



Advent

AT MEADOWBROOK

LIFE GROUP

Advent 2017 Life Group Curriculum

Table of Contents

Date	Scripture	Big Idea	Page
3-Dec	Isaiah 9:1-7	The Promised Savior	1
10-Dec	Luke 2:1-7	The Promise Perfectly Kept: The Birth of Jesus	3
17-Dec	Luke 2:8-20	Tell of His Coming: The Shepherds and The Angels	5
24-Dec	Matthew 2:1-12	The Promise for All Peoples: The Journey of the Magi	7
31-Dec	Luke 21:27-28	The Promise of Jesus' Return: The Second Advent	9

Life Group – Advent Week 1 – Dec. 3, 2017

The Promised Savior

CONNECT

Anticipation and hope seem to fill this season of the year every year. What are you anticipating and hoping for this Christmas season?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Isa. 9:1-7

(Additional Passages: Gen. 3:15; Jdg. 6-7; Jn. 1:1-18; Lk. 1:26-38; Acts 3:22-26; Mt. 1:20-23)

- What verses stick out to you and why?
- From this passage, what do we learn about who God is and what he does?
- From this passage, what do we learn about ourselves?
- How should these truths impact our lives?

SERVE: Apply the Text

Jesus' purpose in coming included having victory over the enemy and fixing the brokenness (Gen. 3:15), executing justice and righteousness (Isa. 9:7), saving his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), and reigning as king over his kingdom (Luke 1:32-33). What are some ways we can serve as a Life Group that line up with these purposes of Jesus?

What activities or opportunities can we plug into or start that help bring victory and restoration to broken people? How can we come alongside others and fight for justice and righteousness in their lives? How can we show Jesus as king of our lives as we do life together and in front of our different circles of influence?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to be saved from their sins? Pray for the hope of the Gospel to grow inside the hearts and lives of those that you know who do not know Jesus. Pray that the Lord will open up many opportunities for us to engage in conversation about the eternal hope that resides within us.

Pray for those who find themselves depressed in this season due to loss of loved ones and other reasons, pray that they would see the great light of Jesus Christ and that their hope and joy would be found in Jesus.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

We love and anticipate Christmas time because of the feelings and memories we share with others. The prophets greatly anticipated the coming of the Messiah with hope and faith in what God was doing. Look for opportunities to share why Jesus' first advent (coming) was so anticipated with those in your different circles (family, friends, neighbors, work, school, social) this week.

For the Family: Read Matt. 1:20-23 and Luke 1:27-38 with your family and discuss what the purpose of Jesus' first advent (coming) was. Talk about his nature as described in Isaiah 9:6 and the great joy and hope we have because of him. (Note: Everlasting Father refers to his care for his people, not the role of Father in the Trinity).

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6, ESV)

Life Group – Advent Week 1 – Dec. 3, 2017

The Promised Savior

The season of Advent is meant to be a season that prepares us for the celebration of our Savior's Birth (Jesus' first coming) as we also long for Jesus' Second Advent. Since the sin of Adam and the promise God gave in Genesis 3:15 that he would provide an offspring to destroy the evil one, the people of God had been longing for their Messiah, looking forward to the day when he would come and restore his people. This brings us to Isaiah. Isaiah is prophesying during a time of great confusion and darkness for the people of God. The Kingdom had split in two and by the end of his prophetic ministry, the northern Kingdom of Israel (verse 1 mentions two of the northern cities to fall first) will have already fallen into the hands of the Assyrians and the southern kingdom will have come close. At the time of this prophecy, Ahaz is king and he was a particularly horrible king, burning his own son as an offering and seeking help from the Assyrians. So Isaiah turns to the faithful remnant and offers a great encouragement from God about their promised Messiah, whom we know to be Jesus Christ. Verses 1-7 can thematically be broken into two sections: "the hope described and the hope explained."¹ He proclaims that the cities Zebulum and Naphtali, the first cities to fall to the Assyrians, will no longer be in gloom, and on top of that, Isaiah includes the Gentile nations as well. There will be no more gloom because light will shine into their dark lives leading to great joy and gladness. Why? Because both the spiritual yoke of sin and the physical yoke of worldly oppression will be broken because there will be no more wars and great peace like never experienced before because the Messiah will be revealed². How will he be revealed? "For to us a child is born." God does not defeat his enemies by being more oppressive, arrogant, and coercive, but "God is strong enough to overcome his enemies by becoming vulnerable, transparent, and humble—the only hope, in fact, for turning enmity into friendship."³ In this restoration, experienced through Jesus Christ, believers rejoice, as we look forward the final fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies within these verses.

