

It Isn't What I Pictured

Conversation Starters

There are lots of characters, real and imagined, that are part of our Christmas celebrations. Which imagined character do you identify with most? Why?

- Buddy the Elf
- Clark Griswold from *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*
- Scott Calvin from *The Santa Clause*
- The Grinch
- Ralphie from *A Christmas Story*

Christmas is about a week away — what are your Christmas plans? Are you already feeling stressed about things not going according to plan?

Available: The past two weeks have been a special time for our church — many people gave gifts, and we came together to choose words about what we're believing God will do in 2020. If your group has not had a chance to talk about their words, use this time to share what word everyone chose and why they chose it. (Encourage people to go to <https://myword.elevationchurch.org/> to enter their word into the word generator download an image with their word so they can put it on their phone, computer, or social media accounts.)

Review

Ask eGroup members to share their favorite points from the sermon, what spoke to them, a phrase or moment from the sermon they related to the most, or questions they have. If members have a hard time recalling the sermon, talk through your notes and share your favorite points.

Make It Personal

1. What's your first response when something unexpected happens to your plan?
2. Read the Christmas story together as a group from Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 2:1-20. What

unplanned situation(s) was Mary facing? Joseph?

3. During the sermon Pastor Steven asked the question, "Who had it harder?" Who do you think — Mary or Joseph? Why?
4. Read Hebrews 11:3 from the King James Version. We can frame our life through faith (what God says) or fear (what we see). Describe the characteristics of someone who views life with a frame of faith. Describe the characteristics of someone who views life with a frame of fear. *(Leader Tip: Some of your members are more visual and would benefit from seeing the responses written down. If possible, try to display these two lists as people give answers.)*
5. What areas of your life do you tend to trust the picture God has planned? (use a frame of faith)? What areas do you tend to use your picture of the situation (the frame of fear)?
6. Joseph initially responded with fear by making plans to divorce Mary. Is there a situation you're facing right now where you're responding like Joseph, with fear?
7. What practical steps could you take to live with a frame of faith and trust in God's purpose for your life instead of a plan?
8. How did your perspective of the Christmas story — especially Joseph's response after hearing from the angel — change after hearing the sermon? How did it challenge you to frame your world by God's Word and His purpose?

Act On It

Close your group with a frame of faith by spending time in prayer. Ask eGroup members to share any prayer requests they have, and use the prayer prompts below to get you started:

- Praise God for why He sent Jesus to earth as a baby.
- Pray for a fresh perspective of how we frame ourselves and our situations; that we would see ourselves as God sees us, not imperfect or missing anything, but fully and wholly complete.
- Pray for the people coming to church this Christmas who do not know Jesus.
- Pray for Pastor Steven and Holly, volunteers, and staff to present the gospel and create a great experience for all guests.
- Thank God in advance for the people who will begin a relationship with Jesus this Christmas.
- Pray for boldness when inviting people to church.