

## INTRODUCTION

Just over 2,000 years ago a few simple shepherds became the first to encounter Jesus as a man. They were as far away from God as you can be, but when they encountered Jesus that first Christmas day, they responded with child-like faith, and immediately began to make the glory of God known to everyone else. It's ironic that the shepherds, who were not allowed to testify in a Jewish court of law, were the first humans to testify of Jesus' birth. You know the Christmas story – you've heard it, read it, sang about it, listened to sermons about it, watched TV specials about it. But the question this Christmas is, "Have you embraced Jesus as truth?" If you have, what is stopping you from going out and unreservedly make His glory known?

## SCRIPTURE

*<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them."*

Luke 2:15-18

## GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How would you have planned the announcement of Jesus' birth?
2. Read Luke 2:15-18. Shepherds were poor, lower-class people in their society, despised by religious Jews, and, as Aaron said on Sunday, smelly ☹️. Why do you think God chose them to be the first ones to hear the good news of Emmanuel, God with us?
3. What do you think the shepherds found most incredible about their experience?
4. What did the shepherds do after meeting Jesus?
5. In response to the shepherd's testimony, Luke 2:18 states that "*all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them*". What do you think people found so amazing – the various aspects of the story itself, or the fact that it was the shepherds sharing it with them?
6. Read Matthew 2:1-12. Compare the experience of the shepherds with that of the magi. How did the signs and responses differ? What significance, if any, do you find in the differences of the encounters?

*Study Questions for Community Groups*

7. Jesus is “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:16). All things in earth are held together by Him (Colossians 3:16-17). Yet for our sake, He, “*in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness*” (Philippians 2:6-7). Read Hebrews 4:15-16 and discuss how having a Savior who is “*just like we are*” (but without sin), willing to come to earth as a baby, will impact your celebration of Christmas this year.
  
8. How can you renew your enthusiasm for the message of Jesus’ birth so that it makes a difference throughout the year?
  
9. What does your passion (or lack of passion) to tell others about Jesus and what He’s done in your life say about your relationship with Him?

**APPLICATION**

Aaron shared on Sunday that if you are near to God, remember how far off you once were; how you were dead in your transgressions, you were an enemy of God, a child of wrath. Each day this week, spend time thanking God for the wonderful gift of Jesus and for the joyous fact that He led you to make room for Him in your heart. Pray that others may come to know the same peace and joy that you have experienced. Ask God for the passion to make Jesus known with no hesitation, just as the shepherds did.