

## Message Discussion Guide

### CHAPTER 48: THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

*The Church at Brook Hills      Dr. David Platt      December 19, 2010      Philippians 2:5-11*

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*This guide is designed to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.*

### **Connect . . .**

*Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.*

**Option 1** If you have a nativity scene, bring it with you to your small group meeting. Display it, and then discuss: How has your perception of baby Jesus changed since you were a child?

### **Option 2**

Invite volunteers to share about some of their favorite mystery games, books, movies, or TV shows. Ask them to share what makes a good mystery, and then ask if anyone has ever thought of Christmas as a mystery. Explain that today, you'll look at the mystery of Christmas.

### **Review the Message . . .**

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Philippians from prison to thank the Church at Philippi for the gift they sent him. In it, he told them about his circumstances and encouraged them to stand firm in their faith.

## THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

Philippians 2:5-11

### **The Truths We Need To Remember...**

- God's nature can be mysterious...
  - He is one God in three Persons, holy above us yet near to us, powerful and patient, sovereign and free, wrathful and merciful, just and forgiving, and altogether great and good.
- Man's responsibility can't be ignored...
  - Unbelievers: Recognize your sin and receive God's mercy.
  - Believers: Worship God humbly, walk with God purely, trust God wholeheartedly, pray to God fervently, and proclaim the gospel confidently.
- God's Word can be trusted...
  - To drive our theology.
  - To lead our faith family.

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**Discussion . . .**

- Why should God's nature, humanity's responsibility, and God's Word always be looked at in light of each other? Can any of the three be distorted without the others?

**Application . . .**

- Practically, what does it look like to fulfill human responsibility in light of God's mysterious nature and God's Word? Be specific and share examples of how God is leading you as a believer.

**The Question We Need To Ask...**

- We must dare to ask: \_\_\_\_\_ WHO \_\_\_\_\_ IS JESUS?
  - A historic, important, awesome, \_\_\_\_\_ personal \_\_\_\_\_ question.
- Who you say Jesus is determines everything about \_\_\_\_\_ how \_\_\_\_\_ you live.
- The mystery of Christmas is not found primarily in the circumstances of the \_\_\_\_\_ birth \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus, but in the identity of the \_\_\_\_\_ baby \_\_\_\_\_ in the manger.

**Discussion . . .**

- When was the first time you remember asking and answering the question, "Who is Jesus?"
- How has your understanding of who Jesus is deepened as you've walked with Him?
- What has God used to deepen your understanding of Jesus? Share the specific Scriptures, people, or books you've encountered and benefited from.

**Application . . .**

- How does the way you live your life show what you believe about who Jesus is?

**The Baby We Need To See...**

- **The baby in the manger is \_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - Listen to Him...
    - He is \_\_\_\_\_ one \_\_\_\_\_ with the Father.
    - He has authority to \_\_\_\_\_ forgive \_\_\_\_\_ sin and \_\_\_\_\_ judge \_\_\_\_\_ men.
    - He has power over nature, disease, and \_\_\_\_\_ death \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Listen to others...
    - He is the eternal \_\_\_\_\_ Creator \_\_\_\_\_ of all things.
    - He is the sovereign \_\_\_\_\_ Sustainer \_\_\_\_\_ of all things.

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- Consider the options...
  - Is Jesus a legend?
  - Is Jesus a \_\_\_\_\_ liar \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Is Jesus a lunatic?
  - Is Jesus the \_\_\_\_\_ Lord \_\_\_\_\_?
- Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ fully \_\_\_\_\_ identifies with God.
- **The baby in the manger is \_\_\_\_\_ human \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - A human \_\_\_\_\_ body \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A human mind.
  - Human \_\_\_\_\_ emotions \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ fully \_\_\_\_\_ identifies with us.
    - He is familiar with our \_\_\_\_\_ struggles \_\_\_\_\_.
    - He is familiar with our sorrow.
    - He is familiar with our \_\_\_\_\_ suffering \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Discussion . . .**

- Read Philippians 2:5-6. What do these two verses tell you about Jesus' attitude toward Himself? Since "your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus," what do these two verses tell you about how your attitude should be?
- Considering the ultimate authority of Jesus—One with the Father and the awesome Creator and Sustainer of the world—why is it significant that He came to the earth as a baby? (see v. 6)
- Read Philippians 2:7. Describe what a newborn baby looks like, feels like, and sounds like. Then, use those same words to describe Jesus as a baby.
- How have people romanticized baby Jesus in various Christmas songs? How can romanticizing him as a baby undermine our view of His humanity? Why is this detrimental to our faith?
- Read each of the following verses, noting what each tells us about Jesus:
  - Isaiah 53:1-5
  - Matthew 4:1-2
  - Matthew 26:38
  - Mark 14:32-34
  - Mark 14:35-38
  - Luke 2:52
  - John 12:27
  - John 20:28
  - Colossians 1:15-17
  - Colossians 2:9
  - Hebrews 2:17-18
  - Hebrews 4:14-16
  - Revelation 1:8

#### **Application . . .**

- C.S. Lewis wrote, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." Why do you think so many people call Jesus "a great human teacher"? How does the phrase in verse 5, "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped," support Lewis' words?

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- How does understanding Jesus' humanity affect the way you should approach God? Refer to the list of verses above in your answer.
- **The baby in the manger is the sinless Savior.**
  - Revelation by humiliation: The sovereign Creator becomes a slave of creation.
  - Salvation by substitution...The perfect Son pays the price for sin.
  - The reality...He was born to die.
    - A shameful death.
    - A painful death.
    - A cursed death.
  - The result...We are born again to live.
    - His shame becomes our honor.
    - His pain becomes our joy.
    - His curse becomes our blessing.

#### **Discussion . . .**

- Read Philippians 2:8. To whom was Jesus ultimately obedient?
- Why is it significant that Jesus subjected Himself to the earthly authorities (such as his parents) in obedience?
- Jesus went from the highest exaltation to the lowest humiliation in obedience to His Father. How must He have felt to be so misunderstood by His creation? What was His response to being misunderstood?

#### **Application . . .**

- What emotions do you feel about the truth that Jesus on Mary's lap was born to die a shameful, painful, cursed death?
- It is only through His death that we can be born again. How is this truth at the heart of the gospel? How does this truth give overwhelming hope to your life?

- **The baby in the manger is the exalted Lord.**
  - He reigns in the utmost position.
  - He holds unending power.
  - He deserves universal praise.
  - He fulfills the ultimate purpose.

#### **The Decision We Need To Make...**

- Reject Jesus as Lord...

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- Bow the knee then.
- Eternal \_\_\_\_\_ condemnation \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Revere \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus as Lord...
  - Bow the knee today.
- Eternal \_\_\_\_\_ celebration \_\_\_\_\_

***Discussion . . .***

- Read Philippians 2:9-11. Even when Jesus was a baby in a manger, He never ceased to be Lord of all. How does the term “Lord” designate Jesus’ rightful place of authority?
- What was God’s purpose in exalting Jesus?
- Who will ultimately confess the truth that Jesus is Lord?
- Who will receive the glory in this confession?

***Application . . .***

- How has the Lordship of Jesus changed the way you view the world?
- When did you first make the choice between bowing your knee now or waiting until it’s too late?
- Why is it important to continually bow your knee to Jesus on a daily basis?
- What hope do you find in the eternal celebration promised for everyone who bows to Jesus now?
- In application to Philippians 2:5-10, read Philippians 2:3-4. Give 1 practical way you can look out for another person’s interest and count them as more important than yourself this Christmas season.