

## WORSHIP

### **Suggested Worship Songs:**

Have Yourself a Blessed Little Christmas, Joy to the World, O Come All Ye Faithful

## WELCOME

**About Christmas.** Fill in the blank based on your personal experience: Christmas is \_\_\_\_\_

## WORD

### **Exodus 40:34–35**

<sup>34</sup> Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Everything about the Tabernacle points to Jesus. The Tabernacle is about pursuing the presence of God. Christmas is about the presence of God in Jesus. Therefore the Tabernacle and Christmas are connected, both are about honoring the presence of God. How do we honor the presence of God?

### ***The Tabernacle Completed***

Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and all craftsmen with God-given abilities and with the heart called to work, to build the Tabernacle according to the design details of God's command (Exodus 36:2). Other Israelites also donated their valuables to construct the Tabernacle (vv.3–5). All were eager to complete it because they understood that they will be able to honor the presence of the Lord in this sanctuary. Moses faithfully followed God's command and he completed the construction of the Tabernacle in time (Exodus 40:16–17; 33).

Are we also like the Israelites who will voluntarily contribute to the works of God with our talents, treasures and time and eager to honor the presence of the Lord?

### ***The Glorious Presence of the Lord***

When all the elements of the Tabernacle and the people were consecrated to the Lord, the cloud descended from heaven and covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle (vv.34–35) with His presence (Shekinah). The people literally witnessed the splendor and radiance of the holy God with the cloud as the visible manifestation of the glorious presence of God that will guide them in their journey to the Promised Land.

The Israelites stayed and camped when the cloud settled. When the cloud lifted and moved, the Israelites also moved to follow the direction of the cloud. Throughout their journey, the Israelites could see the presence of the Lord over the tent and they followed its lead (vv.36–38).

God has a wonderful plan for us, far better than what we could conceive. His desire is for us to follow His lead, but are we following Him or are we moving ahead in our relationships, our career, or in our decisions? Is God leading your life, or are you leading and expecting God to follow and bless you?

Moses understood that the presence of God was critical in their journey. He interceded for the people of Israel and sought the Lord to go with them, or he would rather not leave (Exodus 33:14–16). Moses knew that God's presence in their journey would make the distinguishing mark of God's people from everyone else on earth.

### ***The Glory of God***

In the time of Eli the priest, the Ark of the Covenant has been taken out. The glory of God has departed from Israel. Tragedy happened to the family of Eli because of his two corrupt sons (1 Samuel 4:17-18, 20-22).

This reminds us that God is holy. His holiness cannot fellowship with sin. But thankfully, God is also merciful. From David's vision, his son Solomon built the temple of God. He brought the Ark from the City of David into the temple and then the cloud filled the temple with God's glory (1 Kings 8:10-11). But soon after King Solomon turned away from God, the glory of God once again departed from Israel (Ezekiel 10:18). The people of Israel and the succeeding kings and generations turned away

## WORD (cont'd)

from God. The temple and the City of David soon burned down.

### ***The Glory of God in Christ***

The glory of God returned to mankind on Christmas, when His Son Jesus, Immanuel, translated “God with us”, was born (Matthew 1:21–22). Christmas is all about Jesus; He dwelt or “tabernacled” among us and we beheld His glory (John 1:4).

When the angel of the Lord told Mary that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her and she will bear the holy Child (Luke 1:35), it was the same as the Old Testament “shekinah” in the Tabernacle. Jesus is the radiance of the Father’s glory and the exact representation of God the Father (Hebrews 1:3, Matthew 17:1–5).

Why did Jesus come that first Christmas? The gifts of the magi will tell us. The gold means royalty; Jesus is the King of kings. The frankincense is used

for worship, it means divinity. And the myrrh is an aromatic resin used as a deodorizer to anoint dead bodies; Jesus came to be the sacrifice for our sins for all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), We cannot enter in His glorious presence, in fact we deserve a penalty of eternal death (2 Thessalonians 1:8–9); the wages of our sin is death, but Jesus came to give us the free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). The best part of heaven is not the streets of gold or the pearly gates but the presence of God forever.

If you have surrendered your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the glorious presence of God lives in you. But if you are not sure about the indwelling presence of God in your life, know that Jesus desires you to experience His glorious presence. Come to Jesus and surrender your life to Him and receive Him as your Lord and Savior today.

### ***Discussion Questions:***

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

- 1. The Glory of God.** What was the glorious manifestation of God’s holy presence found in Exodus 40:34-35?
- 2. Journey with God.** In your life journey, what reassures you of God’s presence? Who is leading your life?
- 3. This Christmas.** What haven’t you surrendered to Jesus yet? What keeps you from doing so? Share what you intend to do differently to dwell in the presence of God starting today.

## WORKS

### ***Honor the Presence of God***

If you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, therefore honor God with your body. Share with your accountability partner your action plan starting this week to honor the presence of God in at least three ways:

- 1. Holiness** (1 John 4:4) – Personal holiness by resisting temptation and saying no to sin. This is not perfection but increasing Christ-likeness.
- 2. Humility** (Micah 6:8) – You are walking humbly with God when you are humble toward people: listen and put others first.
- 3. Harmony** (1 John 4:12) – The evidence of the glorious presence of God in your life is if you love others. Ask the people in your life if you are more loving now than before.

### ***Weekly Prayer Points***

#### **I. Thanksgiving**

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

#### **II. Country and the World**

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

#### **III. Church**

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

#### **IV. CCF Facilities**

- New Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

#### **V. Personal Concerns**

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends