

# INTER RUPTED



groupcurriculum



**weekone** : when life interrupts your plans

## CONNECT

Describe a recent event in your life that was unplanned. What was your response to this 'unplanned' event?

When you think of your career and life plans when you were younger, have they turned out like you expected or planned? Explain.

## GROW

Whether you were raised in church or not, you've probably heard the story of Jesus' birth many, many times. But have you ever thought about how much the plans and routines of humanity were drastically interrupted that night in an obscure manger in Bethlehem. From the perspective of God, the birth of Jesus had been planned before the foundation of the world...and in fact, every event that occurred before Christ's physical birth in some way led up to His entrance into the world stage. Yet, Christ's coming could not have been a larger surprise to His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph. This week let's examine how much Mary and Joseph's life plans were changed as a result of Jesus' birth.

**Read Luke 1:26-30...** What does Gabriel say to Mary to indicate why she was the one chosen for this task of giving birth to Jesus? What is noteworthy about these statements regarding God? Regarding Mary?

What is indicated in verse 29 about Mary's maturity given her initial response to the angel's message?

Matthew's gospel includes more about Joseph's experience.

**Read Matthew 1:18-25...** How must Joseph have felt upon finding out that Mary was with child before their marriage?

After finding out Mary was pregnant, Joseph had several options. By marrying her, Joseph would send the message to others that he was the father of this illegitimate child. By publicly separating from her, she and her child would be shunned by the community and her family. Legally he could have had her stoned for being unfaithful, as it appeared she had been. Note that the angel did not appear to Joseph until after he'd already learned of Mary's pregnancy.

What does his response reveal about the nature of Joseph's character (v.19)?

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What were the ramifications of the angel's announcement on Joseph's plans—immediately, in the next year, in the next five years? (Consider socially, vocationally, religiously)

Do you think Joseph “counted the cost” before obeying (v.24)?

Can you think of a time you sensed God calling you to do something, but you counted the cost before responding? What did you end up doing?

## SURRENDER

As we've seen, both Mary and Joseph took the risk and were willing to give up this security for the sake of being obedient to God. Most of us are fairly good at making long-term plans for our lives, which provides a sense of personal security. However, God's call rarely includes such perceived security.

In what areas do you sense God may be interrupting your plans?

While an angel may not have appeared to you in a dream, how is God speaking to you? What do you need to do to help hear Him more clearly?

When God interrupts our plans, we're given the opportunity to act. How is God calling you to respond right now?



## CONNECT

Talk about the sketch of the order and routine of your ordinary work day. Do you enjoy the routine in your life? Why?

Describe the last time one of your ordinary days was interrupted. Note your reaction/attitude toward this interruption. Was this 'interruption' an event you perceive to have been orchestrated by God?

## GROW

**Read Luke 2:8-14...** Why do you think it was significant that the angel revealed this good news to the shepherds first?

What does this reveal about the character and workings of God?

What is significant about the shepherd's initial reaction to the angel's appearance?

With such a supernatural message and messenger, discuss what the shepherds might have been thinking that ordinary evening in the fields, specifically about how God viewed them.

Although this message was extraordinary (as well as how they received the message), what was God subtly telling the first shepherds the news of the Messiah's long awaited arrival? What seems to have been the attitude of the shepherds as they received the message?

**Read Luke 2:15-20...** After receiving the message about the birth of the Christ child, what was the shepherd's response to one another? What did they do after hearing this message of good news?

According to the message, what was the potential risk for the shepherds in their responding the angel's message?

When the shepherds arrived at the manger scene, what two actions did they take? How did those who heard the shepherd's story respond?

How did the shepherds return changed from their 'interruption'?