Hope in Darkness

Isaiah is speaking to a people living in great darkness. Their enemies are having great success, their king is wicked, and God is seemingly nowhere to be found. There are many times in this life where we experience the same darkness. But it is important to remember that, "the darkness and distress are neither the only reality nor the fundamental reality. In any given situation, we can either sink into despair or rise to faith and hope."⁴

Where do we find this faith and hope? In the same place the Israelites did: The Messiah, who we know to be Jesus Christ. They could only look forward but we look back to the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross and through the resurrection, as well as forward to the coming of his physical kingdom. It is all about the vantage point. What are we seeing? Are we seeing the eternal reality and truth of the victory of the Messiah? Or are our eyes fixed on the gloomy surroundings? Have we let the light that darkness cannot overcome shine into our lives and situations?

The Nature of the Messiah

Ever since God promised to David that his throne would endure forever and that there would be a King

whose kingdom would be established forever, the Israelites had experienced nothing but disappointment and division. What would this Messiah be like? Would he be like the evil king Ahaz? No!

He would be a Wonderful Counselor, meaning that he would make the best decisions for his people and their good, unlike Ahaz who decided to befriend the Assyrians. He would be Mighty God incarnated as a child, unlike Ahaz who was a broken, sinful man. He would be an Everlasting Father to the people as a benevolent protector (not meaning that Jesus is the same as the Father in the Trinity)⁵, unlike Ahaz who sacrificed his own child and nearly led the entire nation into destruction. Lastly he would be a Prince of Peace, restoring his people to peace with God and one another. The best part is that He will never step down from the throne. His kingdom will last for all eternity. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this and in this we hope and rejoice. Our King is coming. Amen, Come Lord Jesus.

- This advent season, how can we prepare our hearts and our families to truly celebrate the first coming of the Messiah?
- How can we spread the joy of the Lord this Christmas season that far surpasses any joy this world (Santa) has to offer?

¹ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 99.

² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 244.

³ *Ibid*, 245.

⁴ Motyer, 99.

⁵ Oswalt, 247.

Life Group – Advent Week 2 – Dec. 10, 2017

The Promise Perfectly Kept: The Birth of Jesus

CONNECT

Many of us had a picture of what our life would look like when we were a child. However, many things that we could not foresee caused us to be where we are today. What are some of those things that has made your life better?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 2:1-7

(Other Passages: Isa. 46; 2 Chron. 36:22-33; Deut. 7:6-11; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; Phil. 2; Isa. 53:2)

- What verses stick out to you and why?
- From this passage, what do we learn about who God is and what he does?
- From this passage, what do we learn about ourselves?
- How should these truths impact our lives?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does the sovereignty of God transform how we view and serve others?

How does the faithfulness of God transform how we view and serve others?

How does the humility that God displayed in Jesus transform how we view and serve others?

The entire Bible contains many promises from Gen. 12:1-3 to Matt. 24:14 regarding the widespread growth of the gospel to all nations. How does that promise transform the way that we share the gospel?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

God has made many great promises to believers. To name just a few: he has promised us eternal life (1 John 2:25), he has promised to be with us always (Matt. 28:20), he has promised to sanctify us (1 Thess. 5:23-24), he has promised that his grace is sufficient for us (1 Cor. 12:9), and he has promised to return (Rev. 22:20). So often however we choose not to live in these promises. Take some time to worship and praise God for these great promises, and repent of any lack of belief in the promises displayed through sinful or idle actions.

God promised that there would be people from every tribe tongue and nation in heaven. Yet there are many people groups today who have yet to hear the gospel. Someone pull up joshuaproject.net and pray for the unreached people group of the day. Pray for the lost in this community who do not know Jesus.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Holidays are a time when many are more inclined to come and visit church. Seek to invite a lost friend, co-worker, and neighbor to one of our upcoming Christmas services.

