

## Grace Downtown CG Discussion Guide

December 10-13, 2018

Advent

Luke 2:1-40



### Announcements:

**Christmas in Story and Song:** A musical, candlelight celebration of the Christmas story. **Sun Dec 16**, 5pm during the worship service, at Christ Community Church. Would you pray for 2-3 people in your life you'd like to invite to share with them the hope of the gospel?

**Christmas Eve Service:** Join Grace Meridian Hill at 5pm on Monday Dec. 24 at 810 Shepherd Street, NW for a Christmas Eve service.

**CG Break & Winter Term:** Dec 10 will mark the last official week of CGs until the week of Jan 28. Join us in January for Winter Term, a three-week course on Thursdays (1/10, 1/17, 1/24) at 7:00 pm taught by our network pastors and hosted by Grace Meridian Hill at 810 Shepherd St NW. Topic: Christology- the person, states, and offices of Christ.

**Beauty in Action:** Join us after the service on Jan 20 as Rev Dr. Irwyn Ince of the Institute of Cross-Cultural Mission offers a follow-up on his retreat talks with some practical application. Location: Fellowship Hall. Registration required to reserve childcare and pizza. Register on our website.

### Read and Discuss:

Read Luke 2:1-40 aloud together.

### Introduction:

This is a familiar passage, parts of which are often read each year at Christmas time, so it's easy for us just to glaze over it due to over-familiarity. Try to read it with fresh eyes and hearts, visualizing what is happening and imagining what the different people would have been feeling throughout this story.

### Discussion Questions:

vv. 1-7

1. What is normal and usual here, and what is different and unusual?
2. Both Mary and Joseph had been told in dramatic ways that the baby inside of Mary was going to be someone special. (An angel had appeared to Mary, and both she and Joseph heard Zechariah's prophecy concerning Jesus.) How do you think both would be feeling as they obediently travel to Bethlehem as the census required, and

find no accommodations available, and thus have to sleep in a manger, where Mary gives birth?

vv. 8-20

1. Try to imagine yourself as one of the shepherds, going through typical work as usual in watching the sheep, First one angel appears and talks to you. Then, this heaven-opening band of angels suddenly appears praising God. What would you be thinking and feeling? Why does the angel tell the shepherds not to fear?
2. What specific details about Baby Jesus does the angel give the shepherds and how do they respond? (It was an angel who had spoken to them and yet they attribute his words to God (v. 15). Why?) As they begin traveling to Bethlehem, what do you think they were talking about with each other on the way? How much of what the angel told them in vv. 10-12 do you think they understood?
3. In vv. 16-20, what are the different responses to the shepherds' words? Again try to imagine what Mary is thinking and feeling throughout her travel to Bethlehem, the birth of her baby, and now these words from the shepherds.

vv. 21-38:

1. Once again, Joseph and Mary are simply obedient to the laws regarding the purification rites that were required for a new born baby. Do you find any disjunction with their being careful to obey the laws and their understanding that this new baby of theirs was going to be someone special? (Might they have felt that the usual laws didn't apply to them because of their unique situation?)
2. Describe Simeon's character and actions. What is the main point of his words in vv. 29-32 and then vv. 34-35? Do we learn anything new about the predictions here concerning Jesus?
3. Who is Anna and how did she live out her life as a widow? What does she say prophetically about Jesus?
4. Imagine Mary and Joseph's responses to these two incidents (see v. 33 and v. 39). How do you think they were feeling as the two of them, with Jesus, left Bethlehem and traveled the 90 miles (a five or six day trip) back to Nazareth?

## Overview and Application:

1. List all the different words that were said, and miraculous events that took place, regarding who Jesus is and would be. What are the two or three things that most stand out to you about all that is said and experienced here? Based just on what was said and experienced here, how would Mary and Joseph, and others, be thinking about this baby as they considered what kind of person he would grow up to be?
2. When you consider your own relationship with Jesus Christ, why is it helpful for you to know these details about his birth? In what ways does it deepen your faith? (Why doesn't the New Testament simply skip over the first 30 years of Jesus' life and simply focus on the three years of Jesus' ministry before his death?)
3. Jesus is referred to in this passage as "Savior" and "Messiah" (vv. 11, 26, 30). What would these words have meant to the Jews (see also vv. 31-32)? What do these words mean for us, today? What exactly do you mean when you talk about Jesus Christ as your "Savior"?

## Prayer:

*The Grace Downtown Prayer Team creates opportunities for our community to learn more about prayer together for our church family, our city, and our world. Throughout the coming week, the Prayer Team is asking our church community to...*

...for our congregation to stay attentive to the simplicity of the Advent season. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus, may we ask for prayer for strong relationships with other people in the bond of loving community.

...for a deeper understanding of grace to be able to rest, become aware of God's presence, and enjoy it.

...for purity so we can grow as people and encounter God more fully. May our joy in the coming of Jesus witness to our city during this season