



Discussion Guide  
Away In a Manger — Part 1  
PARTICIPANT GUIDE

.....

**“The joy of God has gone through the poverty of the manger and the distress of the cross; therefore it is invincible and irrefutable.”**

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer]

### ENGAGE & CONNECT

Share about one of your most joy-filled Christmas memories (the day or season; as an adult or child).

### BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“The humble will see it and rejoice. You who seek God, take heart!  
For the Lord listens to the needy and does not despise his own who are prisoners.”*

[Psalm 69:32-33]

### BIG IDEA

The God we were created to know, the life we were meant to live, and the abundance we long to receive all come when we humble ourselves.

### PASSAGE & DISCUSSION

#### Luke 2:1-20

1. In the sermon we heard, *“Luke is telling us that the particular circumstances of Jesus’ birth are significant.”* What might the setting of Jesus’ birth in a manger symbolize about God’s character and His approach to humanity?
2. What does shepherds being chosen to receive the announcement of Jesus’ birth reveal about what and who God values?
3. Humility is central to the Christmas story, particularly the birth of Jesus. How could embracing humility more fully change the way we experience God’s presence and blessings?
4. Mary and Joseph accepted God’s plan with faith, even when it seemed difficult or confusing. How can our small group encourage one another to trust God’s providence in challenging circumstances?
5. What area(s) of your life may require you to trust in God’s providence more, even when His plans are unclear? How can Jesus’ birth story encourage you in this trust?
6. What step is God inviting you to take in order to cultivate a humble heart during the Christmas season?

7. Mary and Joseph said yes to God's plan, at great personal cost. What does it look like for you to "say yes" to God in this season of life? What are you willing to give up in order to say yes to Him?
8. The shepherds shared the good news after encountering Jesus. How is God inviting you to share the message of Christ's birth in your own sphere of influence? Let's be creative in sharing the GOOD NEWS of Jesus this year!
9. What does it mean to "treasure" God's work in your life, as Mary did (she was "treasuring up all these things" in her heart)? How can you more regularly and wondrously practice this daily?
10. Who is someone that God is placing a particular burden for on your heart? How can the humility of Christ's birth inspire you to approach that relationship differently this Christmas season?

## STEP OF OBEDIENCE

In Christ and over time, God's favor and rescuing grace will arrive, and you will be exalted. Every day, the effect of that continues when Christians treasure Christ's person more than Satan's promises! Based on the Holy Spirit's guidance, what is a step of obedience that you can take this week? Here are a few additional questions to make Christmas better. *Have I truly humbled myself ...*

- by saying NO to self-pity?
- by saying YES to correction?
- by being OPEN to reconciliation?
- in response to the REVELATION of His word?
- by looking for the EVIDENCE of grace in others?
- in response to what He's PROVIDENTIALLY permitted?

*Remember ... what could make Christmas or life better this year? Truly embracing humility!*

## PRAYER FOCUS

### Participating In God's Will

- Let's reflect on the truth that humility opens the door for God to work in us, revealing His love, purpose, and provision in ways that we cannot achieve on our own. Where in our lives is God inviting us to a greater level of humility?
- As we pray, let's ask God to help us surrender our pride, self-reliance, and fears. Let's invite Him to shape us into people who walk in humility, trusting Him to fill our lives with His presence, guidance, and abundant blessings.

## VISIO DIVINA

Sometime in the week AFTER your group meets, we invite you to try a spiritual practice known as Visio Divina. It is a Latin word that means "divine seeing" and is *a form of prayer that involves meditating on visual art or imagery to encounter God*. This practice engages your senses and imagination, and it can help you reflect more deeply on God's love and leading in your life.

First, take a few moments to prayerfully reflect on the image and Scripture below, welcoming God's presence with you.



Hanna Varghese, God Is With Us, 2006

*"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory,  
the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."  
[John 1:14]*

Now, come to God in prayer and share what you hope for, knowing He is with you and hears you!