For the Family: Read Luke 2:1-7 as a family and discuss how God was working behind the scenes in order to bring about what he had promised. Talk about how God keeps his promises and can be trusted. Talk about the great humility Jesus showed by coming to us.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Numbers 23:19, ESV)

Life Group – Advent Week 2 – Dec. 10, 2017

The Promise Perfectly Kept: The Birth of Jesus

This is not a new story for many people. Even many non-Christians can recount the story of Jesus' birth. There have been countless Christmas Pageants and live Nativity scenes that attempt to portray the birth of Jesus, (oftentimes inaccurately). Though everyone in our Life Groups may know the story, the incarnation of Jesus Christ still has profound implications that even the most devoted Christian theologians don't fully comprehend. These 7 verses put on full display 3 characteristics of our God – his absolute sovereignty over world events, his total faithfulness to fulfill his promises, and the great humility with which he came to this earth. Verses 1-3 display God's sovereignty of world leaders and events. Caesar Octavian given the title of Augustus was by no means a righteous God-fearing man. In fact he is the first Caesar to claim to be a god himself receiving worship from various Imperial cults throughout the empire⁶. Yet it was the Living God who was really behind the events leading up to Jesus' birth⁷. The census meant for oppression and taxation by Caesar Augustus, was inspired by God to bring about the birth of a King much greater. Verses 4-5 display the faithfulness of God in the fulfillment of two key prophecies regarding the birth of the Messiah. Out of all the religious leaders in the world, Jesus is the only one to have his birth prophesied about. God keeps his promises. Lastly, verses 6-7, display the great humility in which the God who created the world came into the world. He was born into a poor family that could not provide a better place for the Savior of the world to be born into than a feeding trough. Until Heaven, we will never understand fully the immense gravity of the Holy, Eternal God coming in the likeness of sinful man to be despised, mocked, rejected, and pierced for our sins in order that by his wounds we may experience healing and through his resurrection experience eternal life.

A Selection of Old Testament Prophecies about Jesus Christ

- Would come from the line of Abraham (Gen. 12:3), Isaac (Gen. 26:4), Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Judah (Gen. 49:8-12), Jesse (Isa. 11:1), and David (Isa. 9:7).
- Born of a virgin. (Isa. 7:14)
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- Would come up out of Egypt. (Hos. 11:1)
- He would be betrayed by a friend. (Psalm 41:9)
- He would die with criminals but he would be buried with the wealthy. (Isa. 53:9)
- He would rise from the dead. (Psalm 16:8-11)
- + Many, many others.

Though this is a helpful apologetic for the skeptic trying to discern the truth about Jesus Christ, it is also a great reminder to the believer that God will keep his promises and that they are true. So we can be assured that he has given us eternal life (1 John 2:25), he is with us always (Matt. 28:20), he is sanctifying us (1 Thess. 5:23-24), his grace is sufficient for us (1 Cor. 12:9), all nations would hear and receive the gospel (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:9) and he will return (Rev. 22:20). This gives us hope, peace, and joy for today as we navigate the difficulties of this life.

What promises do you struggle with believing or living out? What circumstances prompt doubt in your life?

How does God's promise in Matt. 24:14 and Rev. 7:9 motivate our evangelism and mission efforts?

Augustus vs. Jesus

Augustus	Jesus
Man became a god	God became man
Wealthy	Poor
Honored	Despised
Oppressive	Meek and Humble
Temporary Kingdom	Eternal Kingdom
Died. Still dead.	Died and Rose Again. Still Alive.
Called holy and savior	Actually Holy and the Savior of the World.

"The world had at its helm a self-proclaimed, widely accepted god and savior. Luke, the historian and theologian, wants us to see this as the [scene] for understanding the coming of the real Savior. The contrast could not be greater."⁸ There may not be a Caesar who people look to as their god and savior, but there are many heart idols that people look to even today.

What idols are you tempted to worship or look to for deliverance or security? (Family, Self, America, Income, 401k, Sex, Food... etc.) How can your Life Group hold each other accountable to worship the one, true God and to put to death the many idols we are tempted to worship?

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: Luke, Vol. 1: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998), 81.

⁷ Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels, Vol. 2: Luke/John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1966), 51.

⁸ Hughes, 81.

