

durajs

December 2011

Life FOCUS Parent Newsletter

This Month in Bible Study: God's Greatest Gift

Why This Study?

Most students look forward to Christmas as a special time of the year: a break from school, parties, and of course, the gifts. Unfortunately, not all of them recognize the essential message of Christmas: Jesus, God's Son, coming into the world. More and more people are convinced that Christmas should be a secular observance with simply an emphasis on gifts, family, peace, and goodwill. In the midst of these false messages and the reduction of Christmas to just a cultural celebration, students need to see and remember the true meaning and the message of God's greatest gift.

Students will be challenged to make their faith KNOWN. *Influence* is a category under the umbrella of KNOWN. This study progresses toward the last session, which leads students to be an influence in the lives of others regarding the true meaning of Christmas. As they recognize the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, responding to Him with trust and worship, they can then lead others to see the uniqueness of Christ, encouraging them to respond to Jesus with the same trust and worship. (For more information on the strategy to make their faith known, see the Student Strategy at <http://www.lifeway.com/studentstrategy/>.)

What parents can do:

- Use the suggestions in this newsletter to engage your teenager in discussions about the true meaning of Christmas.
- **Christmas gift idea:** Consider purchasing *ec: essential magazine* for your son or daughter. The magazine includes articles and information on teens' daily lives and spiritual concepts, struggles, and truths. Includes devotions for every day of the month that support the *Life FOCUS* student curriculum.

Networking resources designed for parents and/or teachers:

- For a social network to help parents keep it all together, visit <http://parent2parent.ning.com>.
- Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lifefocus.
- Do you twitter? Check us out at <http://twitter.com/lifefocus>.
- Find parenting encouragement and helps at <http://livingwithteens.com/>.
- Sign up for a semi-weekly family e-devotional from LifeWay Student Ministry at <http://www.lifeway.com/heartconnex>.

Connect with Your Teenager

Whether they are afraid of being labeled the campus "Bible Geek" or scared to end a sinful relationship, students deal with fear every day. Their fears are real, but what about their faith? How real is it?

The key to your teenager's fight against fears, or any other spiritual hindrance, will be a strong relationship with God. Research suggests that the importance teens place on their relationship with God may be waning. In a *USA Today* article*, Barna president David Kinnaman said, "Talking to God may be losing out to Facebook."

To help your son or daughter understand the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with God, regularly share what you are doing to learn more about God and what He expects of you. Hold your teenager accountable as well.

(*Kathy Lynn Grossman and Stephanie Steinberg, "Forget pizza parties," teens tell churches," *USA Today* [online], 11 August 2010 [cited 27 May 2011]. Available from the Internet: www.usatoday.com.)

Family Bible Connection

Sunday School affirms the home as the center of biblical guidance. Family Bible Connection is a strategy for you, as a parent, to discuss with your teenager—and the whole family—the biblical truths and principles discovered in their small group Bible study.

The class your teenager participates in uses a Bible study curriculum called Life FOCUS. You may participate in an adult Bible study that uses one of the adult counterparts in Bible Studies for Life (Life Truths, Life Values, Life Ventures, Life Lessons, or Life Words). Because you are studying the same passage, you and your teenager can both contribute to a family conversation about how God's Word applies to your lives as individuals and as a family.

This Month in Bible Study: God's Greatest Gift

This study will help students discover the life-changing significance of Christmas and will challenge them to carry the message of Christmas to the world.

December 4: Recognize God's Gift – John 1:1-4,10-18

The Question: *What makes Jesus unique?*

This session points out that Jesus is both completely man and completely God, and He makes it possible for us to become children of God. Students will be challenged to place their trust in Christ to make them children of God.

Ask: **When you look at a lot of other religions, they don't believe that Jesus is truly God. Why do you think it matters?** Check out www.4truth.net (a North American Mission Board Web site) for information about different faiths and worldviews. The information there will help your family communicate the truths about Jesus to members of those religions.

December 11: Strengthened by God's Gift – Matthew 1:18-20,24-25; Luke 1:28-31,34-38

The Question: *How can I move forward when I am afraid?*

This study helps students discover that trust in God will help them overcome their fears. They'll be challenged to obey God despite fears and questions they may have.

Discuss with your son or daughter things that teenagers fear. They may suggest things like being alone, heights, public speaking, bullying, divorce, failure, or the future. Ask your teenager what they fear the most. Encourage family members to search the Scriptures to find verses that relate to God's help in confronting fear. Lead your family in prayer asking God to help them trust Him to overcome their fears.

December 18: Respond to God's Gift – Matthew 2:1-12,16

The Question: *What's involved in worship?*

The session focuses on the fact that worship is a concerted effort to honor God by giving Him our best. Students will be encouraged to engage in worship as a response to Jesus Christ.

Ask:

- **What is your favorite Christmas memory? It may be something silly or something very special.**
- **How would you fill in this blank for our family: I wish we were more/less _____ this year?**
- **What are some ways we can bless someone else this Christmas? Consider special gifts that can be made or acts of service that can be performed as a gift for Christmas.**
- **How does giving to others demonstrate worship of God?**

December 25: Share God's Gift – Luke 2:8-20

The Question: *What can I do with the good news of Christmas?*

This study points out that we can share what we've personally discovered about the good news of Christ. Students will be challenged to identify an opportunity when they can share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Ask: **Put yourself in the shoes of the shepherds. Would you have gone to Bethlehem to see Jesus for yourself, or would you have stayed with the sheep? Why?** Point out that once the shepherds checked out the good news, they shared it with others. As a family, list different ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Practice sharing the plan of salvation with each other as a way to prepare to share it with others.