

Songs OF CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER SMALL GROUP SERIES

SESSION 1: ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

ICEBREAKER

What is your favorite Christmas carol, and why?

BIBLE REFERENCES

Luke 2:8-20

LYRICS

*Angels we have heard on high;
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply,
Echo back their joyous strains.*

CHORUS

*Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

*Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains
prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
Which inspire your heavenly
song?*

*Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn
King.*

*See within a manger laid
Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth!
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
With us sing our Savior's birth.*

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. The perspective/speaker changes from verse to verse in *Angels We Have Heard on High*. Why do you think the writer of these lyrics chose to do that?
2. In the third and fourth verses, the shepherds refer to Jesus as King, Savior, and twice as Lord. Given the humble circumstances of Jesus' birth, why do you think the shepherds were able to see Jesus so clearly for who He was?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 2:8-11. Why were the shepherds initially afraid when the angel appeared? How does the angel's news eliminate their fear?
2. Continue reading the story from Luke 2:8-20:
 - a. What was the role of the shepherds? In other words, why did the angel tell them the good news of the birth of Jesus? (Reference verses 17-18)
 - b. Is it significant that God chose these lowly men to be the first to hear the message of the Messiah's birth? Why?
 - c. How do you think you would've reacted if you experienced what the shepherds did?

d. What were the two responses of the shepherds after seeing Jesus and being in His presence? What can we learn from their response?

3. What do you think is meant by “goodwill toward men?” Reference multiple translations of this verse (Luke 2:14) for additional insight (NIV, NLT, ESV, etc.).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. *Say what may the tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?* Have you ever been asked why you're so joyful? If you were to be asked that, how would you respond?
2. Consider the repeated and well-known refrain, *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (*Glory to God in the highest*). This was the heavenly host's response to the birth of the Lord Jesus. We also learned that the shepherds called out to each other with this phrase in order to share their holiday joy. What is something that you do (or could do) to share your joy over the celebration of Christmas with your family? With your congregation? With your community?
3. The session mentioned the command to “come and see”. What have you seen differently this year? Does this change of perspective inspire you to sing glory to God?
4. How have you seen Jesus in your life this past year?
5. Describe what it means to be open to God's presence? How have you experienced Him during the Advent season?

PERSONAL TAKE-HOME

Read Luke 2:1-20 with your family or some friends as part of your preparation for the celebration of Christmas.

Sing all the verses of *Angels We Have Heard on High* this week, either alone or with your family.

SESSION 2: SILENT NIGHT

ICEBREAKER

What do you imagine the atmosphere was like in the stable the night of Jesus' birth?

BIBLE REFERENCES

Luke 2

Matthew 1:21-23

Philippians 2:7

LYRICS

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin
Mother and Child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night,
Shepherd quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night,
Wondrous star, lend thy light.
With the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from
Thy holy face,
With the dawn of
redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.*

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. What are characteristics of holiness or of someone who is holy?
2. What does the phrase "dawn of redeeming grace" mean to you? Discuss the significance of this new dawn of redemption.
3. The video mentions that one of the reasons why the night of Christ's birth was holy was because *He made Himself of not reputation, taking the form of a bondservant*. What should our response be to this, that Christ would lower Himself to such a degree for the sake of our sins? How do the lyrics of *Silent Night* highlight additional aspects of holiness in Jesus' birth?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. The prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 1:21-23 is from Isaiah 7:14. Read Isaiah 7. Is there a connection between these verses and the coming of Jesus? (Perhaps a Bible commentary may be helpful in discussing this.) Why does Matthew record that the prophecy found in Isaiah 7 has been fulfilled?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this carol has become such a beloved Christmas standard? What is it about this song that resonates with you personally? What emotions does the song *Silent Night* stir within you when you hear it each Advent season?
2. In Matthew 1:21-23, we read that God's Son is called Jesus because He *will save His people from their sins* (the Hebrew roots for the name Jesus mean "to deliver" or "to rescue"). What has Jesus saved you from?
3. *Silent Night's* humble beginnings reflect the humble circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. How can we bring more humility and simplicity into a season that has become so commercial and often times overwhelming? How can you make your season of Advent a season of silence, quietness, holiness, and meditation?

PERSONAL TAKE-HOME

Silent Night was written in the midst of great hardship for many Austrians. The Napoleonic wars had recently ended and the ash from a volcanic eruption in Indonesia had caused famine across Europe a couple of years before. This carol reminded these afflicted people of the hope that proceeds from Jesus' birth. Throughout the week, set aside some time to reflect how the Savior's birth has brought you hope, joy and peace, also in the midst of trying times.

Sing all the verses of *Silent Night* this week, either alone or with your family.