Life Group – Advent Week 3 – Dec. 17, 2017

Tell of His Coming: The Shepherds and The Angels

CONNECT

We naturally tell others about good things. It could be the new movie that just came out, the binge worthy TV Show, the latest gadget we have used, the new recipe that tasted delicious, or something great that has just happened in your life. The list could go on. What are some of those things that you share and who do you typically go to first?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

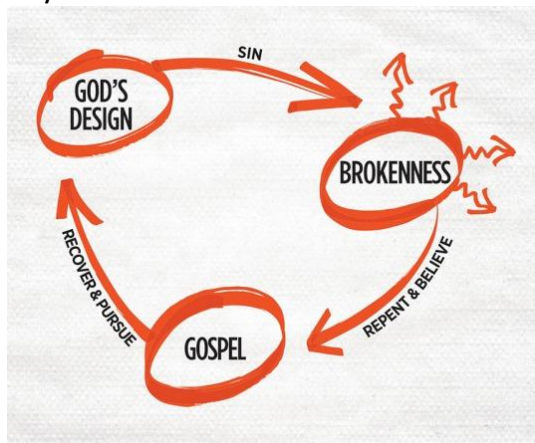
Read the Main Passage: Luke 2:8-20

(Other Passages: Rom. 10:9-15; Acts 4:13-22, 28:28-31; Ps. 40; Ps. 71:14-24; 1 Cor. 10:16-23)

- What verses stick out to you and why?
- From this passage, what do we learn about who God is and what he does?
- From this passage, what do we learn about ourselves?
- How should these truths impact our lives?

SERVE: Apply the Text

Share the gospel with lost people. Practice as a class. Think through where the lost people are in your life.



PRAY: Respond to the Text

Reflect on what it means that Jesus is Savior, Christ, and Lord. Fill in this sentence with multiple answers as a group. Jesus is _____. Spend some time in prayer worshiping God as a group.

Pray that the lost people in your life would come to know Jesus as Christ, Savior and Lord. Pray for your lost family members. Pray for your lost friends. Pray for your lost co-workers. Pray for your lost neighbors. Pray for the lost coming to OpenHands and Way of the Cross. Pray over Gadsden, Hokes Bluff, Glencoe, Rainbow City, Atalla, and Southside. Pray for the lost students in our elementary, middle, and high schools. Pray for our Good News Club. Pray for the teachers and coaches who are believers that they would be proclaimers of the gospel. Make praying for lost people part of your daily routine.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

The challenge has already been made to share the gospel with a lost person this week. So then, seek to train someone up, a child, friend, or someone you are discipling in how to share their faith. Take them with you next time you intentionally engage in evangelism.

For the Family: Read Luke 2:8-20 and explain what it means for Jesus to be Savior (Rescuer), Christ (Promised Messiah/God himself), and Lord (Boss/Master). Look at the example of the shepherds and talk about the importance of telling others about Jesus.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

(Luke 2:10-11, ESV)

Life Group – Advent Week 3 – Dec. 17, 2017

Tell of His Coming: The Shepherds and The Angels

Last week we looked at how God demonstrated his sovereignty, his faithfulness, and his humility in his coming. This week we see how God chose to reveal his coming to the world—and it's not how one would typically think of the Eternal God revealing himself. He revealed his coming to a poor group of shepherds. It is how they responded that challenges us today. Luke says that when they saw Jesus, they made him known. They didn't think about it. They just did it, because they understood, at least in part, the great thing they were able to witness – the incarnation of Jesus the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord. Who did they go and tell? The text does not say specifically, implying that in their great joy they went out telling anyone and everyone who would hear them⁹. All the while they glorified God and praised him for the great news they had received. They had no training that we should marvel at them. They weren't pastors, in fact they were second-class citizens just above lepers. The Rabbi tradition belittled shepherds calling them incompetent and saying that "one should not feel obligated to rescue a shepherd who has fallen into a pit."¹⁰ Yet, this is who God used to first announce to his people that the Promised Messiah had come. So let us not get bored of the gospel, let us not lose our wonder of Eternal God becoming lowly man in order to redeem those who would repent and believe in him, let us not sink into fear or discouragement. Let us boldly proclaim the good news of great joy that is for all the people!

