

LIFE Group Leader Handout

December 23, 2018

Message: *A Child is Born, A Son is Given*

Pastor Mike O'Connor

Scripture--Luke 2:1-20 & 2 Corinthians 8:9 (shown)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9

Main Idea--The Journeys of Christmas Instruct Us on Our Journeys

They Journeyed at Christmas--

- The Shepherds--*left their flocks and made haste to the manger*
Following Means Leaving
- Mary & Joseph--*the uncomfortable metrics: An 80 mile walk while 9 months pregnant*
Providence over Circumstance
- The Magi--*they followed--a star, then a Scripture, then a dream*
Light Received Brings More Light
- Jesus the Messiah--*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...*
Earth was a waypoint, not an endpoint
His Mission: It was urgently required

Application--

- If you are already a Christ-follower, what are some of the things that you left in order to follow Jesus?
- How does the rule of God over all the affairs of people help as you navigate through difficult circumstances? How can the Magi inspire us in a situation like that? (Light received brings more light?)
- If your journey is in a rough patch, how does the waypoint/endpoint teaching help?

As the Small Group Coordinator I've heard stories of support and life change through small groups. As LIFE group leaders many of you have ministered to individuals and families in their time of crisis, helping them to keep their eyes on Christ. You, and your groups, have made sacrifices - of time, money, etc - to show the love of Christ. Just since September, my own group has come alongside group members who have experienced significant health issues, a house move and the imminent death of a parent, and I know you have faced similar challenges. My sentiments echo those of this article. As you read the final paragraph I hope you hear my voice speaking these words to you. You are truly valued and appreciated! I wish you and your family a wonderful, blessed Christmas. -Suzie

Small-Group Leader: You're Changing Lives!

By Michael C. Mack

I thank God for a couple named Mark and Lyric who led a small group in Dayton, Ohio, nearly 25 years ago. I learned from these leaders and this group how to live as a Christian. They showed me how to study God's Word, disciplined me, loved me, prayed for me, and became my good friends. Mark and Lyric started that group and led it because that's what God called them to do. They didn't know what God would do with their faithfulness. They couldn't possibly have seen the impact they would have.

Your Important Role

Just like Mark and Lyric, what you do as a small-group leader has eternal significance, whether you see it or not. You are in the life-change business. When you build authentic Biblical community, you're building the kind of church Jesus dreamed about—the kind where people take off their masks and become vulnerable to the group and to God, where the group dives into God's Word to understand it and live it out, where people grow more and more like Christ every day and begin to step out to lead others, and where people get out of their comfort zones to live by faith and to impact the world around them.

Do you understand the important role you have? You are a minister of reconciliation, and Christ's ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). You are a servant of the most high God, administering his grace through your leadership (1 Peter 4:10). You are in the most strategic position in the church to bring about real, lasting life change in people's lives. You are on the frontlines of ministry, engaged in a spiritual battle for people's hearts and minds. You are touching people's lives directly, face to face and heart to heart, and you are making an impact for God in the world.

Does that seem huge to you? Do you ever feel like you're in over your head? You're not the only one to feel that way. But God has given you a big mission—a mission so large that there's no way you can accomplish it in your own power. And that's the point! God continually move us outside what we can accomplish on our own. He wants us to depend on him completely, so he gives us a mission that seems impossible in many ways.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed, though, remember that your part of the mission is simply to be faithful to it—to make it your priority while you're in this world. God will take care of the rest. He will make an impact and change lives through you. I love how Mother Teresa put it: "I'm a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world."

And that's what Mark and Lyric did. They were instruments in the hands of God. When I lost my job, they prayed with me. When I questioned what God wanted me to do with my life, they

encouraged me to step out on faith. And just three months later, when I was heading to seminary, they helped me pack.

As a small-group minister, I've had the opportunity to hear other amazing stories of support and life change through small groups. All these groups were led by ordinary leaders who served an extraordinary God. I believe every small-group leader can have this kind of impact. You can't make it happen, but God will multiply your faithfulness and your wholehearted work as you are involved in his mission. Let me encourage you, leader: Don't give up! What you do is way too important. What you do has eternal significance.