Christmas at the Movies
"A Charlie Brown Christmas"
Luke 2:8-14
(December 23rd-29th, 2018)

According to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey concerning American's views on Christmas, one of the most striking changes in recent years involves the share of Americans who say they believe the birth of Jesus occurred as depicted in the Bible. Today, 66% say they believe Jesus was born to a virgin, down from 73% in 2014. Likewise, 68% of U.S. adults now say they believe that the wise men were guided by a star and brought gifts for baby Jesus, down from 75%. And there are similar declines in the shares of Americans who believe that Jesus' birth was heralded by an angel of the Lord and that Jesus was laid in a manger as an infant. Overall, 57% of Americans now believe in all four of these elements of the Christmas story, down from 65% in 2014. (Pew Research Center, December 2017)

Answer and discuss the following question with your group.

1. Which part of the Christmas story means the most to you?

Read the following excerpt out loud or watch message segment #1.
An excerpt from the StoneBridge message, "A Charlie Brown Christmas".

Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about? My guess is that some of you are still asking that question. My guess – many of you have asked the same question – because after all the Christmas parties and presents, you are heading home with more stuff than you can imagine. You wonder. You do! You wonder, "Is this what Christmas is all about?"

Christmas seems to amp things up. Expectations are way up! Family obligations are way up. If you have lost a loved one this year – the heartache is way up. If you went through a divorce – the frustrations are way up. You cannot wait for Christmas to be over. Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?

Refer to the following scriptures Luke 2:8-20, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, and answer/discuss the following questions.

2. Luke 2 tells us the greatest love story ever told – the Christmas story. After reading Luke 2:8-20, what message of hope do you find in these verses?

3. Can anyone in your group recite John 3:16 from memory? After reading John 3:16, discuss how you would respond to this statement: "I can't believe in a God that would send me to hell."

4. According to a 2015 Barna research survey many adults believe they will go to heaven as a result of their good works. Broadly speaking, this is the most common perception among Americans who have never made a commitment to Jesus—and it is also quite common among self-identified Christians. Using Ephesians 2:8-9, how would you explain the reason faith in Jesus is the "ticket" to heaven and not person's good works?

Read the following excerpt out loud or watch message segment #2.
An excerpt from the StoneBridge message, "A Charlie Brown Christmas".

Peace. We really don't know what it is, but we do know what it is like not to have it. For some of us peace looks a lot like working a lot. It is one way to not have to deal with life for a while. Peace might look like a bottle or a pill. Peace might look like a vacation. A long vacation. That someone else has paid for.

The peace that Jesus gives is way different than what the world offers. The world offers lots of different options. We try most of them. Thinking, "this is going to work this time," only to be disappointed. Do I come to a place where I enjoy my job or maybe love it? How do I move a step closer? One of the biggest obstacles to enjoying our work is our mindset. Our perspective, our attitude about what work we are doing, or work we think we should be doing, or the situation we are in currently.

Refer to Romans 6:23 and John 14:27 and answer/discuss the following questions.

5. At this holiday season, we think of gift giving. According to Romans 6:23 what is involved in the gift of Jesus?

6. According to John 14:27, Jesus through the Holy Spirit also gives us the gift of peace. How would you describe the difference between the peace the world gives and the peace that Jesus gives?

7. Starting with the Christmas story, what would you share with those wrestling with a decision to believe in Jesus, confess and turn from their sins, and accept him as Lord and Savior?

Reflection and Wrap-up

8. In response to the lesson, what do you need to thank God for at this time in response to his love of sending Jesus?

9. Who in your life needs to know the life changing message of the Christmas story and how can the group pray for this individual and you?

Pray Together as a Group

Additional Study

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about message topic, read and consider the following passages:

- Psalms 119:165
- Acts 10:43
- Philippians 4:7