



# groups

## Introduction to the December Life Group Discussion Guides

**We recommend you read through this entire guide as some of the ideas will require prior planning.**

Merry Christmas, Friends! We hope this season will be a time for you and your group to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ – God who came in the flesh to die for the penalty of our sin and set us free from slavery to sin.

We know the Christmas season can be filled with happiness and frustration, merriment and anxiety. And therefore, not every group will celebrate this season the same. So, our Life Group discussion guide this month will also not look the same as it does in other months.

Normally, we develop a discussion guide that corresponds to the passage or topic of the upcoming weekend message. This month, though, we want to help you and your group members to slow down and remember Jesus. So, we've created 5 guides since there are 5 weekends in December and none of them look the same. You can do these in any order, or you can choose to opt out of all of these and go in your own direction. We would just encourage you to create space for your group to meditate on Christ, to worship Him, and to have fun together.

Here's a summary of what's included in this guide:

- One discussion guide on a passage of Scripture. This will look the same as other series.
- Ideas for a night of remembrance and communion.
- Ideas for a night of fun and celebration.
- One idea for a night of contemplation and prayer.
- One idea for a night of service and proclamation.

### *How to Use These Guides*

- **Choose at least a week out what you will do the next week.** Some of these ideas require some preparation.
- **Communicate the plan to your group members beforehand.** If you will serve communion, some people may make it a point to be there that night, and some may choose to opt out.
- **Feel free to come up with your own ideas on how to use this season to remember and celebrate Jesus.** These are just some of our ideas to help you, as the leader, to facilitate this time of remembrance.

## **OPTION 1: Bible Discussion Guide**

### **Main Bible Passage: Galatians 4:4-7**

**Theme:** Christ's coming to earth and freeing our chains so that we may become sons instead of slaves is the true meaning of Christmas.

- **What's your favorite Christmas memory?**
- **When did someone give you just the right Christmas gift? How did that make you feel?**

Leader's Note: Christmas is a special time of year for many reasons: the smells in the air, the songs and sounds that we don't hear any other time of year, the foods we share, the time we get to spend with those who mean the most to us. But more important than any of those things, wonderful though they are, is that we get to focus on God's greatest gift to humanity—Himself.

**Have a volunteer read Galatians 4:3-5.**

- **What do you think "fullness of time" means? What does this communicate to us about God's plan?**

Leader's Note: Read Acts 2:22-24, Revelation 13:7-8, and Ephesians 1:3-6. According to these passages, it seems God had determined before the beginning of the earth that Jesus when and where would come to die for mankind and that some would be chosen to be written in the book of Life before they were born.

- **What does it mean that Christ was born "under the law"? What's the significance of that for us?**
- **How do we see both the humanity and the deity of Christ affirmed in these verses?**
- **From what do we need to be redeemed? What does this truth entail for our lives?**

Leader's Note: In verses 4-5 Paul gives us a wonderful description of the incarnation, God made flesh. We see not only an affirmation of the historical event, but also its significance for our lives. As important to humanity as the incarnation of Christ was, it becomes significant to us personally as we are adopted into God's family and experience the transformation that a relationship with Him brings.

**Have another volunteer read Galatians 4:6-7.**

- **As adopted children, what is significant about the word "Abba, Father"?**

Leader's Note: The word "Abba" is an Aramaic word that was translated into Greek. It is an title that children would use for their fathers. Although some would state that the word "Abba" means "daddy," there is little-to-no evidence to support that usage. In the Bible, using a repetition of words added emphasis, like modern-day underlining or highlighting; a biblical example would be Jesus' phrase "Surely, surely, I say to you..." So we know repeating "father" adds emphasis. Also, by the first century, the phrase "abba ho pater" (translated to "Abba, Father") had made its way into the prayers of the church. It blended the Aramaic word (Abba, which was the common language of Gentiles) and the Jewish word (Pater, which was the common language of the Jewish people). By including both words, it showed that God was not only the adopted father of the Jews but also those who were from outside the Jewish culture. It was a phrase of inclusion across racial lines.

- **How does using this term make you feel about your relationship with God?**

- **How would you describe the difference between being a “son” and a “slave”?**

Leader’s Note: When we become Christians, God gives us the Holy Spirit and adopts us into His family. Not only do we move from being slaves to sons, but also we can look forward to a great inheritance as His heirs! We celebrate Christmas because Christ—God incarnate—made this inheritance possible.

