

# STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP  
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE  
SCHOOL  
FOCUS

## CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

DECEMBER 9, 2020

Week 2 of a 3-week series  
about Christmas

### BOTTOM LINE

God is with us.

### SCRIPTURE

*"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

- Matthew 1:21-23 NIV

*"I am the light of the world..."*

- John 8:12a NLT

### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see that the promise of Christmas is that God is with us, and to encourage them to remember this promise by including time with God and others in their Christmas celebrations.

 **PRINCE  
OF PEACE**  
Called to Connect

### >> BEFORE GROUP

**THINK ABOUT THIS:** Keep in mind that you're talking with students from all kinds of backgrounds and perspectives when it comes to faith, God, and even Christmas. Some may have a very limited understanding of Jesus, God, and how they're related. Be ready to clarify or answer questions, and be careful to choose language that includes students from many perspectives when it comes to faith. In addition, the idea that God is actually with us may bring up a lot of questions. In this phase, whatever middle schoolers feel is true, they believe to be fact. So when they don't feel like God is with them, they struggle to see how it could possibly be true that He is!

### >> DURING GROUP

*This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.*

#### DISCUSS THIS:

- Describe the best Christmas you have ever had. What made it awesome?
- Describe what your "perfect" Christmas would look and feel like.
- If you were God, how would you have orchestrated the birth of Jesus? Why do you think God did it the way He did?
- What's your favorite "unexpected" detail in the Christmas story?
- What's one unexpected way God has worked in your life lately?
- Who is somebody that you enjoy being with? Why do you enjoy being with them? Why do you think God wants to be with us?
- Share one way you plan to spend time with God this Christmas.
- What are you most looking forward to doing with family or friends over Christmas break?

#### DO THIS:

- To further explore the idea of a "perfect" Christmas (and for fun!) ask some of the following "Would You Rather" questions:
  - ◇ decorate a Christmas tree or decorate Christmas cookies?
  - ◇ lose your voice for the holidays or only be able to speak in Christmas carols?
  - ◇ wear Santa's red suit to school or wear a green elf suit to school?
  - ◇ eat Christmas dinner at home or help serve Christmas dinner at a homeless shelter?
  - ◇ be best friends with Frosty the Snowman or Rudolph the red nosed reindeer?
  - ◇ receive one big present or receive ten small presents?
  - ◇ open your presents on Christmas Eve or on Christmas morning?
  - ◇ have a red nose that lights up or have pointy elf ears?
  - ◇ go sledding or go skiing/snowboarding?
  - ◇ wear Santa's big boots or pointy elf shoes to gym class?
  - ◇ eat a gingerbread house or live in a gingerbread house?
- If you have extra time, ask your group to make up their own questions.

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LEADER GUIDE

HIGH  
SCHOOL  
FOCUS

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**THINK ABOUT THIS:** In this phase, high schoolers are beginning to internally question who they can trust and to think critically about the stories they have been told. That's why, as leaders, it's important for us to talk about the character of God as much as we talk about His desires for how we live. This week, let your discussion linger around why God would choose to come to Earth as He did. Encourage questions. You don't have to supply the answer. By simply letting students think about the answer, you're offering them an opportunity to rediscover that God is good and can be trusted.

### >> DURING GROUP

*Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.*

### DISCUSS THIS:

- Are you naturally more optimistic or more pessimistic?
- What are some areas of your life where you try to keep low expectations? (family, school, sports, etc.)
- Share a story about a time you had a low expectation about something and were pleasantly surprised. Or, share a story about a time you had a high expectation about something and were disappointed.
- What might cause you to change your low expectations of someone or something?
- Is changing what you expect from someone or something easy or difficult for you?
- Do you think most people have high or low expectations when it comes to God? Have you ever felt: God is distant? God is mad at me? God has forgotten me? God is punishing me? God has abandoned me? God is silent? Explain.
- "God with us" means, whatever your reality, God is with you in it. What does this look like for a high school student in general? What does this look like for a high school student in 2020? What does this look like for you?
- Do you think a "close" relationship with God is a realistic expectation? Why or why not?
- God made the first move toward being close with us by coming to Earth (that's why we celebrate Christmas!). Why do you think He did that? What is one way you might move closer to Him this Christmas season?
- Who can you slow down and be fully present with during Christmas break? As a group, brainstorm some practical ways to really connect with somebody who needs you or God. Commit to following through with one of your ideas by the end of the year.

### >> AFTER GROUP

Sometimes the best way for a student to understand that God is with them is for them to experience someone who knows God being with them. So, set an alarm every day this week to make a quick connection with your small group members. It can be as simple as a direct message, a group text, a social media post or something else. The goal is to be present in their lives as much as possible.