



## Seeing Christmas: Don't Forget The Stockings | January 1, 2020

### Discussion Guide

#### The Scoop

Most of us want Christmas to last just a little bit longer. Hear more about how you can take Christmas with you into the new year below.

#### Key Verses

**Matthew 13:31-32 (NIV)**

*"He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and*

*perch in its branches.'*"

#### Discussion

When you think about the presents that you've received from others over the years, the chances are that you remember and treasure some of the little things you've gotten more than bigger ones. It's true that the little things often mean the most. Whether it's a drawer full of thank you notes that you keep and pull out once a year, or something passed down to you from a parent or grandparent, these things often aren't very costly, yet we treasure them more than we do something with a big price tag. And for the most part, it's because these things generally last the longest. We hold on to them, and we treasure them over years and decades.

1. What is something small, a gift that you've received, that you treasure?
2. Why do you think these small things often mean the most? Why does the gift you mentioned above mean a lot to you?

Most of us wish that the Christmas season could last even longer. We get to December 26 and are disappointed that we have to pack away all of the decorations and memories. In her book, *Seeing Christmas*, Karen Stacy encourages us to consider how we can see Jesus in something as simple as our Christmas stockings. They tend to be the thing that we forget and have to run out for last minute. Or in the grand scheme of all the other presents and decorating, the stockings seem small.

3. How do you feel when December 26 comes, and it's time to start thinking about putting away all the Christmas décor?
4. What is your experience with stockings? Were they a significant part of your childhood, and do they continue to be significant in your holiday traditions as you grow older?

In her book, Karen says that the Christmas stockings point us to Jesus, but unlike us, that he never forgets. He is full of faithfulness, always, and ever ready to bless. In Matthew 13:31-32, we read about the mustard seed. Although it's the smallest of seeds, it grows into the biggest of garden plants. Birds even come and make nests in its branches. So instead of running into the new year with huge hopes and dreams, we need to start small. Make simple goals and changes. We need to think about the ways that we saw Jesus throughout the Christmas season, and incorporate those things into our normal rhythms.

5. How do the "little things" of the Christmas season remind you of the mustard seed we read about in scripture?
6. Why do you think this seed is so significant in the Bible? How might you "start small" in your faith this coming year in order to grow something big?

#### What's Next?

Most of us wait all year for Christmas. But the reality is that it comes and goes so quickly. As you think about how to take Christmas with you into the new year, think about the little things. When you do something routine like leave for work in the morning, think about where you see Jesus in that. And when you do that faithfully and repetitively, it's like the mustard seed. It starts out small and grows and grows and grows. And not only does it benefit you, but it starts to benefit others as well.

This week, as you live out and engage your faith, see Jesus everywhere you go. Keep your perspective on how your life and the little changes you are making will impact and model Christ for others. Realize that your life and your faith is important, but that it's not just for you. Think about one way you can encourage others to come in and find refuge and a home in the way you live out your faith as we start the new year.