

WEEK 3: COMFORT FOR THE UNEXPECTED

ABOUT THIS SERIES

In our December series *Comfort and Joy*, your group will discover how the birth of Jesus brings a comfort and joy that lasts long after the tree comes down.

ITEMS NEEDED

- Bibles Pens

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- Pray for your group Read through the Discussion Guide Refreshments (optional)
 Clean meeting area Clean bathroom Crack front door

OPENING (10-12 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Let's get started with an icebreaker—in spite of our plan, it seems like every December is full of surprises.

WHAT'S A SURPRISE YOU'VE HAD THIS DECEMBER?

After a brief discussion, say: We're in a series called *Comfort and Joy* so you can experience just that. And this week we're looking at comfort when we have unmet expectations. In other words, when we're disappointed.

Before we get started, will you please pray with me?

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

LESS THAN EXPECTED (10-12 MIN)

After a prayer, say: Like we heard on Sunday, the Christmas story is full of people who experience the unexpected. Mary and the shepherds get unexpected visits from the angels. The magi see an unexpected star. The animals in the stable bet an unexpected show. And Joseph gets unexpected news that his fiancé is pregnant. Everyone's unexpected brings joy and surprise, but Joseph's unexpected brings him disappointment.

LET'S READ ABOUT IT. CAN SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 1:18-19 ALOUD FOR US?

LET'S BRAINSTORM—BEFORE THIS NEWS, WHAT WERE JOSEPH'S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

AFTER THIS NEWS, WHAT WERE JOSEPH'S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE? (THINK BEYOND THE ACT OF DIVORCING MARY.)

MORE THAN EXPECTED (10-12 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Let's keep going in the story.

CAN SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 1:20-25 ALOUD FOR US?

After the reading, say: Joseph's disappointment at unmet expectations for his life are suddenly elevated way beyond what he was thinking.

AFTER THIS MESSAGE FROM THE ANGEL, WHAT ARE JOSEPH'S EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE AS:**A HUSBAND****A FATHER****AN ISRAELITE****A SINNER****OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS (10-12 MIN)**

After a discussion, say: Joseph's disappointments are suddenly put in perspective for God's greater plan and greater purpose. And this is where we can apply a concept from Joseph's life to our own—

God is about giving us so much more than we expect. A good home and a good marriage and good kids and a good paying job are nice, but he wants to give us something greater. He came to be more than a life coach or an investment advisor to help us, he came to be a Savior to save us from a world full of sin. Christmas is about raising our expectations from a good life to a perfect life with God.

IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE SHARING, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UNMET EXPECTATIONS THAT HAVE DISAPPOINTED YOU THIS YEAR?**WITH OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS FRESH IN OUR MINDS, CAN SOMEONE READ EPHESIANS 1:18 ALOUD FOR US?****HOW DOES THIS READING GIVE YOU HOPE REGARDING YOUR DISAPPOINTMENTS?**

After a discussion, say: When our pain and disappointment is put in perspective, there's a word for that: comfort. May the Christmas season bring you just that this year.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: One of the ways you can bring comfort to others this Christmas season is to invite them to church where they can experience the comfort of Jesus for themselves.

WHO IS SOMEONE YOU'D LIKE TO INVITE TO CHRISTMAS EVE THAT WE CAN PRAY THAT THEY WOULD COME WITH YOU?**ARE THERE ANY OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS?**

Host, after taking prayer requests, close out the group in prayer.