

going deeper study guide

why should we adore the baby Jesus?



*"There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child.
Things never get back to the way they were."*

Dwight D. Eisenhower

*"I guess when your heart gets broken you sort of start to see cracks in everything.
I'm convinced that tragedy wants to harden us and our mission is never to let it."*

Anonymous

In Life Groups, kids, youth and adults study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life.

At a Loss

The words don't seem to come. I suppose it's my own fault for not getting this lesson done sooner. But I struggle to know where to go with this. Friday night and as my children sleep just around the corner and down the stairs, all I can think of are the 20 children in Connecticut that aren't sleeping at home in their beds tonight. I think of the 20 families who have just had their concept of "what Christmas means to me" shattered into a million pieces, along with their collective hearts.

And as I think of how to put a new spin on a lesson about Christmas, I find that I just can't manage to keep my mind off the tragic events of the day. I take a break and pour over Facebook, which I have been mostly off of this week, in hopes of getting the perspective of others. To find others troubled by a broken world spinning so seemingly hopelessly out of control.

My mind turns to our relativistic culture. A culture where folks bristle if you try to assert that there is absolute truth. Where some even say that good and evil themselves are relative, or at a minimum, situational. The way I feel now...it will be very hard not to want to smack the next person that I hear spout that politically correct nonsense (technically, I could just claim that slapping them might not be good for them, but they can't project their sense of right and wrong onto me). Things like the tragedy in CT should forever put this sort of argument to rest – but of course it won't.

I think of how Christmas is a celebration of God entering the world and being called the Prince of Peace – and how peace seems to become less and less meaningful or attainable all the time.

I think for a moment of all the things still to do so that I'm ready for the holiday – and how all that seems to matter so little right now. I'm sure that stress and pressure of all that will return – but I forbid it tonight.

Obviously my thoughts are a bit random. Perhaps not as obvious, but no less true, I am writing this in hopes that doing so is somewhat cathartic, and I can focus on the task at hand. And it's not really working. So I will proceed from the place God has me right now. It's admittedly a place of confusion; of being at a loss and really, really desiring some perspective in light of the day's events. Maybe we can wrestle through this together. I don't know that we'll have answers that satisfy any of us, but we can wrestle nonetheless.

Q :: Given the proximity to the actual holiday, do you believe tragedies like the one in CT affect our approach to Christmas - and more specifically, to the true meaning of it?

Q :: What hard questions might unbelievers have that arise from something like this?

Q :: What do we, as believers, do in the face of such tragedy? How do we respond to tough questions? How do we reach out?

One friend on Facebook posted something along these lines tonight: *We are told in times like this, when children are senselessly slaughtered at the hands of a maniac, that we should go and hug our own children who are safe at home this night. Appreciate them. Love them. And hold them tight. But my question is: Why don't we do this all the time? We need to be doing this all the time, not just after another tragedy strikes that takes someone else's child.*

That is a fantastic question. And I know the answer. We are desperately perspective-challenged.

Almost two weeks ago I was given a preliminary diagnosis of MRSA. By the time lab results came back to confirm that it was not only MRSA, but the “bad kind” as my doctor so eloquently put it, things had gotten worse. The infection had not responded to the two antibiotics I was on and the infection had spread. I was admitted to the hospital that same day. From the time of my original pre-diagnosis I was told that I could not even touch my wife or my children. And I was unable to do so until I was released from the hospital a week ago this past Friday. I left the hospital feeling like I had regained perspective on my life. That’s when it hit me. Do you know what regaining perspective means? It means “I’m so stupid that once again I have forgotten what’s TRULY important.”

And here I am less than a week later and I find it, again, a great struggle to keep the most important things in perspective.

Q :: In what ways does tragedy reset our perspective?

Q :: Does Scripture have anything to say about keeping things in our life in a right perspective?

Q :: In addition to more fully loving and appreciating our children, in what other areas are we most often in need of a perspective reset?

Q :: What causes our sense of perspective to become deadened – and how do we combat that (give tangible, practical examples)?

Q :: Do we suffer from a lack of perspective when it comes to Christmas? How does that manifest itself?

Q :: How can we combat that as well?

I did find something online that I think speaks to the sorrow of the CT tragedy, AND to the need we have for perspective; both as it relates to our own lives, and to celebrating Christmas. It’s a prayer from author and pastor Max Lucado. It reads as follows:

Dear Jesus,

It’s a good thing you were born at night. This world sure seems dark. I have a good eye for silver linings. But they seem dimmer lately. These killings, Lord. These children, Lord. Innocence violated. Raw evil demonstrated. The whole world seems on edge. Trigger-happy. Ticked off. We hear threats of chemical weapons and nuclear bombs. Are we one button-push away from annihilation? Your world seems a bit darker this Christmas. But you were born in the dark, right? You came at night. The shepherds were nightshift workers. The Wise Men followed a star. Your first cries were heard in the shadows. To see your face, Mary and Joseph needed a candle flame. It was dark. Dark with Herod’s jealousy. Dark with Roman oppression. Dark with poverty. Dark with violence. Herod went on a rampage, killing babies. Joseph took you and your mom into Egypt. You were an immigrant before you were a Nazarene. Follow us Oh, Lord Jesus, you entered the dark world of your day. Won’t you enter ours? We are weary of bloodshed. We, like the wise men, are looking for a star. We, like the shepherds, are kneeling at a manger. This Christmas, we ask you, heal us, help us, be born anew in us.

Hopefully,
Your Children

Amen...and amen!