- **What part of your inheritance excites you the most? Why?**

Leader’s Note: The “fullness of time” refers to an appointed time. It is a time purposefully set to accomplish a prepared task. In this instance, the appointed time refers to the coming of Christ and His redeeming death. By Christ’s death, believers have been adopted into God’s family and have received the Holy Spirit as a down payment of their inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives enables us to experience the benefits of God’s gift of salvation while we’re still on earth—adoption as sons and freedom from sin’s slavery that once held us captive.

- **Paul treated “slave to sin” and “child of God” as two different, opposing things. Which best characterizes your life currently: slave to sin or child of God? Are there times you have felt as if both of these things were true? Explain.**

Leader’s Note: Being heirs means believers are heirs of God’s blessings and of all He has promised them. The greatest blessing that the heirs of God receive is God Himself.

- **What would change in your life this week if you were to live fully in the gift of Jesus—an heir and child of God who is no longer a slave to sin?**
- **When are you most tempted to neglect your relationship as a son and become a slave again to the world? How do you think our discussion today can help you combat that temptation?**
- **Using these verses, how can you explain to someone else the offer that God gives at Christmas time and throughout the year?**
- **How would you explain to a new believer how Jesus’ advent should impact his or her life on a daily basis?**

Praise Abba Father for His great plan and the sending of His Son in the fullness of time. Thank Him for the redemption He has offered us through Christ, and the adoption He has brought about in group members’ lives. Ask Him for the courage and compassion to make this incredible offer known to others this Christmas season.

## OPTION #2: Night of Remembering and Communion

### Items Needed

- Loaf of bread
- Grape Juice.
- Plate
- Glass
- Bible

### Before Group Meeting

- Pray for the time to be used for the glory of God and to draw people to Him.
- Text or email the group to remind them you'll be serving communion this week in group.
- Cut or break the loaf into small pieces and put it on the plate.
- Pour the grape juice into the cup about ½ inch from the top rim.
- Choose and look up the Bible passages below and mark the pages in your Bible.

### During the Group Meeting

- Begin by explaining what the night will look like – a time of quiet prayer and confession, communion, sharing what God is doing in your life, and worship.
- Read a Scripture that reminds people of Jesus' work on the cross. Here are some options: John 19, Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Philippians 2:1-11, or Ephesians 2:1-10.
- Open a time of quiet prayer and confession. If anyone wants to share any prayer needs (i.e. a sin that is hindering them from enjoying the presence of God), they are welcome to share and receive prayer from others.
  - You can begin with a prayer like this: "Jesus, we come into Your presence, humbly submitted to Your will. We confess that we're sinful. We often go through our days without acknowledging You or Your ways. We try to do things in our own power. Please forgive us. We take this time to remember You. We ask that You use this bread and juice to nourish our souls and hearts. Be with us here tonight."
- After a time of quiet reflection (about 3-5 minutes), read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 aloud.
- Hold out the plate of bread and say, "This bread represents Christ's body broken for you."
- Pass the plate around and have each person take one piece.
- Hold out the cup of juice and say, "This cup represents Christ's blood, poured out at the cross."
- Pass the cup, allowing each person to dip the bread into the juice and eat it.
- Encourage your group to take a few more minutes of quiet prayer and thanks to God.
- After the time of prayer (about 2-3 minutes), ask your group to share, if they're comfortable, the answers to the following questions:
  - Where have you experienced Christ's forgiveness in your life this year?
  - Where have you grown in your experience of Jesus this year?
- End your time of reflection and communion by worshipping Jesus in song together. Here are a few options:
  - *O Come to the Altar*, by Elevation -- [https://youtu.be/rYQ5yXCc\\_CA](https://youtu.be/rYQ5yXCc_CA)
  - *10,000 Reasons*, by Matt Redman -- [https://youtu.be/DXDGE\\_IRI0E](https://youtu.be/DXDGE_IRI0E)
  - *Jesus Paid It All*, by Kristian Stanfill -- <https://youtu.be/-FHwdx5BIvc>



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## **After the Group Meeting**

- Pray for each group member by name.
- Reach out to each group member by phone or text to see how they are doing and what the Lord is doing in them.



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## OPTION #3: Night of Fun and Celebration

Having fun with your small group is a great way to build friendships and go deeper with your group. As people get to know each other, they become more comfortable sharing with each other. So take some intentional time to have fun this season.

### Items Needed

- A Christmas playlist (i.e. Apple Music, Spotify, or Pandora) or a favorite Christmas CD.

