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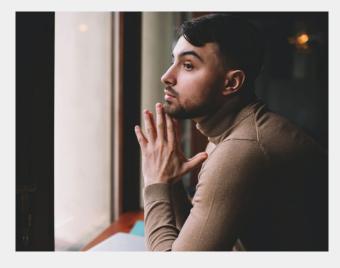
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INTRODUCTION

Notes

he prophet Isaiah tells us: prepare ye the way of the Lord. So that is what we do through this Advent Bible study. First, we ponder, as Mary did. We pray, as Zechariah did. We praise, as Elizabeth did, and we proclaim, as the shepherds did. All these actions prepare us for the coming of our Savior into our lives. With hearts, souls and minds prepared for him, we are ready to receive him with joy this Christmas season.

SESSION 1



PONDER

We ponder your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. PSALM 48:9

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, lead us to hear and obey your Word. Guide our study of Holy Scripture and cause your Word to take root in our lives. As we ponder your mighty acts, we pray that we will grow in faith toward you and in love toward others. Hear our prayer in the name of Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem and our Lord. Amen.

DISCUSSION

Share special Scripture readings or devotional materials that you enjoy using during Advent.

INTRODUCTION

With mighty acts of power, and through the blood of a sacrificial lamb marking each Israelite home, God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt. After 40 years of traveling through the wilderness, they are about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Following Moses' death, God appoints Joshua to lead the people. The Lord promises to be with Joshua as he was with Moses. Joshua receives instructions to do all that the law of God commands, and to meditate on that divine Word. During this season of Advent, we, too, have many opportunities to hear and meditate on the Word of God. We pray that we might hear and respond with humility and obedience, just as Mary, the mother of our Lord, responded when the Word of the Lord came to her in Nazareth.

GOD'S WORD

- 1. Read Joshua 1:1-6. What promises does God make to Joshua? Read Joshua 1:7-9. God repeatedly tells the new leader of Israel to be strong and filled with courage. Why might it take strength and courage for Joshua to do all that the law commands? Why might it take strength and courage for us today to carry out what is commanded in God's Word? What are some ways in which you might meditate on God's Word both day and night?
- 2. **Read Psalm 1.** How is this psalm similar to God's instructions to Joshua? The psalm contrasts the wicked with the righteous, who delight in the law of the Lord. In what ways do these people differ from one another? How is the study of the Word like being "planted by streams of water"?

TRUSTING THE WORD

- Read Luke 1:26-34. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (see Luke 1:24, 36), the angel Gabriel is sent to Nazareth. Read John 1:46. According to the future disciple Nathanael, what seemed to be the general opinion concerning Nazareth and its citizens? What is Mary's first response to the angel's greeting? The arrival of the angel must have been both astonishing and frightening. What may have been especially difficult for Mary to grasp in Gabriel's greeting? Mary hears the astounding news! She is to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. What details does Gabriel give concerning the child to be born? The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, of a virgin-born son, will be fulfilled through Mary. Why had God chosen Mary to be the mother of his Son? Mary accepts the angel's announcement but rightly wonders how such a thing can come to pass!
- 2. Read Luke 1:35-38. How will this mystery and miracle come about? What proof will assure Mary of the truth of Gabriel's message? What is Mary's response to this word from God? Mary's son is the Son of God and our Savior. How might we reflect in our own lives Mary's humble response to the Word? What might we learn from this reading about both the difficulty and the promise found in faithfully following God's Word? If you wish, share circumstances in your own life in which you prayed, "Let it be to me according to your Word"?

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3. Read 1 Peter 5:6-7. How do these verses reflect Mary's response to Word of the Lord? Mary humbly obeyed the Word. She would bear the Son of God, Israel's Messiah. What might she have "pondered" as she considered what lay ahead for her after this angelic announcement? What aspects of the miracle and mystery of Christ's birth leave you pondering the mighty acts of God?

ABIDING IN THE WORD

- 1. **Read John 8:31-38.** What does it mean to abide in Jesus' Word? What is the truth that sets us free?
- 2. Read Colossians 3:15-17. What would it mean to have the Word of Christ "dwell in you richly"? How does the Word dwell in your life now? As a result of that indwelling Word, what are we to do and how are we to respond? In what ways do our hymns and songs play a part in causing the Word to dwell richly within us? What does it mean to do everything, both in word and deed, in Jesus' name? Especially during these seasons of Advent and Christmas, we pray that the Word will dwell within us as we give thanks to God for the gift of his Son!
- 3. Read Ephesians 5:15-21. What would it mean to make "the best use of the time"? How can we "understand what the will of the Lord is"? When do we address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

"Let it be to me according to your Word." More than thirty years later, Mary's son, in a garden called Gethsemane, would offer a similar response to his heavenly Father: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" for the sake of our salvation (Philippians 2:8). As the lambs' blood once marked the homes of Israel, the blood of the Lamb of God marks our lives and sets us free from slavery to sin and death!

PSALM 77:11-15

- □ *I will remember the deeds of the LORD;*
- C Yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
- □ I will ponder all your work,
- **C** And meditate on your mighty deeds.
- □ Your way, O God, is holy.
- C What god is great like our God?
- └ You are the God who works wonders;
- C You have made known your might among the peoples.
- ☑ You with your arm redeemed your people,
- **C** The children of Jacob and Joseph.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God above, during this Advent season, may we, your people, be led by the Spirit to ponder the grace and power of your Son and remember the promises fulfilled in him. Amen.

HYMN

(Tune: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland 77 77)

Savior of the nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here your home! Marvel now, O heav'n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God, Was the Word of God made flesh— Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

A 4 SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR ADVENT

repare

In this Advent Bible study, participants explore what it means to prepare for the Christ Child. Study and discussion questions, prayers and reflections help students ponder, pray, praise and proclaim in preparation for the Savior's birth. The large-format Leader's Guide includes all answers, helpful study notes and session directions.



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PYBDD Student Guide