2026

# ADVENT

## Small Group Study

LifePoint CHURCH

# Before You Gather

Download a copy of the Impossible Christmas Quiz and Answers for everyone in your group. Think of a few simple or fun rewards for the top 3 winners of the quiz.

# Week 1 Group Session

## Ice Breaker:

After welcoming everyone to the group, pass around the Christmas quiz and give everybody 5 minutes or so to answer it. Pull out the answer sheet and read through it to see who got the most questions right. Reward the winners.

## Video: The Child of Promise

It's considered an old movie nowadays, but Back to the Future was an exciting and cutting-edge movie back in 1985! It's a movie about the effects of time travel that was made possible through a highly customized 1981 DeLorean DMC-12.

In one scene, the time machine creator (Doc) is showing his young apprentice (Marty) how to program the keypad in the DeLorean to travel back to a specific date. Doc mentions that Marty can see the signing of the Declaration of Independence as he types in 07-04-1776 in the keypad. Next, he says that Marty can witness the birth of Christ as he punches the numbers 12-25-0000.

I don't know if the screenwriter was trying to be serious or funny with that scene, but the truth is that Jesus was most likely not born on December 25, 0000. Many historians believe He was probably born between 6 and 2 BC, and it may have taken place in the spring, not the winter, so December 25 is just when we celebrate it, not when it occurred.

See, it's easy for us to think of Jesus like we think of everyone else when they are born. They didn't exist beforehand, and nobody predicted their coming until their mother became pregnant, but that's where Jesus is entirely different from anyone else in history.

Jesus didn't begin His existence when He was born. The Bible clearly teaches that He is eternal God who not only existed before the world began, but He is the one who created the world in the first place. The Bible also teaches that Jesus was the fulfillment of hundreds of promises – we call them prophecies – that were given thousands of years before He was born.

This week as you begin your study through Advent, or the coming and arrival of Jesus, it's our hope that you will see how unique Jesus is from anyone else in all of history through His pre-existence and the many promises that would explain why He came to earth. He didn't just happen to be born for us – He is the Child Promised from the dawn of history!

## Discussion:

1. Why do you believe so many people in our culture have incorrect assumptions about Jesus?
2. What do you believe makes Jesus different from anyone else in human history?
3. If you've ever studied what the Old Testament says about Jesus, the Messiah, what is one thing you've learned that you didn't know beforehand?
4. Why do you believe that God provided so many promises about Jesus before He was born?

   Read this week's key verse: Isaiah 9:6 – "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."
5. What is one thing about Jesus that sticks out to you from this verse?
6. What promises about Jesus are shared in this one verse alone?
7. How can knowing and understanding the promises of Jesus help us trust Him more and worship Him better this next week?
8. What is one thing you hope to learn by doing the study this week?

## Devotional Preview:

This week, we are going to explore just a few of the three hundred promises God made about the coming of His Son. You may already know all of these promises or there may be some that are new to you, but they all point to the Child of Promise who would come to this earth to take away our sins.

## Prayer:

Take a few moments to go around the group and take prayer requests. If time allows, pray through them together as a group. Also, pray that God uses this week's devotional studies to bring a fresh joy and hope that Jesus came to us.

# Week 2 Group Session

## Ice Breaker:

Have a little fun going around the room and letting each person share either one thing that their parents did that would be considered "bad parenting" today, or something they did as a parent that was funny or awkward. Make sure to keep the details positive and appropriate.

## Video: The Unprepared Parents

Being a new parent isn't always what it's cracked up to be. I came across the story of a young, first-time dad named Ken who had a frightening experience with his newborn daughter Marie who was just a few months old. Marie would spit up from time to time like all babies do, but one day when Ken's wife was away and he was giving Marie a bottle, she projectile vomited halfway across the room!

Ken had never seen anything like that before, but he had just watched The Exorcist with some of his friends a few weeks before, so he panicked because he thought his daughter had become possessed like the girl in the movie. He grabbed Marie and raced over to his church to have an emergency meeting with his priest only to find out that Marie was not in fact possessed; she was just doing what babies sometimes do. It's hard being a new parent.

Then there's the story of Sandy, a new mom who was suffering from sleep deprivation due to having an extra fussy newborn son at home. He didn't sleep for more than a few hours at a time, so Sandy would get up multiple times a night to tend to him. After several months of doing this, she was deliriously tired.

One night after finally getting her son settled after a crying spell, she was heading back to bed when she heard the noise of a cat outside her window. Ever since she'd had her first cat as a young child, Sandy had always brought her pets indoors at night, especially when it started getting cooler, so she went outside, grabbed the cat, and brought it back inside for bedtime.

The only problem with that was that Sandy's family didn't own a cat! Sandy had just been so tired that when she heard the cat crying outside her window that night, she mistakenly thought it was one of her childhood cats, so she brought it inside the house. Needless to say her husband was surprised when he woke the next morning to find both his wife and a cat sleeping next to him! It's hard being a new parent.

Parenting isn't easy for anyone, but I'm guessing it was much harder for Joseph and Mary for several reasons. First, things didn't happen in the order they were supposed to for Jewish couples. You were supposed to get betrothed, then get married, and then start a family afterwards. But they became parents right away.

A second challenge that Joseph and Mary faced was that they had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the census. This wasn't just some trip right up the road – Bethlehem was 85 miles away across vast hills and valleys so taking that journey with an expectant mother was no easy endeavor.

As hard as those two things were, I think they paled in comparison to a third challenge that Joseph and Mary dealt with. It's a sobering responsibility to raise any child God gives us, but imagine being told that your child was going to be the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God,

who would save the world from their sins. That's a unique kind of pressure that none of us would take lightly.

