

Small Group & Personal Bible Study

During this Christmas Season we invite you to read together with us a weekly devotion from the free devotional, *Christmas, The Father's Gift* by Billy Graham. (Pick up your devotional at the Welcome Center)

This Week's Devotion: "The Gift of Joy" *Christmas, The Father's Gift* by Billy Graham (pages 17-30)

Memory Verse: Luke 2:10 (The Message)

The Angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide."

Daily Bible Ready:

- Day 1: The Gift of Joy (pages 17-30)
- Day 2: John 1:4-5
- Day 3: Luke 2:1-7
- Day 4: 1 Samuel 16:1, 17;12, Micah 5:2, 4-5
- Day 5: Luke 2:8-20

Lesson:

In his devotional, Billy Graham speaks of the Inn being full, "No room for Jesus? No room for the King of kings? This is the answer that millions are giving today... Things have not really changed since that Bethlehem night two thousand years ago. God is still on the fringes of most of our lives. We fit Him in when it is convenient for us, but we become irritated when He makes demands on us. Our lives are full. There is so much to be done. But in all our busy activities are we in danger of excluding from our hearts and lives the One who made us?"

1. Why do you think we squeeze God out of our lives and choose instead to fill them with things that pass away?

We have bought into the culture we live in. We have adapted to fast pace, high reward, competitive lifestyle. We live for the purpose of keeping up with the Jones' and we don't even realize it. When we see an ad for the latest and greatest on TV, we have to have it. When we see others doing the coolest thing (even churches) we have got to do it too or we might be missing something. We spend all of our time, energy, and resources trying to make our lives full and happy. But Jesus came so that we could have life to its fullest. He came to make our joy complete. Remaining in Him is the only way we will find joy. This Christmas, I urge you to search hard for the joy that comes from an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ alone. In doing so you will find life!

2. Read the last sentence in the paragraph above (from page 20 of devotional). Do you feel in danger of excluding God from your heart and your life? What is God telling you to do in response?

Let people share and be prepared to pray on the spot for God to take over and fill them with His love.

3. Our memory verse, Luke 2:10, makes it clear that the Messiah is for everyone. The entire world needs to make room for Him. What does this message mean to you?

We have a great message to announce. A message of great joy in Christ. The message of the coming of God With Us. The message of the Messiah, our Savior and Redeemer. The message that God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. We have the message of life. "In Him was life and that life was the light to men." John 1:4. That "light shines in the darkness" John 1:5. We are chosen to continue to shine His light to a dark world. We have a duty to share that message of Jesus to everyone.

This song has penetrating lyrics about making room for Jesus in our lives and our country. If you have a recording you may want to play it or simply share the lyrics with the group.

While You Were Sleeping lyrics by Casting Crowns

Oh little town of Bethlehem
Looks like another silent night
Above your deep and dreamless sleep
A giant star lights up the sky
And while you're lying in the dark
There shines an everlasting light
For the King has left His throne
And is sleeping in a manger tonight

Oh Bethlehem, what you have missed while you were sleeping
For God became a man
And stepped into your world today
Oh Bethlehem, you will go down in history
As a city with no room for its King
While you were sleeping
While you were sleeping

Oh little town of Jerusalem
Looks like another silent night
The Father gave His only Son
The Way, the Truth, the Life had come
But there was no room for Him in the world He came to save

Jerusalem, what you have missed while you were sleeping
The Savior of the world is dying on your cross today
Jerusalem, you will go down in history
As a city with no room for its King
While you were sleeping
While you were sleeping

United States of America
Looks like another silent night
As we're sung to sleep by philosophies
That save the trees and kill the children
And while we're lying in the dark
There's a shout heard 'cross the eastern sky
For the Bridegroom has returned
And has carried His bride away in the night

America, what will we miss while we are sleeping
Will Jesus come again
And leave us slumbering where we lay
America, will we go down in history
As a nation with no room for its King
Will we be sleeping? Will we be sleeping?