

12-21-25 Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide: The Misunderstood Package of Christmas

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share a time when you received a gift that wasn't what you expected based on the packaging. Were you disappointed or pleasantly surprised?

Key Sermon Points

Christ is often misunderstood because we judge by the package, not the contents

God's love is demonstrated through sacrifice, not comfort

True transformation requires being "born again" - a complete regeneration

Jesus wasn't packaged the way people expected (Isaiah 53)

We're called to be ambassadors who share Christ's presence, not just celebrate traditions

Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

Understanding the Message

The Misunderstood Package: The pastor shared how we often misjudge gifts based on their wrapping. How have you "misjudged the package" when it comes to understanding who Jesus is or what following Him means?

Born Again Reality: In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be "born again." What do you think it means to be completely transformed rather than just mentally acknowledging Jesus? Have you experienced this transformation?

The Isaiah 53 Description: The sermon highlighted that Jesus "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him." Why do you think God chose to present the Savior in such an unattractive package? What does this teach us about God's values versus worldly values?

Personal Reflection

Sacrifice and Love: The pastor shared the story of his father working the graveyard shift to provide Christmas gifts. How does this earthly example help you understand God's sacrifice? What sacrifices has God called you to make for others?

The Fairy Tale Expectation: Many people come to Christ expecting life to become a "fairy tale." Have you ever struggled with disappointment when following Jesus didn't eliminate your problems? How has your understanding of God's promises evolved?

Slowing Down to Hear: The pastor mentioned we're "over-sensualized" and rarely slow down enough to hear from God. When was the last time you intentionally created silence to listen to God? What keeps you from doing this more regularly?

Application & Action

Being Present vs. Giving Presents: The pastor challenged us to pray about bringing God's presence (not just presents) to our Christmas gatherings. How can you practically do this with your family or friends this week?

The Hidden Christian: The sermon asked, "Can people see in your life that you are a Christ-bound, Christ-seeking individual?" If your neighbors or coworkers were asked about your faith, what would they say? What might need to change?

Anticipating God's Gifts: The pastor noted we get up early on Christmas to receive gifts, but not on Sundays. How can you approach your time with God with more anticipation and excitement?

Key Takeaways

God's love initiated our salvation - it begins with Him, not with us

Following Christ includes suffering - Jesus was "familiar with suffering" and calls us to follow Him

Transformation is complete, not partial - being born again means total regeneration

Our greatest gift to others is God's presence - not our presents, programs, or performances

Christ paid a debt we couldn't pay - the gospel is about His sacrifice, not our merit

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2):

Create a "Selah" Moment: Schedule 15-30 minutes of complete silence this week. Turn off all devices, sit in a dark or quiet place, and simply be still before God. Journal what you hear or sense.

Reframe Your Christmas Gatherings: Before each Christmas event this week, pray specifically: "God, how can I wrap You as a gift and deliver You in a way my family/friends would see You like never before?"

Have a "Born Again" Conversation: Share with one person this week about your own transformation in Christ - not just when you "accepted Jesus," but how He has genuinely changed you from the inside out.

Study the Sacrifice: Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 slowly each day this week. Meditate on what Jesus endured for you personally. Write a prayer of thanksgiving based on what you discover.

Examine Your Package: Ask a trusted Christian friend: "Do people see Christ in me? What do they see instead?" Be open to honest feedback and commit to one specific change.

Prayer Focus (10-15 minutes)

Pray for:

Eyes to see Jesus as He truly is, not as we want Him to be

Hearts willing to be completely transformed, not just improved

Courage to share Christ's presence with others during this Christmas season

Those in the group facing disappointment or hardship - that they would experience God's comfort

Opportunities to be "Philip" to someone searching for God

Silent Prayer: Take 2-3 minutes of complete silence to personally respond to what God has spoken to you through this sermon.

Looking Ahead

Attend the Christmas Eve service and invite someone who needs to experience God's presence

Continue reflecting on how God might be calling you to sacrifice for others

Prepare your heart for the New Year by evaluating: "What does it mean for me to follow Christ in 2024?"

Closing Thought

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16

The greatest gift wasn't packaged the way anyone expected. But it was exactly what we needed. Will you receive it fully? Will you share it boldly?