

ADVENT
2022



ENTERING INTO CHRISTMAS

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LIFEGroup Study Guide

November 27 - December 18

LBF.Church

LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

• *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
www.lbf.church/messages

Lesson 1: Enter into Hope

Isaiah 9:1-7 • pp. 4-6 • November 27

Lesson 2: Enter into Peace

Luke 1:26-38 • pp. 7-9 • December 4

Lesson 3: Enter into Joy

Luke 2:8-14 • pp. 10-11 • December 11

Lesson 4: Enter into Love

Galatians 4:4-7 • pp. 12-13 • December 18

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big. Contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

• *Contact Pastor Dan:*
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ENTERING INTO CHRISTMAS

Enter into Hope

Lesson 1 • November 27 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

The birth of Jesus brings hope to people who are in dark places.

Introduction

We all need hope. While we sometimes use the word “hope” to mean the same thing as “wish,” biblical hope is different. Biblical hope is the expectation of better days ahead. Hope is not something you close your eyes and wish for; hope is something you confidently expect to happen. And you base your life on that hope.

During the season of Advent we celebrate that Jesus Christ is our hope. And we want to enter into that hope so that our lives are filled with the light and the optimism and the confidence that better days are ahead.

In Isaiah 9:1-7 we have a passage that does not overtly contain the word “hope,” but depicts the hope of the world through a prophecy about Jesus. The prophecy paints a picture of people in darkness and fear and despair. But then they experience light and peace and harmony. This is not because they come up with new political policies or rules for living. It is because a Savior is sent to them. And this Savior will rule with justice and his rule will never end.

As you walk through this lesson, use this as a time to reflect on where you feel hopeless, and how Jesus invited you to enter into the hope that he brings.

Getting Started

1. What makes people feel hopeless?

2. Hope is the expectation that better days are ahead. Are you more likely to (a) feel hopeless or (b) to place your hope in things that are unstable?

Digging In

Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

1 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

4 For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them,

the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

5 Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you
listened to the sermon, feel free to share something
significant that you remember.

4. How do verses 1-2 paint a picture of hope coming
to people?

5. Verses 3-5 depict a hopeful future of the nation of
Israel. According to these verses, what is that future
going to look like?

6. Of the four titles given to the Son (Jesus) in verse 6,
which one most stands out to you, and why?

7. Verse 7 emphasizes that the reign of Jesus will be
forever. Why is this so important to our ability to place
our hope in him?

Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. It might seem strange that one of the titles for Jesus
is "everlasting Father," since he is the Son. What do
you think might be a helpful explanation for this?

Connecting To The Gospel

9. Isaiah 9:2 speaks of people walking in darkness. John 1:5 says of Jesus, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” In what specific ways has Jesus brought light into the world?

Taking It To Heart

10. During this season of hope, what is an area of your life that is making you feel hopeless?

11. How can you enter more fully into the hope that Jesus came to bring?



ENTERING INTO CHRISTMAS

Enter into Peace

Lesson 2 • December 4 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Jesus invites us into a peace that overcomes our fears.

Introduction

It has been said that peace is more than the absence of conflict. In other words, peace is more than just the avoidance of something negative. It is the presence of something positive. It is the presence of harmony. It is the experience of life—both internally and externally—making sense.

But what do we do when the external world seems scary and chaotic? What do we do when there is war and inflation and disease and political animosity? And what do we do when we are experiencing internal anxiety, frustration and confusion? Can we have peace in these circumstances?

In Luke 1:26-38 we read the story of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. While we can easily celebrate the news that Mary will give birth to Jesus, we must remember that the news would have been much more complicated to Mary. She was an unmarried woman and her fiancé would know that he was not the father of the child. This news likely would have turned Mary's fairly simple life into a complicated mess. That doesn't sound very peaceful.

Pay attention to how Mary takes in this news and to how she responds. And, as you do this, consider how Jesus can bring peace into even the most confusing and challenging situation.

Getting Started

1. What robs you of peace? Give a specific example.
2. How do you cope with times when you are not experiencing peace?

Digging In

Read Luke 1:26-38.

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you

have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. In verse 30 the angel tells Mary not to be afraid. What are some different reasons why Mary—at this point—might have been afraid?

5. In verses 31-33 the angel gives the news of Jesus' birth. We take this as good news—and appropriately so! With that said, how would this news have complicated Mary's life?

