



## Rock Bridge Small Group Discussion Guide Christmas at Rock Bridge – Part 1 LEADER GUIDE

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### Leaders: Have a HOLIDAY MEETING PLAN!

- Even in the busyness we still need community.
  - **Make a plan to meet at least once in December**, at least for a Christmas party, etc.
  - Have a fun gift exchange or dinner.
  - Plan on a New Year meeting if possible.
  - **Invite new people** to check out your group by joining your party!
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### ICE BREAKER:

- What are you most looking forward to about the Christmas season?

### MAIN POINT:

- *God's gift of life is fulfilled in an unexpected way in unexpected circumstances for the good of humanity and advancement of God's kingdom.*  
*Read this out to the group as a type of road map for where the discussion should go.*

### INTO THE WORD:

Before reading this passage as a group, consider the following **Core Questions**. Read these questions aloud to frame up your discussion.

1. What does this passage reveal about what God is like? I.e. Obvious statements, attributes of His character, ability, etc.
2. What are some key words or phrases and how do they help us understand what is being said?
3. Is there some kind of action that we are called to? A sin to confess? Something to thank God for? Someone I need to pray for or encourage? A behavior I need to change?

*These are questions that can/should be used help teach basic Bible observation. Use the same questions each week. It is good to have them read the questions prior to reading the passage so that they read with the questions in mind.*

**Passage Summary:** *Unexpected circumstances in life can be interpreted as good/gift or bad/curse. The former is Mary's reaction and the latter is the Naomi's reaction. These two interpretations are based on how we see/understand God's character and how we see/understand God's kingdom.*

*Read the Summary out before the passage. This will help set up the direction of the discussion.*

**Passage(s) to Read: Ruth 1:9-21, Ruth 4:14-17, Luke 1:26-37**

### DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss the core questions as they relate to the passages.
2. In the story of Ruth and Naomi, how would you describe Naomi's reaction? How would you describe her view of who God is?

*Naomi obviously is bitter and angry at coming home empty and with nothing left in her life and losing her sons and husband. She probably sees God as cruel and cold that He would allow all that has*

*happened to her to occur. By having others call her a new name, she is open about her pain and is identifying it as her new identity.*

3. In verse 14 of Ruth, the ladies tell Naomi that God has brought her a redeemer. The Bible is clear that God does not cause evil, but in His sovereignty allows it to play out. But in His great love, He powerfully redeems what evil does, demonstrating His power over it. How is the final result in Naomi's life consolation for what has happened to her?

*We cannot know all the reasons and details behind the tragedies in Naomi's life. However the end result is that for all eternity Naomi will be attributed to the family and story of Jesus, and she has an incredible impact on the future of the coming King David, the King attributed with being "after God's own heart." Her consolation is more of an eternal one, but God has brought her provision in a new family and love that rivals those of sons through Ruth.*

4. In the Luke passage, what are some things that God does that are unexpected, and frankly, inconvenient? How might she have interpreted this as a harsh act by God, even though the honor would be great?

*Mary is pledged to be married and this situation will obviously create a great mess with Joseph and her own family. She will face persecution and shame in the community and could possibly lose a valuable engagement and future marriage to Joseph. She is young a baby before marriage is disastrous cultural strike against her.*

5. How did Mary respond to the Angel's testimony? What are some fears she faced and how did she likely respond in her thoughts to her fears?

*Her response was a question of "how can this be" first of all, but not a question of doubt. She must have told herself: God will provide for me even if Joseph does not marry me. God will take care of me for the sake of His son as well.*

#### **APPLICATION:**

Pablo listed three crucial responses when life throws us the unexpected. Discuss each one as a group and talk about what it means to do this in your life.

1. Remember who you are - "servant of the Lord"
2. Step back and ask Him what He is doing: 1 of 3 things:
  - Calling you to Himself to begin a new life (John 3:16)
  - Making you more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29)
  - Disciplining you as a good Father (Hebrews 12)
3. Trust Him for His outcome - "Let it be to me according to your word" "Not my will but yours good Father"
4. What is going on in your own life that is unexpected and challenging? Share it with the group and talk about how you should respond to the challenge.

#### **STEPS OF OBEDIENCE**

- This week have everyone in the group commit to praying for someone else, and his or her challenging circumstance.
- Commit to texting the other person in your group to encourage them in their prayer.

#### **PRAYER TIME**

- Get in groups of two or three and pray for each other for what is going on in their lives.
- If anyone in the group has a special prayer request, make sure that is shared with the group.

