

THE ROAD AHEAD

FACILITATOR GUIDE

NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Text or email this reminder to your group:

REMEMBER: *Don't trade God's timing for your deadline.*

CPC HAPPENINGS... (Leaders, please share with your group. We want to do everything to keep people connected to the entire church family.)

Baptism Opportunity

As of right now, the next CPC Baptism Service is planned for Sunday, January 10. If you would like to participate, please go to the church website (yourcpc.church/events) to sign up.

CHRISTMAS 2020

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best) how would you rate your Christmas?

What was the best part?

What was the worst part?

Was this Christmas any different for you because of the pandemic?

Were you able to keep in mind the real reason for the celebration?

What part did Jesus play in your celebration?

How did you include the real meaning of the season in your celebrations?

How has 2020 effected you the most?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most), at this time last year how optimistic were you regarding the year 2020?

What are some words you hear (or say) everyday now that before 2020 you never used or knew? (**Mask, hand-sanitizer, toilet paper rush, social distancing, Covid, coronavirus, pandemic, vaccine, stimulus relief, quarantine, zoom call, zoombombing, flattening the curve, asymptomatic, droplets, red zones, hot spots, super-spreader, etc.**)

DETOURS AND DETERMINATION

Matthew 2:1-3, 7-12 — After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star at its rising and have come to worship Him.”

3 When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

7 Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child. When you find Him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship Him.”

9 After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 Entering the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

Let’s look at that last phrase—“They returned to their own country by another route.” Because of the pandemic, many of us have had to “take a different route” in our way of living life—some people have lost jobs, some started new jobs, some are still looking for jobs. We now have to take a mask with us everywhere. Many have lost loved ones and friends during this year and are having to learn to do life differently without them. We don’t hug or shake hands as often this year. And for quite a while, we had to learn to worship by watching video. We even had to learn to do Connect Group on the internet. 2020 has thrown up many roadblocks, but think about it in this way....

Did taking a new route home change the experience of the wise men? [No, they still worshiped Christ. Their hearts were still full. They were probably over-joyed at the experience.]

How do their new route home work into God’s plan? [Because they went a different way home, they didn’t go near Herod’s palace. As a result Herod wasn’t informed about the baby King’s location. Jesus remained safe.]

Do you accept change easily?

Would be willing to change if it meant seeing God’s Kingdom increased?

How might this pandemic be working to increase the Kingdom? [First, understand that God was not the “creator” of this virus. However, we know from the Scripture that what

the devil means for the destruction of people, God can take and use for good. In some instances, families have been drawn together. Some people have changed jobs to something better for them. Churches have learned new ways to do ministry—which is not a bad thing. Understandably, it has been a tragic thing for so many to die, and so many people have been grieving during the holidays. However, we have to wonder what is God really up to that He has allowed this virus to occupy so much of our year. We need to be constantly aware of God’s greater plan and always be prepared to operate within His will and desire. We should always...]

**Be willing to go A DIFFERENT WAY
in order to preserve GOD’S DIVINE PLAN!**

Always consider that what you are going through right now may just be God’s way of getting you to the place you need to be, or a means of future preparation for His purposes.

LOOKING AHEAD

Luke 2:4-7— And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Finally in a shelter out of the weather, with the baby snuggled in their arms you would think that their world would all seem good. But peace wouldn’t last long.

Matthew 2:13-15—...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Have you ever felt that you have taken “one step forward” only to take “two steps back?”

Mary and Joseph couldn't rest for long. We know from Scripture that at eight days old, they took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised. (Luke 2:21-27) For a while all seemed as it should. But in a dream, Joseph was warned to take his family to Egypt—of all places! Jews had spent 400 years working as slaves in Egypt! It was a place that represented bondage. But an evil, wicked government was forcing them to flee for their lives, so they were on the road again!

In what ways did the troubles Mary and Joseph went through before the birth help them through what they would have to go through afterward? [They knew they could get through another long journey. Perhaps they were better prepared this time. Their troubles probably brought the two of them closer together because they had no one else to depend on. They probably had learned to trust God more through the process.]

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most optimistic) how optimistic are you about 2021?

What are your hopes for the new year?

What will you do if 2021 is no better than 2020?

How do you think 2020 has better prepared you if next year is just as difficult or worse?

Proverbs 23:18 —There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.

1 Chronicles 16:11-12 —Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced.

Proverbs 16:9 —In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Proverbs 3:5-6 —Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Isaiah 43:18-19 —[God says] Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Philippians 4:11-13 —Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in

prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

What do these verses say to you that need to take with you into the new year?

Do any one of these verses have a message that really stands out to you? Which one?

One thing we are told in the Scripture is the closer we get to the coming Christ, the more troublesome this world will get. So whether 2021 is better or not, know that God is still in control and He has a better plan that is in motion. Trust in Him and gain strength from the Holy Spirit no matter what 2021 should bring!

PRAYER TIME

- Before you pray, take time to share with the group the good things God has done for you this year. (If you have nothing else to share, thank Him for how good He has been to CPC this year.)
- Pray for those who have been affected so drastically this year.
- Ask God to help you be willing to move within His will—even when it doesn't make sense.
- Ask God to show you how you can be used this coming year to advance the Kingdom of God in the world.
- The verse that you chose a moment ago now pray back to God. Claim it's promises for the new year and rest in its message.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!