6. What reassurance does the angel give to Mary in verses 35-37?

7. What do you think empowered Mary to give the peace-filled response that she gives in verse 38?

Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. God could have chosen to have a married woman as the mother of the Messiah. Instead, he chose Mary, despite knowing that this would be a potential scandal. Why do you think God sometimes chooses to put his people in positions that upset their peace?

Connecting To The Gospel

9. The angel prophecies that Jesus will reign as king. Why is it good news for us that Jesus will be a king whose kingdom will never end?

Taking It To Heart

10. Name a truth about Jesus that can bring you peace, even when events around you seem chaotic.

11. How can you respond to Jesus and enter into the peace that he came to bring?



ENTERING INTO CHRISTMAS

Enter into Joy

Lesson 3 • December 11 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Jesus invites us into a joy that can't be taken away.

Introduction

We all chase after joy. We chase joy through the foods we eat, the work we do, the relationships we form, and the way we spend our recreation time. But most of our joy is short-lived. We finish the dessert, we run into problems at work, people let us down, and “fun” time turns out not to be as much fun as we thought it would be. Joy is hard to get and harder to keep.

But Jesus said that he came to bring a joy that no one could take away from us (John 16:22). And this joy was announced at the first Christmas. Specifically, it was announced that there was “good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” That is what the angel announced to the shepherds.

As we walk through Luke 2:8-14 we will see that the offer of joy truly did go out to “all people” because the initial announcement is to blue collar shepherds. And we will see that the offer is for lasting joy because it is based not on rules and regulations but on good news. In other words, the joy stems not from what we do for God, but from what he does for us.

Getting Started

1. What brings you joy?

2. Why do you think joy is frequently so short-lived?

Digging In

Read Luke 2:8-14.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Shepherds were not considered to be important people in society in first century Israel. Why, then, do you think God chose to send his angelic announcement to shepherds?

5. The “great joy” is caused by “good news” that is announced in verses 11-12. What most stands out to you about this good news?

6. Why do you think the angel emphasizes that the good news causes great joy for “all the people”?

7. While the offer of joy is for “all the people,” according to verse 14, what kind of people will benefit from the good news of the Savior being born?

Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. According to verse 14 peace will come to those “on whom his favor rests.” Does this mean that God gives his peace randomly at his own whim? What do you think this statement means?

Connecting To The Gospel

9. The angel speaks of “good news” in verse 9. The word “gospel” means “good news.” This means that “news” is at the center of Christian faith. How is a faith based on news different than a faith based on rules and regulations?

Taking It To Heart

10. How do you think you can pursue joy that is based on the good news of Jesus instead of joy based on the uncertain realities around you?

11. Share one specific way that you are currently finding joy in Jesus.



ENTERING INTO CHRISTMAS

Enter into Love

Lesson 4 • December 18 • by Dan Franklin

Main Point

Jesus invites us into a love that makes us children of God.

Introduction

Have you ever received a Christmas gift and wondered how much it cost? It's natural to wonder. This is partly because the cost of a gift tells us how much a person was willing to spend on us. And, we think, the amount the person was willing to spend on us tells us something about how important we are to them.

Galatians 4:4-7 tells us how much God paid in order to give us the Christmas gift of his Son. And we also see that God sending his Son paved the way for all of us to become children of God.

The truth is that many of us struggle to believe that God truly loves us. It just seems too good to be true. This passage will help us know that we are on solid ground when we embrace the delight of God's love for us.

Getting Started

1. Share about a way that someone demonstrated love to you in a powerful way.

2. Is it hard for you to believe that God loves you? If so, why do you think this is?

Digging In

Read Galatians 4:4-7.

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. **6** Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." **7** So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Paul says that God sent his Son (a reference to Christmas) “when the set time had fully come.” What does this statement tell you about God’s plans and timing?

5. Verse 5 says that Jesus came to redeem, which means to buy back. How did Jesus redeeming us demonstrate God’s love?

6. Share at least one specific way that you see the theme of adoption connecting to the love of God.

7. Paul says in verse 7 that we are “no longer” slaves. In what ways, then, were we previously slaves?

Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. What do you think it means that the Holy Spirit calls out (in our hearts), “Abba, Father”? (For help, check out a parallel passage in Romans 8:14-17).

Connecting To The Gospel

9. The word “redeem” (verse 5) was often used to refer to someone paying to set an enslaved person free. How does this idea connect to what Jesus did to set us free?

Taking It To Heart

10. In what ways do you sometimes still live as a slave, even though believers are now children of God?

11. What most helps you to believe and embrace God’s love for you on a daily basis?