



There are many words we associate with the Christmas season: Joy, Faith, Hope, Love. But the word “Fear” isn’t usually one of them. Nevertheless, as we read the accounts of Christ’s birth in the Bible, the phrase “Do not be afraid” appears frequently. Maybe we have become too familiar with the story to recognize the key characters as human, with circumstances and emotions we can relate to. Fear is so much a part of our human experience that it should come as no surprise that even at Christmas (maybe especially at Christmas) fear is with us. This Advent Season, as we contemplate the miracle of “God With Us” may we hear Him when He says, “Fear not.”

Week Two: Fear of What People Think (*Matthew 1:18-25*)

Discussion Questions:

The following are based on the “My Application” Questions found in the bulletin this week. (Leaders, urge your group members to attend worship—or watch the sermon online—and to spend time considering and answering those questions before coming to the group. This will produce a richer discussion time.)

- 1) What are the things that stress you out about Christmas and the holidays? Do you find yourself worrying about what people think about you?
- 2) What was Joseph’s dilemma? Why did God delayed his message about the Divine origin of Mary’s pregnancy as Joseph struggled with what he was going to do?
- 3) Read Galatians 1:10. What is your observations of this verse? Compare these observations with Joseph’s situation in Matthew 1:18-25.
- 4) Is there a situation in your life where the opinion of others could distract you from the voice of God as He gives you direction?
- 5) What is God’s mission for you this Christmas? Try to be specific.

Application:

On Christmas Eve each year, thousands of people come to Hill Country to celebrate. Many are visitors, unfamiliar with our campus. Often they are open to hearing the message of God's love as they are at no other time. It is **our mission** to make them feel welcome and comfortable, like honored guests in our home (not stressed and confused, like outsiders). Accomplishing that mission will require MANY volunteer hosts/hostesses.

Can you give an hour or two this Christmas Eve to help us extend the love of Jesus to these honored guests? We need ushers, greeters, coffee and cookie servers. If you would like to volunteer at the Lakeline campus, you can sign up at <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/wrrgs>. For Brushy Creek, Crystal Falls, and Steiner Ranch, check with your campus offices.

Group Prayer:

What causes you to worry about what others are thinking of you right now? Admit that to God.

Thank God that His opinion of you is what matters, and He has accepted you.

God also has a mission for you. Ask Him to show you (or remind you about) that mission. Ask Him to help you, as you commit to that mission, not to be distracted by what people will think.

Scripture Memory:

*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.*

Matthew 1:21