



## PREPARATION

*Spend the week studying Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:8-14 and John 14:27. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.*

**PRAY** *for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.*

**LANDING POINT** *Jesus came to bring peace to my relationships with God and others.*

## REMEMBER THE FOUR GROUND RULES FOR SMALL GROUPS

- ■ CONFIDENTIALITY | What's said in the group stays in the group.
- ■ NO CROSS-TALK | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group.
- ■ NO FIXING | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- ■ SHARING | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

# OUR PRINCE OF PEACE

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild

God and sinners reconciled  
Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim  
Christ is born in Bethlehem

The words of Charles Wesley's famous 1739 hymn speak to the joyful news delivered by angels to lowly shepherds in a field in the region of Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago. Christ's first arrival brought the coming of peace, something long ago prophesied by Isaiah to the national Israel. The prophet promised that Jesus, the Messiah (Savior King), would be the Prince of Peace and would rule the nations forever with justice and righteousness.

Every Advent we celebrate the joyful news of peace Jesus brought to this earth. Today your group will discuss what it means to live in the peace God has given you through His Son and how it impacts your day-to-day circumstances and relationships.

**Look up the lyrics to Hark the Herald Angels Sing and sing the hymn as a group. When finished have a volunteer pray a prayer of praise for the peace given to us by God through Jesus.**



## DEEPER DIVE

### A MESSAGE OF GREAT JOY

The decree had been issued by Caesar Augustus for everyone to be registered. After hearing the news, Joseph and his fiancé Mary traveled to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem. Not long after their arrival, Mary gave birth to Jesus. His birth wasn't the kind you would expect for a king and it went largely unnoticed. However, a few shepherds tending their sheep out in the field got a surprise visit from a chorus of angels who delivered a message of great joy for the world. The Messiah had finally arrived.

Let's take a look at this story in Luke and two other passages that reveal the coming of peace in the coming of Jesus.

**Q:** Have volunteers read Isaiah 8:6-7, Luke 2:8-14 and John 14:27. What does Isaiah's prophecy reveal to us about the character of the Messiah?

**Q:** How could you follow the angels' example and praise God in your life?

Q: *In what ways have you experienced God's peace this last year?*



## REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

# EXPERIENCING GOD'S PEACE

We may not see peace in the world around us but we can experience God's peace inside us. How is this possible? The simple answer is trust. To trust God is to believe in His good and sovereign character. Because He is both good and sovereign, we can rest in the peace that everything He does is for His good purposes and there is nothing outside of His control. No matter the circumstance God will always be good and sovereign.

If you want to experience more of God's peace in your life, you can:

- *Look back.* Reflect on the ways God has shown His goodness to you. You can have peace when you trust that God will always be good and faithful to you.
- *Look around.* Consider the many things God has given you that you are thankful for this Christmas. You can have peace when you trust that God understands and provides for your needs. He's a Good Father who gives good gifts to His children.
- *Look ahead.* Find hope that, despite what you may see in the world now, God is working to bring real and final peace to this earth one day. You can have peace when you trust that God's good plan continues to move forward to a day when our Prince of Peace will reign over the nations with justice and righteousness.

Q: *What makes it important that God is both good and sovereign and not one or the other?*

*Have everyone share one thing they are thankful to God for this Christmas.*

*Think of a relationship in which you'd like to experience more of God's peace. Pray silently over the relationship and consider what you could do to seek peace in that relationship.*

**Q:** *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

## COMMENTARY

### *About those Shepherds*

“One should not romanticize the occupation of shepherds. In general shepherds were dishonest and unclean according to the standards of the law. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came. Such outcasts were the first recipients of the good news.”

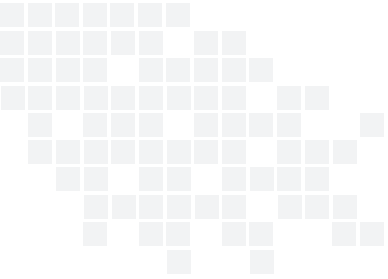
### *A Gospel Proclamation*

“The angel’s announcement includes several of the most frequently used words in Luke’s gospel—a fact that shows the tremendous importance of the angelic pronouncement. It is a bold proclamation of the gospel at the very hour of Jesus’ birth.

The constellation of christological titles here is important. Implicitly, once again, Jesus is David’s son. The term ‘Savior’ is especially important in this context when Augustus (v. 1) also claimed to be the savior of the world. Likewise, “Christ the Lord” affirms the unique lordship of Christ. The arrival of a new ruler is clearly presented. Thus in this whole section Luke shares his perception of major themes that support the declaration: the time has come (‘today’) for the fulfillment of the prophetic expectation of Messiah’s coming.”

### *A Different Kind of Peace*

“The pax Romana (‘Roman peace’) was won and maintained by a brutal sword, and many Jews thought their Messiah would secure peace with an even mightier sword. Instead, the Messiah secured it by suffering and dying (Col 1:20). The world promises peace but cannot give genuine peace. For individuals, Jesus’ peace secures composure in the midst of trouble and dissolves fear (16:33; Phil 4:7; Col 3:15).”



*Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 108.*

*Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, "Luke," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Luke–Acts (Revised Edition), ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 78.*

*D. A. Carson, "The Gospels and Acts," in NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1925.*