



LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

December 1 - December 22



ibf.church

LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

by Dan Franklin

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

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:*
danfranklin@lbfchurch.com

Lesson 1: Hope

John 11:17-27 • pp. 4-5 • Dec. 1

Lesson 2: Peace

Mark 4:35-41 • pp. 6-7 • Dec. 8

Lesson 3: Joy

Luke 19: 1-10 • pp. 8-9 • Dec. 15

Lesson 4: Love

John 18:1-14 • pp. 10-11 • Dec. 22

HOPE

Lesson 1 • December 1

MAIN POINT

ONLY Jesus can make hope a reality in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As we enter the Advent season, we begin by focusing on hope—a theme woven deeply into the story of Christ’s coming. Hope, in its truest form, isn’t just a wish for something better; it’s a confident expectation rooted in a faithful God. In John 11:17-27, we encounter Martha and Mary, mourning the loss of their brother Lazarus, feeling the weight of a seemingly hopeless situation. But Jesus enters their grief with a life-changing promise: He is the resurrection and the life. This passage teaches us that, while friends and family can comfort, only Jesus has the power to truly transform our deepest grief into lasting hope, not just for the future but for here and now.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share about a time you really hoped for something and it came to reality – or a time it didn’t.

2. What are you hopeful for this Christmas season?

DIGGING IN

Read John 11:17-27.

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. **18** Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, **19** and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. **20** When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; **26** and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

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. Look through verses 17-21. List the ways that John establishes the fact and the finality of the death of Lazarus.

5. Many people came to comfort Martha and Mary in their grief. Why do you think their presence wasn't enough to bring real hope?

6. Do you think Martha thought her brother's "rise" (verse 23) was going to be a physical, immediate resurrection or a future resurrection? Read John 11:39 for more context.

7. In verse 25 Jesus states one of His "I am" statements. What do you think are the implications of the promise he offers (verse 25 & 26)?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In Verse 24, Martha expresses a belief in a future resurrection on the "last day." Jesus, however, declares himself to be the resurrection and life now, not just in the future. Since all of us eventually die, what does this mean for us today?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Martha approaches Jesus in her grief, and he responds with words of hope and life. How does Jesus' compassion and assurance illustrate the gospel message?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Where, apart from Jesus, are you tempted to place your hope? What are specific ways that you can fight to abandon that hope, and hope in Jesus alone?

11. List two practical ways you can demonstrate the hope Jesus offers as you gather with others this advent season.

PEACE

Lesson 2 • December 8

MAIN POINT

ONLY Jesus can make peace a reality in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As we enter the second week of Advent, we focus on peace—a deep and lasting rest that only Jesus can bring. Today’s passage, Mark 4:35-41, captures a moment when Jesus and his disciples encounter a fierce storm. In their fear, the disciples cry out to Jesus, questioning whether he cares that they are facing danger and possible death. With just a few words, Jesus calms the storm, restoring peace in an instant.

This story goes beyond calming physical wind and waves; it points to the peace Jesus brings into our lives. He doesn’t just calm storms around us—he brings peace to our hearts, even amidst life’s struggles. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has defeated sin and death, providing the foundation for true, lasting peace that nothing in this world can take away. As we reflect on this story during Advent, let’s consider how Jesus alone makes peace a reality, both now and forever.

GETTING STARTED

1. How would you define peace?

2. Share about a time you were overwhelmed but suddenly found unexpected peace.

DIGGING IN

Read Mark 4:35-41

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” **36**

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. **37** A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

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. Recalling that many of the disciples were fishermen and familiar with being on these waters, what does it say about the nature of this “storm” that they were afraid of perishing?

5. According to verse 39, what happened to the storm after Jesus spoke? How does this compare to storms you've experienced?

6. According to verse 40, what was it the disciples were lacking?

7. Notice the response of the disciples in verse 41. What can you draw from their response?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In this short account Jesus demonstrates that he is very human (exhausted from teaching all day, asleep in the midst of chaos) and yet very much God. How can he be both? Does his authority over the natural world lessen his humanness and diminish the sacrifice he made for us? Explain your answer.

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. When the disciples cry out in fear, it's as though they feel abandoned. When you feel abandoned and without peace, how can you call on Jesus?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What is an area of your life that you could enjoy more peace? Pause and pray now in light of your answer.

