

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS PEACE

ABOUT THIS WEEK

It seems that everyone is hurrying about getting ready to celebrate Christmas. Yet, when asked what they'd most like to experience at Christmas many people say peace. When we fully experience Christmas, we truly experience peace!

ITEMS NEEDED

- o Prayer Journal
- o Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- o Pray for the meeting
- o Print & Read Discussion Guide
- o Clean meeting room
- o Clean bathroom
- o Refreshments (Optional)
- o Front door cracked open

OPENING (5-7 MIN)

Briefly welcome everyone and say: Since the bustle of the Christmas season is fully underway, let's go around and answer:

WHERE IS THE MOST PEACEFUL PLACE YOU HAVE EVER BEEN? WHAT MADE IT SO PEACEFUL?

After a discussion, ask: **AS A FOLLOW UP QUESTION, HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE PEACE?**

Say: As busy as our schedule may be, today we're going to talk about how it's still possible to experience of peace!

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Say: But first, can someone start us off with a brief prayer for our time together?

HURRY IN OUR CHRISTMAS (10-15 MIN)

After the prayer, say: Experiencing the true peace of Christmas is a challenge for many because we're in such a hurry.

WHAT BRINGS YOU PEACE DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON?

NOW LET'S FLIP IT—HOW ARE YOU IN A HURRY THESE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS?

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ELIMINATE HURRY TO EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS PEACE?

After a discussion, say: We tend to think of peace in a very zen-like way. That is, we must eliminate hurry to experience peace. And any demand or interruption becomes a threat to our peace. But the peace of Christmas is the kind of peace that's uncompromised by our hurry.

HURRY IN THE FIRST CHRISTMAS (10-15 MIN)

Say: Let's take a look at a portion of the Bible that helps us to better understand the right relationship between hurry and peace.

CAN SOMEONE READ LUKE 1:38-40 FOR US?

WHAT SORT OF THINGS DID MARY STOP DOING TO HURRY TO JUDEA? IN OTHER WORDS, HOW DOES AN EXPECTANT MOTHER GET READY?

CAN SOMEONE ELSE READ LUKE 2:15-16 FOR US?

WHAT SORT OF THINGS DID THE SHEPHERDS STOP DOING TO HURRY TO BETHLEHEM?

After a discussion, say: In both of these readings, Mary and the shepherds, we see a different kind of hurry. It's not a hurry to do as much as possible in the little bit of time left, it's a hurry to stop doing everything to do one thing—celebrate Jesus. This leads us to an important question we asked on Sunday.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO HURRY TO CELEBRATE JESUS IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS? IN OTHER WORDS, HOW CAN YOU FOCUS ON HIM?

WHAT SORT OF ACTIVITIES DOES THIS MEAN YOU NEED TO STOP DOING?

PEACE (5 MIN)

Say: This idea of focused hurry also means that hurry doesn't compromise our peace. We've already defined peace earlier in our discussion, but the peace of Christmas is more like a treaty, or a truce, than a feeling of serenity. We were God's enemies, but now the blood of Jesus has made a truce with God and we are at peace. Peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with others.

WHICH IS EASIER, FORGIVING YOURSELF FOR YOUR MISTAKES OR BELIEVING THAT GOD CAN FORGIVE YOUR MISTAKES?

IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE SHARING, WHO IS SOMEONE THAT IS OR WAS HARD FOR YOU TO FORGIVE?

HOW DOES A DEFINITION OF PEACE THAT INCLUDES FORGIVENESS (BETWEEN YOU AND GOD, YOU AND YOURSELF, OR YOU AND OTHERS) CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT THE PEACE OF CHRISTMAS?

After a discussion, say: May God help each of us hurry to experience Christmas peace.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (1 MIN)

Say: There is only one announcement to share today:

There will be no Kids' Ministry on Dec. 24th and 31st. Kids' Ministry will resume on Jan. 7th!

CLOSING PRAYER (5-10 MIN)

Say: Are there any prayer requests today. [Please write them in your group prayer journal.]

End your prayer by saying: And we close by asking you to fulfill the promise of your Word in Philippians 4:7, that “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.”