

# Bethlehem

Small Group Discussion Guide



# THE PLACE WHERE THE PAST IS BURIED

## To Begin

How many times have you moved in your lifetime? From where to where?

## Digging Deeper

*Together read Genesis 35:16-20 then watch Session 1, "The Place where the Past is Buried."*

Life and death are major themes in Genesis. God gave life, and Adam and Eve chose death. Throughout Genesis the reality of death is painfully reminded to us again and again. In Genesis 35, we read about the deaths of Rachel and Isaac. Rachel was buried on the way to Bethlehem and a stone monument was set in place for her.

- If you haven't already, have a few of your briefly share your stories.
- Should we let the past define us? Why or why not?
- Where do we need God's grace to let go of things that hold us back? How do we bury our past with God's help?

In order to move beyond our past we need to move beyond our circumstances and trust our Father. Mary and Joseph had to let go of their own dreams in order to fulfill their Father's plan. This requires an attitude shift. We need to have the same attitude as Christ. In Philippians 2:3-4 we read "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

- Take a moment to re-read Philippians 2:3-4, then share what word or phrase stands out to you.



# THE PLACE WHERE HOPE IS FOUND

## To Begin

What is your favourite food, fresh from the garden? What was the last time you've ate it?

## Digging Deeper

***Together read Ruth 2 then watch Session 2, "The Place where Hope is Found."***

The book of Ruth is a beautiful story which demonstrates God's love and concern for all people, even Israel's enemies. In the midst of hostility and suspicion between the Israelites and Moabites, the young Moabite Ruth is accepted by God and His people.

Choose 1 person to read through Ruth 2 again, slowly. The rest of the group could shut their eyes and put themselves in Ruth's shoes. It might help you to imagine what she's experiencing if you can imagine what she might feel? Keep in mind that Ruth was probably in the country only a few days and was clearly an outsider.

- In what ways do you identify with Ruth? What about Boaz?
- Have you ever felt like you had no hope, no future? How did God come through?
- What does "taking refuge under the wings of the Lord" look like in your life?
- What action could you take to reach out to those whom God cares?
- Where have you found hope in your own life?



# THE PLACE OF SACRIFICE

## To Begin

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a daredevil were you as a kid? How about now?

## Digging Deeper

*Together read 2 Samuel 23:13-17 then watch Session 3, “The Place of Sacrifice.”*

2 Samuel 23 contains a list of the many men who supported David, along with a few of their more spectacular achievements. From a human perspective, these are the courageous and loyal soldiers who made David’s kingdom possible.

The water retrieved by the three soldiers illustrates their love and loyalty to David. However, David longs for water not simply to quench his physical thirst, he longs specifically for water “from the well near the gate of Bethlehem,” his hometown.

After his men risked their lives to bring him the water, his reaction may seem ungrateful to us. When David poured out the water “before the Lord,” this was an act of devotion to God. Instead of selfishly consuming water brought to him at such a great risk, David honors his men even more by offering it to God as a sacrifice. David refuses to drink this water, turning it into an offering for God.

- Have you ever really had to make a sacrifice?
- How do you think David felt when his three mighty men offered him the water?
- What do you think David’s soldiers might have felt when he then poured it on the ground?



# THE PLACE OF FULFILMENT

## To Begin

Do you know how your parents picked your name? What does your name mean?

## Digging Deeper

*Together read Matthew 1:18-25 then watch Session 4, “The Place of Fulfilment.”*

Jesus’ unique way of coming to earth is both mind-boggling and amazing. The miraculous nature of his coming shows both his full humanity and his full divinity. Jesus brought life and redemption from sin, which God had promised centuries before. Jesus is God with us!

- What is most striking to you about the birth of Jesus Christ?
- Jesus’ existence as fully God and fully man is difficult to understand. Does its difficulty bother us? Why or why not?
- How have you experienced Jesus as Immanuel in your life lately?

There’s meaning in a name, Jesus means “God saves”. His purpose is to save people from their sins.

- How do you understand this central purpose of Jesus’ ministry?
- How might the reality of Jesus being “Immanuel” or “God with us” be such good news? What connection do you see between the meanings of ‘Jesus’ and of ‘Immanuel’?







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