

Teen Devotion

Year C - Advent 4

When the LORD Comes Near



One truth shared: This is the way of our God, to exalt the lowly, to elevate the small. Little Bethlehem was insignificant in the world, but not in the eyes of God. So also, for us.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

Micah 5:2

Small but Significant

Have you ever been let down by the hype?

Maybe, a friend told you about this great new series coming out on the Netflix. And so, you waited for months. You marked the premiere on your calendar and waited in line to see it. Then you watched the trailer. “Meh. That was okay.” You grab the latest and greatest iPhone. “Meh. It’s just a slightly different version of the old phone.” All the hype leads to a letdown, because it isn’t all it was talked up to be.

When it comes to promised birth of a coming Messiah, there had been a lot of talk for a long time. All through the Old Testament, he was the One to crush the serpent’s head. He was the One to bring rescue for everyone and entrance into heaven. The prophets hyped Jesus over thousands of years.

But when Jesus finally arrived, it might have felt a little bit “meh.” He was born in little Bethlehem. Yes, it was the hometown of the ancient, great King David. But it was not the capital city; it was not impressive, and, in those days, it was a dusty, insignificant sheep town. There is a reason we sing, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

When people look at Jesus and make snap judgments about him, he may appear like a normal kid whose dad was just a carpenter, just a regular guy. People didn’t look at Jesus and see anything special. And when Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of all the hype, they laughed him. He was so far from their expectation that many wouldn’t believe that he was the One.

But he was.

That’s what Micah wants us to see in Bethlehem, this small town. He wants us to see that God lies in that manger there. He wants us to see that God, the Savior, has been born of Mary. Jesus measured up to all the hype and more; he surpassed it! He is now what he has always been—the Son of God. He remains now what he was then—the Son of Man, born to save us all.

Don’t miss this when you celebrate Christmas this week. Jesus is all he is hyped to be.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, sometimes I miss how big a deal you really are. Sometimes I forget how big a deal your birth really is. Your birth means that God has come to save me and to save the world. Help me to see what a big deal this really is. Amen.

Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

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Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- Have you ever been let down by the hype of a new series, a new product, a vacation, a Christmas present, etc.? Without embarrassing anyone, share a story of what let you down and why you were disappointed in it?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- What do you think people expected when it came to the person of the Messiah?
- Agree or disagree: Many people were disappointed by Jesus when he finally came. He didn't measure up to the hype.

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning or a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Consider these sections and discuss why the coming of Jesus was so unexpected: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 2:1-7; Isaiah 53:3-5.
- Do you ever feel let down by Jesus? That following him isn't all that it is cracked up to be? Explain.
- Despite his appearance, why does Jesus match the hype and more? Colossians 1:19-20; John 1:1-3.
- What impact does this truth—that Jesus is true God—have on your day-to-day life and on your eternity?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps, circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

- Sometimes we, ourselves, feel insignificant and small in the eyes of the world. Sometimes what we do in our lives also feels like a small thing. How does our BIG Savior change the way we see ourselves and the things we do in the world?
- How does our new identity in our true God/man Savior, change the way we experience and enjoy the things in this life—even when they don't live up to the hype?

Note: We will not write facilitators guides for 12/26/21 and 1/2/22. We'll pick them up again with a new Epiphany series on 1/9/22. God's blessings on your Christmas celebrations.