11. This advent season, how can you be a pillar of peace to those around you? Write down three specific ways.

JOY

Lesson 3 • December 15

MAIN POINT

ONLY Jesus can make joy a reality in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate the third week of Advent, we turn our hearts to joy—the true, transforming joy that only Jesus can bring. In Luke 19:1-10, we find the story of Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector whose life changes dramatically when he encounters Jesus. Despised by his community for his greed and corruption, Zacchaeus is an unlikely candidate for joy. Yet, when Jesus calls him by name and chooses to stay at his home, Zacchaeus experiences a joy so profound it changes his entire life. He responds by giving generously to the poor and making amends for his wrongs, overflowing with the joy that comes from being truly seen, accepted, and redeemed.

This story reminds us that Jesus brings a joy that is not based on possessions, status, or circumstances—it is rooted in the grace and love that only he offers. As we reflect on Zacchaeus's transformation, may we be reminded that Jesus brings this same joy to us, making it a reality in our lives.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some things that bring you joy?

2. What are some things that can rob you of joy?

DIGGING IN

Read Luke 19:1-10.

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” **6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

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. Jericho was a prominent city and Zacchaeus was surely a rich man. Knowing this, what strikes you about the actions of Zacchaeus in verse 4? How do his actions relate to Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:14?

5. Jesus' words in verse 5 are a mandate, not a request. It's the only instance recorded in the gospels where Jesus invited himself to be someone's guest. Why do you think Jesus was so insistent here?

6. Compare and contrast the response of Zacchaeus in verse 6 to that of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22-23. What do you think led to these different responses?

7. In verse 8 Zacchaeus demonstrates the condition of his heart and shows the fruit of his salvation (note this action didn't earn his salvation). He goes well on to give above and beyond the legal requirement of restitution. What would lead Zacchaeus to so freely part with his wealth?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Just a dozen or so verses earlier, Jesus claims that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18:25). Then in our passage we see how quickly Zacchaeus—a rich man—is accepted into God's family. How can this be? Explain your answer.

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In verse 9 Jesus quickly states Zacchaeus has found salvation while the crowd around him was likely still grumbling that Jesus was going to stay with Zacchaeus as his guest. In what situations could you find it difficult to see certain people receive grace from God?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What "riches" are stopping you from experiencing the fullness of the joy found in Jesus?

11. Brainstorm one new way you can share the joy of Jesus this advent season.

LOVE

Lesson 4 • December 22

MAIN POINT

ONLY Jesus can make love a reality in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry willingly walks into a forest to face the villain Voldemort, fully aware he may not survive. Driven by love for his friends and the greater good, he chooses self-sacrifice over self-preservation, setting aside fear to bring peace and freedom to others. His walk toward death echoes the strength and courage it takes to love deeply, even when it leads to suffering. In this moment, we see that true love isn't passive—it's powerful, sacrificial, and rooted in hope.

In John 18:1-14, we witness Jesus' own journey into the "garden of surrender." Facing betrayal, arrest, and imminent suffering, Jesus could have fought or escaped, but instead, he chooses to give himself up, even healing the injury of an enemy. His love here is unlike any other—a love that embraces self-sacrifice for the sake of others and reveals that only Jesus, in perfect humility and obedience, can make true love a reality in our lives.

GETTING STARTED

1. How would you define love?

2. Share a specific way that someone has demonstrated love for you. Share a specific way that you have demonstrated love for someone else.

DIGGING IN

Read John 18:1-14

1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) **6** When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

7 Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." **9** This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

11 Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **13** and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

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. Look at verses 4-8. What was Jesus' focus when he was being arrested?

5. Read John 15:9-13. How do you see this text played out in our passage?

6. In verse 9 Jesus demonstrates that his love for us will never fail. How does Romans 8:35-39 relate to this promise?

7. What choices did Jesus have in verses 10 & 11? Which option did he willingly choose?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In this passage, Jesus willingly allows Himself to be arrested, showing profound self-sacrifice. How do his actions show the connection between love and power?

9. The disciples struggle with fear and confusion, yet Jesus knows what must be done for the sake of humanity's redemption. How does this passage illustrate the gospel truth that only Jesus, not our own efforts, can bridge the gap between God and humanity? How does this bring us hope and assurance of His love?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. How can you demonstrate the sacrificial love of Jesus this advent season?

TAKING IT TO HEART

11. What is stopping you from fully experiencing the love that Jesus has for you? Is there something or someone you need to stop looking for love in? Is there something or someone you need to offer sacrificial love to?