### Ideas to have fun

- Host a potluck dinner (where each person brings a different food and you provide the main dish) at your house.
  - Here are some ideas for main dishes and sides: <https://www.spendwithpennies.com/category/seasonal/christmas/>
  - Here are some ideas to help the dinner time conversations: [https://icebreakerideas.com/christmas-party-games-icebreakers-adults/#Christmas\\_Dinner\\_Table\\_Games\\_for\\_Adults](https://icebreakerideas.com/christmas-party-games-icebreakers-adults/#Christmas_Dinner_Table_Games_for_Adults)
- Go out to eat together and then carpool to see Christmas lights in the area, such as in [McAdenville](#) or at the [Charlotte Motor Speedway](#).
- Host a White Elephant Gift Exchange, but set a price limit (i.e. \$10 max per gift) that is doable for all your group members.
  - Here are some rules for the exchange: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_elephant\\_gift\\_exchange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_elephant_gift_exchange)
- Have a movie-watching party at a group member's house. Everyone brings an appetizer or dessert and watch a Christmas-themed movie together, such as *Elf*, *Home Alone*, or *The Nativity Story*.
- Do a cookie swap together. Here's how to do that: <https://www.bonappetit.com/entertaining-style/holidays/article/how-to-throw-a-holiday-cookie-swap-party>
- Host a birthday party for Jesus, include kids and have cake.



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## OPTION #4: Night of Contemplation and Prayer

### Items Suggested

- Soft music without vocals
- Quiet place without distraction

Spend your group meeting praying through specific topics. Read a question or prompt from the list below and/or have each person share, then pray for the person next to them.

As the leader, you set the tone for your group. If you share with authenticity, your group members will be more likely to do the same. So, stretch yourself and share deeply, knowing that God has covered you with His grace and forgiveness.

In a couples' group or an especially large group, it may be helpful to break up into smaller groups (i.e. men with men and women with women for a couples' group) for sharing and prayer.

- Think of what you have learned about God this year or what you already know of Him. Spend some time praising God for who He is and what He has done for you and the world.
- Think of a person close to you (family, friend, neighbor, etc.) who doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus. Share a little about that person and pray that your group member would have an opportunity to share about Jesus with him/her.
- Think of someone you know who is going through a difficult life circumstance (i.e. illness, poverty, unemployment, etc.). Pray for his/her healing and that God would use that to bring him/her closer to Him.
- Consider an area of your life God is asking you to change or grow (could be a part of your devotional life or an area of struggle or sin). Share that with the group and pray for each other.
- Think of another member of your group who has been encouraging or made an impact on your walk with Jesus. Spend some time thanking God for that person.
- Consider an area of your life where you want God to move (could be a need you have, a relationship you want to be healed, or a desire that hasn't yet been fulfilled). Share that with the group and ask that God would either (a) grant those or (b) help you release them if they're not in His will. *(Note: This prayer is different than the one above. The one above talks about areas God wants to change in you. This is about what you want/need from God.)*
- Pray for a need in the community around your city that God has given you a passion for (maybe sex trafficking, homelessness, foster care, etc.).
- Pray for the future of the church – both Forest Hill and the church around the world. Pray that God would be glorified through their efforts.
- Pray for your brothers and sisters around the world who are being persecuted because of Jesus.



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## OPTION #5: Ideas for Service and Proclamation

Christmastime is one of the best times to share the gospel and proclaim the glory of Christ with our words and our actions. However, it can also be difficult to come up with ideas to do that as a group. So below are some ideas to both create opportunities to serve the world and invite people into a Christian community.

- If your group meets in a coffeeshop or restaurant, consider writing cards or giving gifts to the baristas/staff/servers.
- If your group meets in a home or neighborhood, consider baking cookies and taking them to the neighbors around you.
- Host a Christmas gathering in the area where your group meets. Don't have an agenda, such as a gospel presentation. Just focus on creating a warm and welcoming environment. You can use some of the ideas from Option #3 above as a start.
- Prepare a meal and take it to a neighbor ... just because.
- Get a Bluetooth speaker and go caroling around the neighborhood or shopping center where your group meets.
- Deliver cookies and gifts to a local fire department, police station, or hospital.
- Adopt a local teacher or social worker. Bring him or her gifts, baked goods, etc.
- Send Christmas cards to soldiers overseas.
- Go caroling at a nursing home near you.
- Adopt a family who is in need. Supply food and gifts for them.
- Reach out to Congregations for Kids – a local agency that assists with fostering and adoption – to see what needs they have.
- Connect with one of Forest Hill's partners at <https://foresthilchurch.goentrepid.com/opportunities>