



Group Leader Guide

“Hand to Hand, Face to Face” - Peace On Earth, Good Will Towards Men

December 6, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Message Summary

Because of God’s good will towards us, He offers us peace through Jesus. However, as humans, we don’t always receive that amazing gift well. Lead Pastor **Jim Burgen** kicks off this year’s Christmas series, “**Peace On Earth, Good Will Towards Men**,” looking at how we can better receive that gift and extend that gift of peace to others.

// Biblical Background: Luke 2:9-14

Angels: Angels are often misunderstood creatures. We imagine them being more or less human, but with wings, or small Cupid-like babies with wings floating on clouds, or even what someone becomes when they die. Most of this is due to artistic representations of them throughout the years. However, the Bible’s description of angels is quite different. Let’s take a look at some of the characteristics of angels that Scripture reveals to us.

1. God created angels. They have not always existed, and they are not on a level with Him. Like us, they are a part of the universe that God has created (**Nehemiah 9:6**).
2. They have a rank and order. Angels comprise God’s spiritual army, and that army is led by the “archangel” Michael (**Revelation 12:7**).
3. They aren’t all good (**Revelation 12:7-8**). Satan was actually an angel before his rebellion (**Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19**).
4. Only 2 are named: Michael (**Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7**) and Gabriel

(**Daniel 8:16, 9:21; Luke 1:19**). They are not mentioned to have had wings. Satan is also named, obviously, but just as “Satan.” The idea that his name was “Lucifer” before is based on a misinterpretation of **Isaiah 14:12**. “Lucifer” was the Latin name of the planet Venus, which was referred to in Isaiah as “the morning star,” a title of the angel who became Satan.

4. There are other kinds of heavenly beings besides angels, namely the cherubim (**Genesis 3:24, Ezekiel 10**) and seraphim (**Isaiah 6:2-7**. These are sometimes lumped into the category of “angels.” Both cherubim and seraphim do have wings, but they don’t seem to appear human-like.
5. There are a lot of angels. The Bible doesn’t give an exact amount, but it does allude to there being a great amount (**Luke 2:13; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11**).
6. There is no Scriptural basis for each person having their own personal guardian angel. However, one of the purposes of angels is to protect us (**Psalms 91:11-12**).
7. Other purposes for angels include glorifying God, delivering His messages, and carrying out God’s plans.
8. Angels are not created in the image of God. Humans have that sole designation. Therefore, we will one day rule over angels (**1 Corinthians 6:3**).
9. Angels are powerful and sometimes terrifying (**Matthew 28:2-4**).

“An Angel of the Lord”: The angel mentioned in **Luke 2:9** that first appeared to the shepherds is referred to as “an angel of the Lord.” This is similar to, but probably not the same as, “The Angel of the Lord.” “The Angel of the Lord” is a term used especially in the Old Testament for an angel that is essentially indecipherable from God Himself (Genesis 22:12, 31:11-13; Exodus 3:2-6). Think of Him as a physical manifestation of God in “angelic” form. However, sometimes he is distinguishable from God (2 Samuel 24:16). The angel in Luke 2 may be a similar manifestation of God, as the verse also states that “the glory of the Lord shone around them.” However, the designation of “an” instead of “the” could also mean that he is simply an angel *sent* from the Lord.

“Heavenly Host”: This term is a way of referring to all the angels in heaven. The Greek term literally means “an army.” The Hebrew term translated “host” in the Old Testament also has strong military connotations. Therefore, the angels that appeared to the shepherds were literally an army announcing the coming of Jesus and praising God.

// References

Baker, Warren, and Gene Carpenter, editors. *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*. AMG Publishing, 2003.

Grudem, W. A. (2000). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine*. Zondervan Pub. House.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. AMG Publishers, 1994.



Group Discussion Questions

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// Bible References

Luke 2:13-14; John 1:9-13; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:9; Acts 1:8;

// Message Screenshots

- The God who is the Most Glorious, Most High God has found favor with you.
- He is leaving Heaven, coming down in your direction and is “willing” good (good will) in your direction. His name is Jesus.
- Good God is keeping His promise to leave His Most High position to come down in our direction so that we might receive and experience the gift of a life described with words like “peace, whole, lacking nothing.”
- They “made known abroad everything that they knew about Jesus.”
- Seeing Jesus changed them and I think it would be safe to say that their lives were never the same.
- Reasons we might refuse a gift that is offered to us:
 - Our hands are full so we can’t or won’t accept the gift.
 - We don’t trust the one giving the gift.
 - We don’t feel worthy to receive the gift.
- We are not all God’s children.
- We are ALL God’s image bearers.
- The best way to glorify God in the Highest is to bring peace where peace is absent.
- Peace/Shalom: whole, lacking nothing, complete

// Community Questions

1. How was everyone’s Thanksgiving?

// Core Questions

1. Have you ever given a gift to someone and they received it poorly? Explain.
2. How are you at receiving gifts?
3. How do you try to “repay” the gift-giver when you receive a nice gift? (For example: get them an equal or greater gift, refuse the gift, express your unworthiness of the gift, etc.)
4. Knowing that in order to pick up the gift of grace and peace through Jesus, you may have to let go of some things in your life, what is it that you find hard to let go of?
5. Are you ever afraid that there is some sort of catch to receiving the gift of grace and peace through Jesus? What might that “catch” be?



6. Do your past experiences with church and/or Christians affect your ability to trust that God's gift is genuine? If so, explain.
7. Do you ever feel like you are unworthy of the gift God is offering? Why?
8. Does God's gift of unconditional grace, love, and peace offend your human sense of pride? Why?
9. Where in your life is there no peace? (Examples: family, marriage, parenting, a specific relationship, etc.)
10. How can you begin to bring peace to that area of your life during this season?



Student Group Discussion Questions
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// Parent Resource

Talk with you student about which of our partners you like and why you feel like you should give to them. Help you student come up with different ways they can give to what the church is doing this Christmas.

// Discussion Questions

1. 1. What is the lamest gift you have ever received?
What is the best gift you have ever received?
2. What is your strategy behind gift giving?
3. How does it make you feel when you are given a great gift?
After getting a good gift, do you try to give a better gift next time?
4. Read **Luke 2:8-20** twice.
Who are the characters in this passage? Help them realize that the shepherds and the angles are the main characters.
What is happening in this passage?
What was the gift the shepherds had to give and why do you think they gave it?
5. How has Jesus coming been a good gift to you?
6. How can you give to others this Christmas?

// Pray

Pray that God will help you see the places that you can give out of what you have received.

// Leader Feedback

Please let us know how these questions went over in your group. Email your feedback to caleb_flowers@flatironschurch.com