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**Christmas at the Movies—Christmas Vacation**  
**Matthew 1:18-24; Proverbs 3:5-6**

**December 3, 2023**

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**DAILY DEVOTION**

Find a rhythm in God's word this week! Follow this 4 day plan on your own or with your group!

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/19580-when-disappointment-strikes>

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**INSPIRATION**

In the movie *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, Clark Griswold has high hopes for quality family time during the Christmas holiday. That is, until family members, and more family members (and their pets), arrive for a visit. Family bickering ensues, the Christmas tree burns down during a chaotic family dinner, Clark's boss is kidnaped by a Griswold family member and held in the Clark's home, and the SWAT team arrives. Despite Clark's best efforts, he and his family experience a very messy Christmas with unrealized expectations. The movie may be an exaggeration, but does any of this resemble Christmas holidays that did not go your way?

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**ICE BREAKER**

1. What is your favorite Christmas movie. Why?
  2. Explain some unrealized expectations you have experienced during Christmas holidays, not only in terms of gifts but also in relationships with family.
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**DEEP DIVE**

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

"Disappointment sets in when our expectations are not met. We are disappointed with our salaries. We get disappointed with our kids. This is not what I had planned out for my life.

Ever been disappointed? In life, in your relationships, with God?

Joseph was. Mary was too.

And then they decided, in spite of all the confusion, disappointment and rejection from their family, they decide to trust God."

**Read Matthew 1:18-24 and then answer the following questions:**



3. Explain how the hopeful expectations of Joseph and Mary were not realized in terms of:
  - Their initial relationship with each other
  - Their relationships with family and friends
  - Their plans for a joy-filled and public wedding
4. Compare and contrast Joseph's initial decision concerning Mary in verse 19 with his ultimate decision in verses 25-25. Explain how his choice to take Mary as his wife demonstrated his faith and trust in God.
5. Based on verse 19, what challenge did Joseph and Mary face by deciding to stay faithful to each other and to God?
6. What important plan, set forth in verses 22-23, is being carried out in the lives of Joseph and Mary?

**Read this out loud**

An excerpt from the message this week:

"Have you ever been a little disappointed with life, with God? The hopes and dreams just didn't work out. The Christmas that you were hoping for quickly turned into a disaster.

Perhaps this year can be different. Perhaps we look inside a little bit today. Ask yourself, "What is really important to me this year, why am I so obsessed with making things just right, why do I continue to set myself up for failure?"

How do we bridge the gap between expectations and reality?

Faith.

Faith in God's promises, His love for you, his presence in your life."

**Read Proverbs 3:5-6 and then answer the following questions:**

7. In *Christmas Vacation*, the character Clark Griswold tried to implement his own idea of Christmas, defiantly declaring "we're gonna have the hap-hap-happiest Christmas," only for his efforts to fail. Based on Proverbs 3:5-6, what is more important, seeing your own plans through, or trusting in God despite disappointments? Explain why.

**Additional Study**

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

- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Philippians 4:6-7
- Psalm 42:11



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## **NEXT STEPS**

8. Joseph and Mary faced extreme pressure from the public (Matt. 1:19) to compromise their faith. List some ways in which Christ followers today are pressured to compromise their faith. Which was ultimately better for Joseph and Mary, their initial choice to abandon their plans or their ultimate choice to remain faithful to each other and to God?
9. Explain how Proverbs 3:5-6 is the antidote to our disappointments and unrealized expectations.

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## **PRAYER**

1. Lord, I often get lost in my own plans, especially during holidays, instead of your plans for me. Help me to realize your plans are better, and to follow them.
2. If you need a personal, or deeper, relationship with God, talk to him.

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## **SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Establish a regular rhythm of serving together! Below are some service opportunities.

- BENSON – Local Mission Partner is ABIDE. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
- MILLARD - Local Mission Partner is Heartland Hope. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
- FREMONT - Local Mission Partner is LifeHouse. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
- OMAHA - Local Mission Partner is Open Door Mission. Contact Campus Pastor for more information.
- Or get to know your community! Seek out service opportunities in your area.