a magnifying glass; he loves to torment people
 - The circumstances of his birth teach us to trust God when our own life circumstances look bleak
 - Other: _____

- Of course, several of these are true (and a couple are not!), and Kyle mentioned some of these in the video. Which one stands out as most true to you?
- 6. When, like Joseph and Mary, have you thought, "This isn't the way it's supposed to work"? What were the circumstances? How did you feel about them?
- 7. Kyle mentioned the Old Testament verse, "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). How does this passage help you understand why things don't always go the way you hope?
- 8. Kyle pointed out that Jesus often shows up in unpredictable places.
 - Where have you seen Jesus show up lately?
 - Where do you need him to show up now?
- 9. Kyle said, "The manger is an invitation to live a life of humble service and sacrifice." How does a life of humble service and sacrifice change the way you think about your difficult life circumstances?
 - In what specific ways do you sense God moving you more toward a life of humble service and sacrifice? For whom are you being called to serve or sacrifice? What's your next step?

Between the Meeting Options

- Take some time this week to personalize and meditate on this question: "How far would God go to show his love for you?" At the end of the video presentation, Kyle said, "he gave up everything so you would know how much he loves you."
- Based on the last couple questions in this session and your group prayer time, call a couple members of the group this week to encourage them, spur them on toward love and good deeds, and pray for them on the phone.
- Take some time and journal your response to these questions:
 - How does Jesus sympathize with my weaknesses?
 - What did he go through in his life that would help him understand what I'm going through right now?
 - How can I give my circumstances over to him and trust him in the midst of them?
- During the session, the group discussed how we are being called to humbly serve others and sacrifice ourselves for them. Take some time to write out a list of possible things you can do this week to become more serving and self-sacrificing. Be as specific as possible!
- Read and meditate on Luke 2:8-20 this week.