

SMALL  GROUP

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

The Kid / Week 1

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Christmas is about the Kid who changed everything.

SCRIPTURE

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room (Luke 2:1-7 NRSVUE).

“Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46 NLT)

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to see that following Jesus can change the way they think about and experience Christmas.

THINK ABOUT THIS

It's easy to talk about the holiday season like you're talking about a Hallmark movie! Christmas decorations, holiday treats, cozy family time—why wouldn't we want to focus on all things merry and bright? While those parts of the Christmas season are great, they don't represent the way all your middle schoolers feel about or experience the season all the time. For some of your students, the holiday season isn't all that great. In fact, it can bring all kinds of feelings, like loneliness, lack, and the like. Some don't have families to spend the season with, and others may have families who cause harm. Some may not be able to afford any gifts or decorations, and others may not have food to eat while school's out. You know your students better than anyone, so keep their context in mind as you lead this conversation. While you don't want to make this a doom-and-gloom Christmas conversation, it's important to create space for students to be realistic, honest, and open about their real feelings and experiences that impact this season.

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the content as needed, and don't feel like you need to complete everything listed.

DURING GROUP

JUST FOR FUN

Have a Christmas Carol sing off with your Small Group! Challenge students to go head-to-head in Christmas karaoke, each singing a different verse of a familiar Christmas song. Then, have students vote on who sang it best!

DISCUSS THIS

1. What's your very favorite thing about Christmas?
2. What's your least favorite thing about the holiday season?
3. Do you think Christmas is always supposed to be fun and joyful? Why or why not?

4. What's one reason a middle schooler might feel like Christmas isn't fun or joyful?
5. In what ways does looking back to the first Christmas help us understand what the season is about?
6. How might following Jesus change the way you experience Christmas?
7. This week, what's one step you can take to:
 - a. Be real about what you're feeling this Christmas?
 - b. Embrace the ordinary moments of your holiday season?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 1)

Explain that your group will co-create a mural where everyone can share their thoughts and feelings about the holiday season—both the good and the not-so-good. Hang butcher paper or a large poster board on a wall where everyone can easily reach it. Divide the mural into two sections and label them: "Favorite Things About Christmas" and "Not-So-Favorite Things About Christmas." Ask your students to use colored pencils, crayons, or markers to write or draw their opinions and thoughts in each section.

When everyone is done, have students write down their "one step" they came up with from Question 7 on a sticky note and put it on the mural that they've created.
