

The Available Gifts

FP Small Group Study Guide for Advent 2017

Week 3

Luke 2:8-20

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." 15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. 20 The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. (NIV)

1. Describe a time when you stayed up all night — why did you stay up, how did you feel during the night, and how did you feel the next day?
2. Read the passage and pray for this time in scripture.
3. Looking only at verse 8 to set the scene, what might the shepherds be doing, seeing, feeling, and experiencing before the angel comes?
4. In verses 9-14, what descriptive words or phrases stand out to you as Luke tells the story of the angel's visitation to these shepherds?
5. How does the angel of the Lord help the shepherds process what is happening?
6. From their response in verse 15-18, what can we learn about how these shepherds processed the angel's proclamation?
7. The Jews had been waiting for the promised Messiah for hundreds of years. Why do you think God chose to announce his birth first to these lowly shepherds?
8. Compare and contrast the different reactions of the shepherds, the crowd, and Mary in verses 17-20 to the birth of the Messiah.
9. Which of those three reactions are you most identifying with this Christmas and why?
10. What is one way you can incorporate more of both a quiet pondering AND an expressive glorification of the Savior born to us this Christmas?