The Message

The Shepherds simply repeated the message that the angels proclaimed to them. So let's break it down:

"Fear not" - The shepherds had just seen the glory of the Lord shine all around them and they were terrified. Why? Because they came to a clear understanding of their own sinfulness in light of who God is, just like Isaiah did and just like Ezekiel did. The good news of the gospel cannot be received until one understands the bad news of their sinfulness"

"for behold, I bring you good news of great joy" – the gospel is good news, and it brings lasting joy that surpasses anything we could achieve on our own. God provides what he demands in his Son Jesus. Yet too often we don't share it as good news or joyfully. Our face doesn't display the goodness of it, we stammer through it and have a tendency to be apologetic in our approach. We have good news to share! Let your face and tone demonstrate the joy of the gospel. In a world full of bad news, people need good news.

"that will be for all the people" – the gospel is for ALL people. All races, all backgrounds, all walks of life, all income levels. Enemies, friends, family, strangers, gay, straight, transgender, violent opponents, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhists, Atheists, all people. No one is out of reach of the gospel. The Spirit can convict the most hardened sinners and lead them to repent of their sinful ways and believe in Jesus. Let our sharing reflect this truth. Let us be indiscriminant in our sowing of the gospel message. You never know who will listen. (Acts 28:28-31)

"Unto you... this day" – Today is the day of Salvation. Seek the Lord while he may be found. He is near.

"born" – God became like us. He became a man, but he came not as an adult, rather a helpless baby. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He was not a spirit or an angel, but a man who came to redeem mankind. He can sympathize with us in every way. He was tempted like us yet without sin. He suffered rejection. He went through puberty. He was ridiculed and despised, betrayed by a close friend. He lost loved ones. He experience hunger and thirst. God became a man.

"in the city of David a Savior" – Jesus is the king of an eternal kingdom and the Savior for our sins. He died for us on the cross and three days later rose from the dead demonstrating his victory over sin, death, and Satan. He saves us from ourselves and the eternal punishment that awaits those who do not repent and believe. And conversely, he gives eternal life and his righteousness to those who do repent and believe.

"who is Christ the Lord" – Jesus is the promised Messiah from Old, the seed of the woman who would defeat once and for all the ruler of the world and our enemy, Satan. He is God himself. So not only is he a man, but he retained his divinity. (100% God, 100% Man, at the same time). He is Lord. He is sovereign and in control. At his name, every knee will bow. He is not a personal Lord but Lord of all. The question is will we submit and surrender to him or not.

The message is simple. Will we be like the shepherds in sharing it or not?

What prevents you from sharing the gospel? How can we get past that?

⁹ Hughes, 89.

¹⁰ Randy Alcorn, "Shepherd's Status - Resources," Eternal Perspective Ministries, March 11, 2008, , <http://www.epm.org/resources/2008/Mar/11/shepherds-status/>.

Life Group – Advent Week 4 – Dec. 24, 2017

The Promise for All Peoples: The Journey of the Magi

CONNECT

What's the farthest you have ever traveled?
What made you uncomfortable? What did you find to be exciting? How did this experience change the way you viewed the world?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read the Main Passage: Matt. 2:1-12

(Other Passages: Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 67; Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-11; Rev. 7:9-17)

- What verses stick out to you and why?
- From this passage, what do we learn about who God is and what he does?
- From this passage, what do we learn about ourselves?
- How should these truths impact our lives?

SERVE: Apply the Text

God has graciously brought the nations to us through International Student programs and refugee relocation. How can we as a Life Group partner be a part of MeadowBrook's efforts to engage the nations with the gospel? How can we encourage others to be involved?

This Christmas and throughout the beginning of the year, pray as a Life Group and ask if God is directing your class to go together on a Mission Trip overseas.

Invite someone to our Christmas Eve service tonight.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for the unreached peoples in this world. The greatest social injustice in this world is that we hear the gospel multiple times a week and there are many who never hear it once. Go to joshuaproject.net and pray for the unreached of the day. Pray for willing laborers (not excluding yourself) and pray for hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the gospel. As a class, creatively and intentionally pray for the unreached people groups in 2018.

Ever since the Tower of Babel, mankind has struggled with racism and prejudice. We are not exempt from battling that as well. Any shred of racism or prejudice impedes gospel multiplication. Search your heart for any signs of it and pray to God a prayer of repentance.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text

Gadsden is the home of many people from various countries throughout the world. Seek to engage in a conversation with someone from a different culture than you and see where it leads.

