

CREW Bible Study

Youth XP3 Message Series – Christmas Lights

Week 2 – Go & See

- **BOTTOM LINE:** Go see for yourself.
- **GOAL:** To encourage students to take a step towards discovering Jesus for themselves – no matter what they believe or have heard about Him previously.
- **SCRIPTURE:** *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. – Luke 2:1-20*

MESSAGE

Have you ever had an experience that was so good, so epic, so incredible – an experience that was so amazing that you had difficulty trying to explain it to other people?

Maybe it was a live concert or show you went to. The music, the crowd, the energy in the room was so amazing. And yet, it was really hard to explain that whole experience. You kinda just had to be there.

Or maybe it was a super fun time with your friends. Not that you did anything really special, but just hanging out that night was awesome. And then you got home and your parents said, "What did you do tonight?" and you just couldn't put it into words. Because you felt like no matter what you said, it wasn't going to make sense. You just had to be there.

Or maybe you traveled to someplace really beautiful. And you took some awesome pictures. But when you showed them to your friends, the pictures just didn't really capture what it was like to see it in real life.

Some things in life just can't be explained. They need to be experienced.

During the Christmas season, we hear plenty about Santa Claus and the reindeer, the snowmen and the elves, but the foundational message of Christmas is about how God came to earth as a helpless baby. And even if you aren't totally sure what you believe about the Christmas story, the message we hear about the birth of Jesus is that it was an incredible moment, and an incredible gift to us.

Maybe you've heard people try and explain to you that because of the birth of Jesus, you can know how powerful God is. Maybe you've heard that because of Jesus you can live with hope for your future, with peace within yourself and with others, live with joy, and live knowing you are loved. You hear how "Jesus is the reason for the season," but maybe you doubt it.

Maybe you doubt it because you hear this story about how life-changing the birth of Jesus is, but you hear it from people whose lives don't look very life-changed. Maybe you hear it from people who claim to follow Jesus, and yet they don't seem to treat people very well. They spend more time judging others than loving others. And that just seems hypocritical and wrong.

Or maybe you hear that the birth of Jesus shows us how good God is, but you look around at the circumstances of your life and the lives of others around you, and it doesn't seem like God is very good. Because life is hard. Maybe life isn't going the way you hoped it would or the way you feel like you deserve for it to go.

This has been such a difficult year for so many people around the entire world. You look at how many people lost their jobs, lost their lives and lost loved ones due to COVID and other things and it can be tough to believe in the explanation that there is a good and loving God in control of it all. Maybe this story of God demonstrating his closeness and goodness to you by coming in the form of a baby just doesn't add up.

But I ask you to keep an open mind for just a minute.

For almost all of human history, people thought God was angry and distant and someone that had to be appeased. But then, God actually showed up in our world as an infant. He showed up in such a humble way to let us know that He really does get us and understand us.

God showed up in the world just like you showed up in the world.

God wanted to put Himself in your shoes, to wrap Himself in skin just like you and experience all the things of this world and the feels of this world. He sent Jesus into the world – into our world – to do this for Him. In his lifetime, Jesus would experience betrayal. He would experience frustration. He would see one of his best friends die. He would know what it feels like to be rejected by others. He would also know what it's like to have a close-knit group of friends.

If you ever wonder if God knows and understands what you're going through, the Christmas story is proof. He sent Jesus to live it all.

In Luke, chapter 2 verses 8-15 we hear this:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

The shepherds were the lowest of the low when it came to social status. Shepherds were typically too poor, too un-showered, too undignified for regular society. But this is who God sends this message to. And this story that their Savior, the Messiah has been born as a little baby lying in a manger was just too strange to simply believe. They had to go and see for themselves that it was true. They had to go and see. And they did. And it changed them forever. They saw for themselves and they spread the word that others needed to see it too.

Now, I don't know how you feel about this whole story, but I challenge you to follow the example of the shepherds. Do what they did. Go and see for yourself.

What do I mean by that? When it comes to our faith – to your faith – we can't let someone else's experiences tell us what to believe. We need to experience it for ourselves. So, how can you continue to experience Jesus beyond the Christmas season?

Here's two ways:

1. **Keep showing up.** Maybe it's coming to worship. Maybe it's coming to CREW events. Maybe it's joining a small group or really making your small group more of a priority. Whether it's virtual or in-person, put away the excuses for why you can't be there. The first step to nearly every good thing in life is showing up.

2. **Ask a question.** What is it about the Christmas story, about God, about Jesus that you wonder about? What makes you doubt? Ask someone – ask me, your parents, or someone you trust who believes. Keep exploring, and learning, and discovering, and seeing for yourself. Make your faith your faith.

I want you to know and experience the love of God. I want you to know that Jesus came to earth as a tiny baby to experience all of the things that you experience. I want you to see for yourself who Jesus was and is. I want you to see for yourself.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever had an experience that was so good, so epic, so incredible – an experience that was so amazing that you had difficulty trying to explain it to other people? What was it?
2. What is something in life that you had to experience for yourself to really appreciate?
3. What is most likely to cause you to try something new? (commercials, social media, recommendations of friends, etc.)
4. What are some reasons people might be hesitant to believe the Christmas story?
5. Think about the steps you might take to experience a new song, video game, movie, etc. that a friend tells you about. What would be involved?
6. What does it look like to “go and see for yourself” when it comes to God? What steps can you take?
7. If you were to lay aside assumptions and get to know God for yourself in the next few weeks, what is one thing you would hope to discover?
8. The first step to nearly every good thing in life is showing up. What will you make a commitment to show up to when it comes to your involvement with church?