



# Small Group Study Guide for December 3, 2023

*Our Savior Lutheran Church and School*

**Theme:** During the season of Christmas, we often focus on the material things, the stuff. It's fun giving gifts, and every good and perfect gift is from above. But during this Advent season, we strive to focus on the best Gift, given by the greatest Giver.

## **Getting Started: (sharing with each other)**

1. What is one of the most important or special decorations that you put out around Christmas time?
2. What is one of the most memorable gifts you received as a kid at Christmas?

## **In the Word: Read Luke 1:26-38**

3. There are only two angels names in the whole Bible. One is Michael, the warrior angel, commander of the angel armies mentioned in Daniel, Jude, and Revelation. The second is Gabriel, the messenger angel, who announces good news, mentioned in Daniel and Luke. What is Mary's reaction to Gabriel's appearance and message, and why do you think she reacted that way? (vs. 29)
4. Gabriel's words to Mary start with "Greetings!" which literally is the word "Rejoice!" The angel says Mary is highly favored, and found favor with God. She is going to receive a special blessing from God, the gift of a son conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary didn't quite understand at first, and this would be a big surprise. It would be confusing to relatives and potentially hurt her and Joseph's reputation. Can God's gifts and blessings also bring troubles and hardship?
5. Make a list of the titles and words used to describe Mary's child in verses 31-35
6. Make a list of all the Old Testament names and references in 26-38 (including Gabriel, mentioned in the book of Daniel). Share your finds with the group.

### **Putting it all Together (what do we believe or do as disciples?)**

1. “Nothing is impossible with God.” (verse 37) or “No word of God can ever fail.” We sometimes struggle with the immaculate conception (virgin birth) of Jesus, because we cannot understand scientifically or medically how exactly that would happen. And yet the miracle of the virgin birth seems small and easy compared the miracle of the incarnation – that God became a human being, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. What does Mary demonstrate in her response in verse 38, and how is that an example for us?
2. At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of God’s love, His Son, born to be our Savior. We give each other gifts to celebrate and show our love and affection. Christmas is worth celebrating, and gifts are a fitting way to do that. But when does it tip the scale, and get off balance, and the gift-giving become the focus rather than Christ?
3. How might gift-giving be a way to reflect the Gospel, and open a door to share the Good News of Jesus with someone?
4. Isaiah 40:10 announces the good tidings to Zion when it says, “See, the Sovereign Lord comes (advents) with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.” God will come (advent) and bring gifts (recompense is to repay, reward, restore). What gifts do you anticipate and desire from God this Advent & Christmas season?

**Prayer:** Ask God to guard our hearts from the tug and pull of materialism this time of year. May we be generous on every occasion. Ask God to bless our gifts given and received, that we might glorify Him. Thank God for the greatest gift of all, a Savior, Jesus, born for us.

**Next Week:** The next “Christmas Confession” admits that our hearts are not always in the right place during Advent and Christmas. We worry and fret about many things that rob us of our joy. Jesus wants to restore the joy! The third week, we light the pink candle and rejoice in the coming Savior.

**Note:** Advent Hymn Festival is December 6, 7 p.m. with choir, brass, bells, “the works”! You will be blessed!