For the Family: Read Matthew 2:1-12. Talk about how big of a deal it is that God revealed himself to the Gentile wise men. Introduce your family to the concept of global Christianity and unreached people groups. Look at joshuaproject.net and pray for an unreached people group each month as a family.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)*

Life Group – Advent Week 4 – Dec. 24, 2017

The Promise for All Peoples: The Journey of the Magi

Jesus came for all peoples. The Old Testament speaks regularly of the blessings of the kingdom being extended to all nations. Missions are a big deal because lost people matter to God and God deserves to be worshipped by them. The journey of the Magi symbolizes the worship of God by all nations in heaven, as we see in Revelation 7:9. Christmas is a time where we naturally direct our attention towards others. Use this week as an opportunity to reflect on the glory of God that led the Magi to worship him as a boy. Reflect on our commission as believers. Pray for those who are among unreached people groups. Pray as a class about going on a mission trip together within the next 2 years. Lastly celebrate together as a Life Group our Savior's first coming which led to our salvation and restoration!

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."

– John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*

"We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God."

– John R.W. Stott

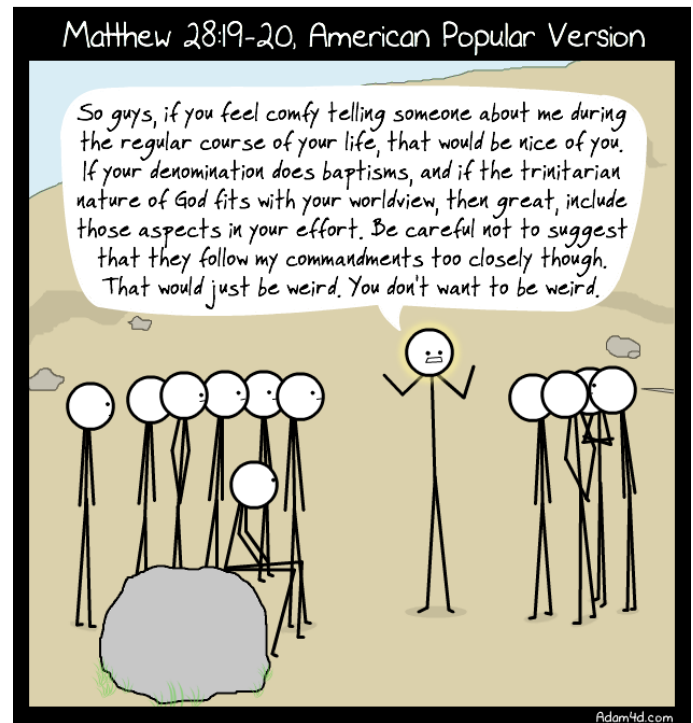
"The gospel is only good news if it gets there in time."

– Carl F.H. Henry

"Some wish to live within the sound of church and chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell!"

– C.T. Studd

Reflect on these famous quotes about missions. What principles need to be discussed in your Life Group?



source: <http://adam4d.com/matthew-2819-20-american-popular-version/>

This is a satirical look at how some people live their lives in light of the true Great Commission. Is there any truth to this satire in your group's lives?

Life Group – Advent Week 5 – Dec. 31, 2017

The Promise of Jesus' Return: The Second Advent

CONNECT

Have you seen those videos of soldiers returning home and the joy that their pets and families show? Has there been a time when you've been away from home for a long time? What emotions were felt at your return?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read the Main Passages: Luke 21:27-28; Rev. 19:11-16

(Other Passages: 2 Pet. 3:8-14; Rev. 22; Zech. 14:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; John 14:1-6)

- What verses stick out to you and why?
- From this passage, what do we learn about who God is and what he does?
- From this passage, what do we learn about ourselves?
- How should these truths impact our lives?

SERVE: Apply the Text

How does the return of Christ affect the way you serve others?

New Years are great. It's a fresh start. Anything is possible. When Jesus returns he will make a new earth and a new heaven and his redeemed people will dwell in them and He will be their God and they His people. That is the hope and joy of the Christian faith. Are we living in light of that truth? Are we active in sharing that hope, letting go of the temporary cares of this world?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Reflect on the second coming of Christ. Consider this week as we begin our 40 days of Spiritual Renewal, fasting with the specific purpose of eagerly longing for his return. Prayerfully evaluate your life examining where you are storing up temporary treasures. Repent and begin storing up eternal treasure.

