



CHRISTMAS STORIES

life groups discussion guide

A PEOPLE PREPARED Luke 1:16–17, December 8, 2019

CONNECT

1. Christmas is upon us. Share a time when you were either embarrassingly ill-prepared for Christmas or you were impressively prepared. What did you learn and how were those around you impacted?

CELEBRATE

2. There are a number of stories in the Bible that direct our attention to the Lord Jesus. These certainly set up the Bible's glorious Christmas event—the birth of Jesus! John the Baptist's life and his unique birth is one of those. Read Luke 1. Give special attention to Luke 1:16–17, 44 & 76–80. Discuss what you perceive is John's primary purpose. In other words, what is His Christmas story?
3. The angel Gabriel tells John's father, Zechariah, that John would "go . . . in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). Who is Elijah and why the comparison? Read 1 Kings 18–19 for insight.
4. 1 Kings 18:37 finds Elijah crying out to God for the people of Israel to have their hearts "turned . . . back" to the Lord. Compare this prayer of Elijah's with John the Baptist's mission as conveyed in Luke 1:16–17. What might it look like to "turn one's heart" to the Lord? See also Joel 2:13, Acts 3:19 & 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10. Note the concept of "repentance" and "turning" in these verses.
5. The angel Gabriel's words in Luke 1:16–17 suggest a turn not just to God but to one another (see verse 17). Acknowledging that "repentance" is a feature of "turning," how does this shape the manner in which we relate to the people around us?
6. Luke 1:16–17 clearly put forward a turning to the Lord and to people—a reconciliation that is both vertical (to the Lord) and horizontal (to people). Why does this theme seem to persist throughout God's Word? See also Matthew 22:34–40, Luke 2:14, John 17:22, 2 Corinthians 5:18 & Ephesians 2:11–22. How does this effect how you live life day-to-day?

CONTRIBUTE

7. The Old Testament prophet Malachi foretells of one who "will prepare the way" (Malachi 3:1) and be like "Elijah the prophet" who will "turn the hearts" of the people (Malachi 4:5–6). This sets the stage for John the Baptist who comes to "make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (Luke 1:17). Clearly, preparation for the Jesus' arrival is a key element of the Christmas story. How are you preparing yourself to meet and experience Jesus this Christmas? Be specific.
8. New Hope Church's Christmas theme this year is stories that move us closer to Jesus. What's a Christmas story in which you were drawn closer to the Lord Jesus? How can you use this story to encourage another soul?