## SURRENDER

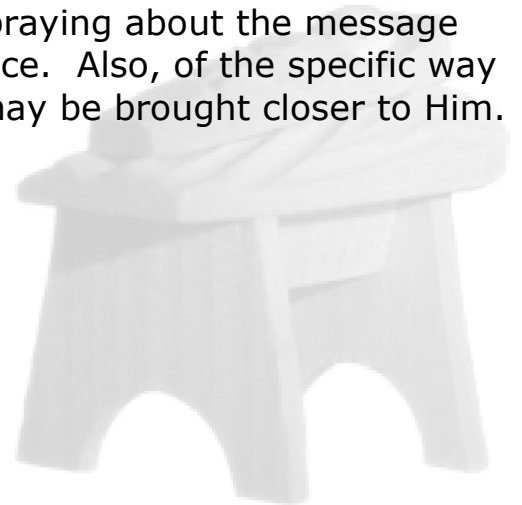
Of all the characters in the birth narrative of Jesus, people most often identify themselves with the shepherds in the field. Their low position in society, and the ordinary nature of their routine life gives hope to us all that God desires to involve us in the work of making His Son known to the world. But it was important for the shepherds to not exclude themselves from being involved in God's work, to take the risk of investigating the message, and finally to share their story with others. With the shepherds story in mind, contemplate your availability to God's interruptions in your ordinary day.

As you evaluate your daily routine, how available are you to the 'interruptions' of God? Are you so busy that you don't even recognize when He is trying to get your attention?

Does your ordinary day reflect your desire to have God bless your agenda, or does it reflect your willingness to live the day according to God's purposes? Are you taking the necessary risk to investigate more closely the interruption God has brought what God is revealing to you about Himself or how He wants you to relate to Him?

To what extent do you share with others (friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers) when Jesus interrupts the routine of your daily life, even in a small way? To what extent do you share with these same people the *life-changing* interruption Jesus caused in your life when you accepted Him as your Lord & Savior? With whom does God desire you to share your story?

\*\* Conclude your time together reflecting on and praying about the message God has given to us all of His Son's love and sacrifice. Also, of the specific way in which God has 'interrupted' our life so that we may be brought closer to Him. Consider *sharing your story* with the group.



## CONNECT

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "All people are on a spiritual journey. Some just don't know it yet."

Saint Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God." What do you think Saint Augustine means by this? How would you describe your current state of rest in God?

## GROW

**Read Luke 1:5-25...** What do you know about Zechariah and Elizabeth from this passage?

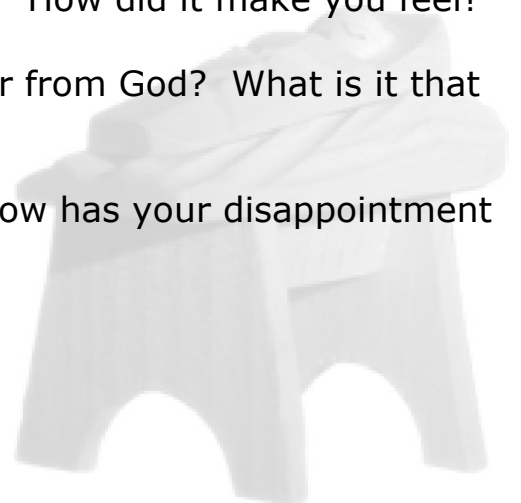
Imagine yourself in Zechariah's place. You and your wife have wanted a child for decades. Now, in your old age, God is going to bless you with a son. Your son will also be a blessing to others as a prophet preparing the people for the coming of the long awaited Messiah. How would all this make you feel? Other than a miracle of God, is there anything that would keep you from shouting this news from the rooftops?

Zechariah was interrupted in a moment of worship with a life changing message from God. How would you describe his reaction to this interruption?

Has God ever interrupted you in a time of worship? How did it make you feel?

Are you too preoccupied in times of worship to hear from God? What is it that preoccupies you?

What do you do when you face disappointment? How has your disappointment effected your relationship with God?



*weekthree : when god interrupts your spiritual journey*

**Read Isaiah 55:6-9...** In what way are these words a comfort to you? In what way are they a concern?

When have you prayed earnestly for something? How did God answer your prayers?

## **SURRENDER**

How would you describe your degree of trust in God? What are you trusting Him with? What are you holding back?

Take a few moments in private to consider areas of your life that need to be surrendered to God.

