



Dear LifeGroup Leader,

As you may already know by now, I am in my final days of my role as pastor here at Montrose Church. This has been a wonderful journey for me.

My family and I have been in ministry here for the past 7 years, and love this church and church staff dearly. It's been a pleasure to get to know you, to support you, and to hear stories about the work God is doing in your life.

I am so proud and encouraged by your faithfulness. If there is one thing I've learned from you, if there's one thing I've wanted to impart to you, it's this: YOU ARE THE CHURCH.

God's main means of working in our world is nothing other than the seemingly menial and normal interactions that happen between your group every week. And it's important that we recognize that. If we don't, then there's a tendency to always be looking past and ahead to a "future" time when God will change us.

And yet, each week as you meet together, you create a fertile garden for God's Spirit to move between and among, binding together, strengthening, empowering, forming, moving, sanctifying.

This is my prayer for you - that God would empower you to see His continual work in the Holy space you sit in every week.

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The Spirits of Christmas

The Spirit of Compassion

Long ago it was believed that at Christmas Eve the veil between Heaven and Earth thins. We long for the coming of Jesus and His Kingdom in our world. The story of Christmas is about a collision of cultures and classes who meet up at the birth scene of Jesus. The birth of Jesus pulled us out of our divisiveness and into an encounter with each other and with Jesus. This is the essence of compassion - that because of Jesus we recognize each other's humanity.

FOCAL POINT: Christmas spirit is about crossing dividing lines and encountering real people.



Getting Started

Catch up together about how your week has been, possibly also revisit last week's meeting.

- ▶ What's your favorite Christmas movie and why?



Exploring Scripture

Read the following passage together.

Luke 2:8-18

- ▶ Where do you hear God's heart in this passage?
- ▶ What words or phrases stick out to you?



Reflection

Take time to reflect together about the passage.

- ▶ The contrast between the heavenly angels and the earthly shepherds is apparent in this passage. What do you imagine it was like for the shepherds to be invited to Jesus' birth? What questions do you think they asked? What did they feel?
- ▶ In what way do you feel like the shepherds? In what ways do you feel on the "outside" of culture, family, or friendships?



Praxis

With the understanding that we gathered here are the body of Christ, let's allow the truth from today's scripture to impact us as a LifeGroup.

- ▶ In Christmas, people of different opinions, backgrounds, and status are brought together in Jesus. Let's reflect on how this is also happening in our lives.
- ▶ Of all the people you interact with at Christmas, which person is most different from you? What will it be like to be around this person?
- ▶ Let's prayerfully lift this person up before God. As we pray for this interaction, let's visualize this person and yourself gathered together before the baby Jesus at the first Christmas, just as were the shepherds with Mary and Joseph.



Moving Outward

Challenge each other to live out God's truth this week.

- ▶ Merry Christmas! May your celebrations be filled with joy and peace.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.