**Grace Group Study Guide**

**December 6**

**For Unto Us – Pt. 1**

I remember making the point this past Sunday that it is so very easy for us to miss the mark every year when Christmas comes around. We spend a tremendous amount of time, energy, effort, finances, etc. on making sure that everything is just perfect that we find ourselves a week or two later looking back not even considering what we’d done all that for. Even the people who are zealously campaigning to “keep Christ in Christmas” can become so wrapped up in the cause that they miss the Reason.

There is a word that keeps coming back to me over and over and over – **intentionality**. The Joel Stamper dictionary defines that word as the “act of being intentional (brilliant, I know).” Intentional means doing something on purpose or deliberately. To some of you, this is second nature. Everything you do is meticulously thought through and your actions are oozing with purpose. Then there is the rest of us who have a very broad, general idea of what needs to be accomplished and we spend our time usually taking the long way around and while we eventually get things accomplished, there is no exact science or efficiency to it.

Now that you have thought through that and classified yourself either as a genius or a blind squirrel that sometimes finds a nut, let me make a connection that I think will benefit us all. As I reflect on the Advent season I see a lot of people being intentional about a lot of things, but oftentimes Jesus isn’t one of those things.

Something that struck me in my studies this week – the word “us” in Isaiah 9:6 and the word “you” in Luke 2:10-12. Those are very personal words, aren’t they? Both words are personal and specific and both contexts have to do with receiving something. Maybe one of the reasons we aren’t intentional about our treatment of the Greatest Gift of all is because we fail to think of ourselves as specific recipients.

Imagine the awe and wonder of the shepherds when the angel appeared and said “there has been born **for you** a Savior.” With an announcement that personal, you have to act upon it. There is a tremendous difference in an announcement that “a Savior has been born,” and “there has been born **for you** a Savior.” One would have certainly been a reason for joy but the other called for joy and response – “let’s go see OUR Savior.” Wow, talk about a reason for JOY!

How many of you, if I were to shoot you a text and say “behold, I have a thousand bucks FOR YOU,” would respond and say something to the extent of “hey, that’s super – I’ll get that from you next time I see you.” What if I extended the offer to your friends and family? All of the sudden your priorities would change and you would start focusing in on getting back up with me and telling them to get a hold of me because I have something for them as well.

Folks, we have something infinitely better than money that has been given to ME, to YOU, to YOUR FRIENDS, to YOUR FAMILY, to EVERYONE. But how many of us are going to burn up the phone lines this Christmas season sharing the Good News of Great Joy?

Now, I’m not suggesting that you spend the next 3 weeks badgering people. I AM suggesting that we take that little word “intentionality” and pair it up with our reason for celebrating this season. Look for avenues to share, look for opportunities to serve, be sensitive to the needs of others and if the Lord prompts you to be generous, be wildly generous.

**Anyone have stories to tell about the thrill of giving?**

As individuals we all have something to give (the 3 T’s) – we have **time**, we have **talents** and we have **treasure** (finances or material things). Treasure has certainly taken the spotlight this time of year but giving your time and your talents to others are equally (if not more) beneficial. **Consider some ways that you could be intentional with your T’s this Season and allow those opportunities to be an avenue for sharing the Greatest Gift of all and especially to let people know that the gift was for them!**

My heart was so full of joy it almost burst on Friday night and Saturday morning. Seeing so many of you come out and serve with the breakfast was a tremendous blessing. And many of you that participated with that got to talk to folks for the first time and many of the folks that you talked with weren’t “church” folks. So if you step back and think about things, in about 5 hours’ time we promoted the ministry of the pregnancy center, we raised $2100 for the center, we served about a hundred and ten folks, we had conversation with them, and if the Lord allows, maybe one day we’ll meet up with them again and have a chance to deepen those conversations. You might have left saying “Well, all I did was move chairs and tables…” and to that I would say, “Nope – you did all these other things too!”

Those sorts of things happen when we do things on purpose. And it’s one of the reasons we encourage our Grace Groups to do service projects – we are called to serve! That is the pattern that Jesus established for us during His earthly ministry (Matthew 20:28, Phil. 2:3-8)

I want to challenge you this Christmas season to be intentional. When you think about the Greatest Gift ever given, Jesus, and then consider the recipient of that gift (yourself) then it should move you to desire to share that gift with others. So take that truth and ask the Lord to give you chances to use your t’s as an avenue to share that Gift.

Memory Verse – Luke 2:11 –**“for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”**