

# DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

*Our Mission: Reaching Out to Leaders Who Can Change the World.*

December

## *The Glory of Christmas*

### INTRODUCTION

**Read Article # 1** What are some places of poverty or suffering in our world where people feel “forsaken” by God? What do these places have in common?

### OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

*Note: “And there was no illusion or deception in this: the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation.” –J. I. Packer (note: the word incarnation means “in flesh.”)*

### **Read John 1:14-15 The glory of Christmas is God dwelling with His people**

1. **Read Art # 2** What’s the difference between merely “visiting” a place and “taking up residence” somewhere?
2. Why is it important that God chose to make this world His home?
3. What benefit do we receive when we affirm the testimony of Jesus’ incarnation? Col 2:9-10

### **Read John 1:16-17 The glory of Christmas is God giving us grace and truth**

4. Consider some of the things we need if we are to live worthy of the gospel. How does Jesus’ divinity supply us with these needs?
5. **Read Art # 4** How does our reflection of Christ’s grace and truth help us bear witness to God’s work?

### **Read John 1:18 The glory of Christmas is Jesus revealing God to us**

6. How do you respond to someone who says that the holy figures of world religions all lead to God? Jn 1:1
7. How does Jesus’ testimony about Himself differ from this way of thinking? John 5:22-30
8. How does Jesus Christ fulfill and challenge our expectations of what God is like?

*Note: Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5).*

### APPLICATION

Let the incarnation of Jesus inspire you and empower you to spend time with others and be a living witness to the truth that *God cares* and that *God gets involved*. We don’t worship a distant deity who only speaks from afar; we worship a Savior who planted His feet in the dirt of this world and brought redemption through His death and resurrection.

## The Glory of God Articles

# 1 I stopped believing in Santa Claus by the time I was five. Growing up poor, I realized Christmas at our house did not resemble what I saw on TV. Our family wouldn't wake up on December 25<sup>th</sup> to find dozens of perfectly wrapped gifts under our tree. I remember thinking to myself: *Santa is either scared to come to my neighborhood at night, like other people, or he simply doesn't exist.* My older brother told me the truth—there is no Santa; we didn't have presents because we didn't have money, and even if there were a Santa, he wouldn't come to our neighborhood.

The absence of Christmas reminded me of the decadence of the city. As the years passed, I noticed how friends on my baseball and wrestling teams were never allowed to come over to my house to play or spend the night. Even Pizza Hut stopped delivering to our community. For years, I believed even God wouldn't want to be in our neighborhood.

I realized the faultiness of my logic a few years later when the Lord saved me. The starting point of my conversion was when our pastor described a God who left the riches of heaven to become poor. I remember the words of Paul he quoted: "Though He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

In saying this, the pastor captured my attention. He went on to explain the reality of Jesus' incarnation and how He was the greatest Christmas gift that God could give. For the first time, I understood that God didn't forsake my neighborhood. His presence through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the church were there; I just never cared to take notice.

# 2 John used the Greek word *logos* (translated as "the Word") to describe Jesus. By claiming that the Word was "with God" and "was God," He was making major claims about Jesus, identifying Him as eternally God, essentially God, and equal with God (John 1:1). But here we arrive at an even more stunning claim. In John 1:14, he claimed that the Word of God "became flesh." He took on our humanity.

Laying all his cards on the table, John was clearly communicating that God's entrance into our world was not a mere "passing through." God was coming to *live here*. He "took up residence" (1:14). This image recalls the Old Testament tabernacle, which God set up as a place where sinners met with God and a place that symbolized God's desire to dwell with His people.

# 3 God deals with us in this way because we are no longer under the law of Moses. Instead, we experience *grace and truth* through Jesus Christ. The law was necessary to show God's perfect standard. Since He is perfect, He cannot lower His standard of perfection for anyone. His pure demands must be met perfectly. The truth of the law is revealed in Leviticus 11:44, where God says, "For I am Yahweh your God, so you must consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am holy."

Through the incarnation, God the Son entered into our fallen world in order to place Himself under the law of Moses (Gal. 4:4-5). He did this to meet God's requirements for humanity. His perfect life was the payment He submitted as a substitution for sinners on the cross (Mark 10:45). The evidence of His payment being accepted by God was His literal, physical, and visible resurrection from the grave (Rom. 4:24-25).

# 4 Perhaps to your lost family members and friends, there is no greater Christmas present than being pardoned from the penalty of their sins. I should know because this was my experience. Christmas in 1995 was taxing on my mom and dad. It was not because they went into debt to buy me gifts. Rather, a few days before Christmas, I stole a large sum of money from them and ran away from home. December 25<sup>th</sup> came and went, and they still did not hear from me. They received a tip regarding my whereabouts from two of my friends, so they sent the police to apprehend me. Within a couple of hours, I found myself in a cell at the county jail. An officer came to the door with a disgusted look on his face and told me that I was free to go home. Perplexed, I wondered who came and got me out. Lo and behold, it was my dad and brother. No charges were filed, and my record was held up by the sergeant and ripped in half. It was my dad and mom who extended grace by not pressing charges. This caused me to reconsider the trajectory of my life. This event was the first cause in a chain reaction that God used to regenerate me only three months later. The night I heard my pastor speaking on the incarnation, I reflected on my short-term experience in jail and realized that although I was physically free from incarceration, I was spiritually dead, a slave of sin and imprisoned in my spiritual condition (John 8:34).