New Years, as mentioned, is an exciting time full of hope. It is a false hope, however, because, at the end of each year countless people always look back on a year that began with such hope with great regret and a sense of failure. Pray for those in need of real hope. The only hope that Jesus can give. Pray for the lost that your class has been praying for that they will receive this hope.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text

Seek to share the great hope you have as a believer and the reason behind it with someone this year. Invite a lost person to check out our upcoming series on spiritual renewal.

For the Family: Read Luke 21:27-28. Talk about how great it will be when Jesus comes back. Talk about how he is with us today still through his Holy Spirit, but one day we will see him face to face. Talk about the various ways that affects how we live today.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:27-28 ESV)

Life Group – Advent Week 5 – Dec. 31, 2017

The Promise of Jesus' Return: The Second Advent

Luke 21:27-28 is one of the times where Jesus refers to his second coming. This lesson is not meant to deteriorate into an argument or discussion of the various views on how Jesus will return, but rather on the faithfulness Jesus showed in his first coming and how that solidifies our hope in his second to where we can be confident that surely he is coming soon! It is also about the differences in his first and second coming. The first was in great humility and obscurity – only a handful knew that the Messiah had arrived. The second will be in great power and glory and everyone will know that the King of Kings has returned. Lastly, it is about how the promise of Jesus' future return greatly affects how we live today. No one knows the day Jesus will return, so the encouragement is to stay awake, live lives of holiness and godliness, share the gospel message urgently, and to raise our heads each day longing that today might be the day that Jesus would return. Jesus has given us through his Holy Spirit many texts regarding his second coming that are meant to be an encouragement and challenge to us. He wants us to know that he is coming. Even after 2000 years, we are confident in Jesus' return. He was faithful to come the first time, and he will be faithful to come the second time. Some may object, calling us fools for waiting, saying that he will never come because he is not real or does not care or some other reason. But it is not for the sake of believers that Jesus is waiting to return, it is his love for the lost in this world. Remember, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*, 2 Peter 3:9, ESV. So are we reaching out to the lost around us? Jesus has not returned yet because of his patience with the lost and his desire to see them repent. Does our evangelism reflect the heart of our Savior?

Differences in the First and Second Advent

First Advent	Second Advent
He came to save sinners	He will come to judge sin
He came in peace	He will come in war
Hidden Identity	Revealed as King of Kings and Lord of Lords
The Lamb	The Lion
Came in meekness	Will come in power
Brought Spiritual Kingdom	Will establish Physical Kingdom
Rejected and despised by his own people and the nations	Every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

The Hope of the Second Advent

Jesus' return though terrifying for those who have not repented and believed in the gospel is cause for great hope for those who have repented and believed in Jesus. For there is *no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 8:1, ESV). Those in Christ have nothing to worry about regarding Jesus' second coming. In fact we eagerly await his coming. Here are some of the events that will occur:

- We will see Jesus face to face
- The final defeat of sin, death, and Satan
- The creation of the New Earth and New Heaven
- The giving of our resurrected body
- Reuniting with those who fell asleep in Christ

- Eternal joy and satisfaction in the glory of God
There are not words that will describe the great joy that we will experience when we finally see our savior's face. John Piper in his sermon, *Our Hope – The Appearing of Jesus Christ*, brings these questions to mind:

1. Does your mind return frequently to the truth of Christ's appearing?
2. When your mind turns to the truth of his appearing, does your heart want it — is there an eagerness to see him?
3. Do you pray for his coming?

If not, he offers these 3 explanations – ignorance, growing cold, or lack of salvation. The Second Coming is vital to the Christian life today and in the future. Think about it, long for it, pray for it.¹¹

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Listen to *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* by the Sing Team and reflect on these lyrics.

Blessed Savior, You have promised,
all our burdens You will bear
May we ever,
Lord, be bringing all to you in earnest prayer
Soon, in glory bright unclouded,
face to face will be our prayer
Joyful praise and endless worship
will be our sweet portion there

¹¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-hope-the-appearing-of-jesus-christ>

