

# Sermon Discussion Guide

## God's Greatest Gift

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*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (NIV)*

As we celebrate Christmas with the giving and receiving of gifts, let's remember that God has given us Jesus to exchange our hurts, worries, grief, fears and sins for healing, peace, joy, love and forgiveness. Each one of these precious gifts are ours because Jesus came to earth and died for us – for you and for me. As Christmas day draws near, let us give up the things that bind us and receive what only God can give: his perfect love, joy, and peace. They are not like the world gives.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

*“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 (NLT)*

1. Each of us has received one gift after another because God loves and cares for us. Discuss a gift you have received in exchange for your worries and sorrows.
2. Can you describe how a sorrow on earth can become worry free, allowing you to experience the gift of peace of mind and heart?

*“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I will bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)*

3. How can grief keep people from fully experiencing God's joy this Christmas season? Ask each member to share a time when they were struggling with grief. Which one of God's promises or what biblical passage could help someone find joy in the midst of grief? How might having someone walk through another's grief bring them more quickly to joy?

*“When people sin, they earn what sin pays – death. But God gives us a free gift – life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23 (NCV)*

4. Ask each group member to share how they felt and what they did when they came to the realization they needed a Savior. Now as a group, read this passage aloud. What words or phrases stand out? Have each member communicate how they feel God is inviting them to share the free gift of salvation with another person during this Christmas season.

### Diving Deeper (optional)

1. Reflect on a time when Jesus healed one of your hurts. During this time, what did you come to learn about God? What did you come to learn about yourself? How can the healing you experienced improve the way you help those around you who are suffering or struggling? Why is love the greatest gift we can give another person?

*“With His love, He will calm all your fears.” Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)*

2. What is your fear right now? What do you face that causes you to doubt? Share this with someone close to you who can pray for you. Then rest in God's love that he gave us in Jesus (John 3:16.)

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**



## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week's Study

- If you could exchange anything you have for something better, what would you give and want to receive?
- God exchanges our worry, hurts, grief, fears, and sins, for peace, healing, joy, love and forgiveness.
- Dear God, we give you all our worry, hurts, grief, fears and sins and ask you to replace them with your peace, healing, joy, love and forgiveness. Let our hearts be open to all the goodness you have for us, especially as we gather with family and friends this Christmas season. Let us boldly share all you have to offer to others, that they may know how wide and deep and high is your love for them today and always. In Jesus name, Amen.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.