

# THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

**ICEBREAKER:** Recall a time in your life where things didn't go according to your plan. What happened? How did you respond to it?

## JOHN'S NIGHTMARE

*When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.*

*John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"*

*Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. And tell him, 'God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.'"*

*As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,*

*"Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you."*

*I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is! And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it.*  
Matthew 11:1-12 NLT

## **1. NIGHTMARES ARE A PART OF LIFE**

- a. You can live life right and have it go wrong
- b. You can live life wrong and have it get worse

**DISCUSSION:** When you look back over your life, can you see some of the choices you've made that have brought you to this place? Can

you see where you've tried to do the right thing and it still didn't turn out right?

**DISCUSSION:** How did these events cause you to respond to God? How did God respond to you during some of these events?

## **2. NIGHTMARES CAUSE FEAR THAT WILL CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH**

**DISCUSSION:** Will you continue to believe when life is really bad? Have you ever come to the point when you wanted to stop believing? What did you do?

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."*

*Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God." John 1:29-34 NLT*

**DISCUSSION:** In what way do you view the world and events around you as a battle against God's kingdom?

**DISCUSSION:** How will you look at the events of your life and keep a proper perspective on your choices and the battle against spiritual influences that are out of your control?

**DISCUSSION:** How can you keep a proper perspective on your outcomes knowing that life may not turn out exactly the way in which you expect? How will you keep God's kingdom mindset above your own desires?

**PRAYER PROJECT:** Spend 5-7 minutes alone with God and talk to him about how much of your faith in Jesus Christ is dependent upon whether life is going good or not good? Talk to God and ask Him to show you specific examples.

**DISCUSSION:** Share your experience with God with your group.