

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

The Kid / Week 3

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

The Kid changes how you see your fear.

SCRIPTURE

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28 NLT)

"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!" (Luke 1:30 NLT)

"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" (Luke 1:31-33 NLT).

"For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37 ESV).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To remind students that Christmas demonstrates the truth that God is with us and believing that can change the way they respond to fear in their lives.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Remember that fear is a relative experience. What brings up fear for one student may be completely harmless to another. So, as students talk about what things in their lives bring out fear this season specifically, be inclusive to all the things expressed and careful not to dismiss any of their answers. In addition, be aware that it may be hard for your middle schoolers to talk about fear in a more abstract or vulnerable way. Their thinking is concrete in this phase and their emotional quotient is still developing. So, they may only talk about fear in a very tangible, surface level way, as in, "I'm afraid of spiders," or, "I'm scared of the dark." That's okay! Let them start there and then build on that foundation by sharing from your own life (just make sure you keep it age and phase appropriate!). Give students examples of more abstract, deeply rooted fears you've felt at the holidays, like, "I'm afraid I won't be able to afford any gifts," or, "I'm afraid to spend Christmas without my parent who passed away." By going first to share, you're not just giving them an example, but you're modeling what it is to be honest and vulnerable with both God and others.

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 tradition debate! Give your students two opposing views on the holiday season (like, real tree vs. fake tree or Christmas cookies vs. Christmas dinner) and let them debate each side while the other students vote on a winner.

DISCUSS THIS

1. Rank the following feelings, starting with the one you feel the most at Christmas down to the one you feel the least:
 - a. Joy
 - b. Excitement
 - c. Fear
 - d. Peace
 - e. Frustration
2. Why do you think a middle schooler might experience fear around the holiday season?
3. How do you typically respond to fear in your life?
4. Put yourself in Mary's shoes that first Christmas. What would you have been afraid of if you were her?
5. What does Mary's response to fear teach you about how you can respond to your own?
6. What does the angel's promise that "God is with you" mean to you?
7. How might that change the way you respond to fear?
8. This season, what's one step you can take to remember that God is with you?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 1)

Give each student several strips of paper or note cards and ask them to write down some of the fears or worries they experience, especially around the holiday season. Next, ask them to write down, "God is with me," on another strip of paper. Discuss how remembering God's presence can help them face their fears, just as Mary did. Then, hand each student a clear ornament and have them place their strips of paper with fears inside. Ask them to place the strip with the word or phrase about faith on top, symbolizing that God is with us even when we're afraid.

For extra fun, give your students small decorative items like glitter, stickers, or little stars to personalize their ornament and make it special.