One thing you'll notice as you read the stories this week is that Joseph and Mary didn't run from their challenges, they didn't fight with each other, and they didn't make things about them – they chose to be faithful and to give God their best. It's our hope that you'll be inspired as you follow in their footsteps toward Christmas.

## Discussion:

1. What do you think is the hardest thing about being a parent of a newborn baby?
2. What advantages do first-time parents have today that people didn't have back when Jesus was born?
3. As you think about the Advent story, what do you think were the greatest challenges that Mary, herself, faced from being Jesus' mother?
4. What do you think were the greatest challenges that Joseph faced from being the earthly father of Jesus?
5. Read Matthew 1:18. Take a moment to go online and compare betrothal with a modern-day marriage engagement. How are they different?
6. What do you think it was like for Mary and Joseph to live in a small town where it became known that Mary became pregnant before her wedding?
7. What sacrifices do you think Mary and Joseph had to make to welcome Jesus into their lives?
8. Sometimes, doing God's will requires us to make sacrifices. In what ways do Mary and Joseph remind us that sacrificing for God is always worth it?
9. Is there anything that God has asked you to do that you've been putting off? Use the example of Joseph and Mary as motivation to get it done!

## Devotional Preview:

This week, we'll continue exploring the highs and lows that Joseph and Mary faced as God used them to help bring forth His one and only Son. Some moments were incredibly difficult in their story while others were greater than their wildest dreams. In all of it, God accomplished exactly what He wanted to do!

## Prayer:

Go around the room and share one prayer you have for this Advent season. What is one thing that you would like God to do in your life, your marriage, or your family that will bring glory to Him in the days ahead?

# Week 3 Group Session

## Ice Breaker:

Since this 4-week Advent study is halfway done, it may be a great time to have a small party with your group and talk about what you are learning as you reread the stories of the nativity. With Christmas just weeks away, it might also be a good time to plan a gift exchange or other fun activities together.

## Video: The Welcome Party

Have you ever had the chance to attend an extravagant party? One of the most expensive parties ever thrown took place back in October of 1971. It was hosted by the Shah of Iran to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire, and it would have cost almost one billion dollars in today's economy.

The ancient site of Pasargadae was selected since it was where the first Persian capital was founded by Cyrus the Great in 550 BC. The planning took a year and because the original site had become a barren desert, they had to build an entire roadway to get there and a landing strip for those arriving by plane.

They built a small city for the party that consisted of 50 massive luxury tents spread out across 160 acres in a star pattern with a giant fountain in the middle. Each tent was outfitted with Persian carpets, silk-lined walls, and modern climate control. 15,000 trees were flown in to create an oasis in the barren landscape and 50,000 songbirds were imported from Europe.

Food was catered by a famous French restaurant in Paris and flown in throughout the day to keep it fresh. 10,000 plates of china were commissioned for the food that included roast peacock, quail stuffed with truffles, the world's most expensive caviar, and vintage Dom Perignon to drink. They spared no expense.

It is still listed among the most expensive celebrations in history, and it was so outrageous that many historians believe that it may have contributed to the fall of the Shah's rule as the leader of Iran. He was accused of wasting the Iranian people's money by throwing such a costly but unnecessary party!

If anybody deserved to have a party like that, it should have been the Son of God. After all, He created this world and all who dwell in it, so if anyone deserved to have the greatest welcome party of all time, I think we could all agree that Jesus Christ certainly did. But that's not the welcome He received.

Instead of world rulers coming to kneel before Him or having millions of dollars spent on pomp and circumstance, Jesus had one of the humblest arrivals of any person on earth. He didn't even have a sanitary place to be born since His parents had to settle for an animal shelter.

Still, His coming wasn't without some celebration. God chose some special people to celebrate His birth, and they made His coming joyful and gave them what they could even if it wasn't food flown in from Paris or tents with Persian rugs. These people came in awe of what God had done with hearts full of worship and mouths full of praise. That was the welcoming party that God wanted!

## Discussion:

1. Have you ever had the chance to meet a dignitary, movie star, or someone important? If so, what was it like?
2. If it were up to you, how would you have announced Jesus' arrival to the world? What would you have planned for Him?
3. Why do you think that God chose such a humble setting for Jesus to be born into?
4. Have someone in the group read the lyrics of Joy to the World. How does it make you feel knowing that this song wasn't actually written about Jesus' first coming; it was written about His return?
5. There were 300 prophecies about the Advent of Christ in the Old Testament, but there are 1,500 prophecies about His return. As you read verses like Zechariah 12:10, Acts 1:11, Revelation 1:7, how do you think the second coming of Christ will be different than His first?
6. If Jesus came back today, how do you think He would be treated...by the world? ...by the Church? ...by your family?
7. It can be easy to lose our focus on Jesus in the busyness of the Christmas season. What is one way that you and your family can keep His birth as the biggest focus of the holidays?
8. You may not have gifts of gold, frankincense, or myrrh to offer Christ this Christmas, but you do have your time, your talents, and your treasure. What is one gift you'd like to give Him this year?

## Devotional Preview:

In a season when people are busy going here and there preparing for the holidays and family traditions, it's easy for Jesus to be ignored instead of being adored. The focus for this week is preparing our hearts to adore Him, our mouths to praise Him, and our hands to serve Him this season.

## Prayer:

Take time to go around the room and share one thing each person plans to do to make more room in their heart – and their life – for Jesus this Christmas season. Pray that He would not just be another box to check over the holidays, but that He would take center stage in all we do during the weeks ahead!

# Week 4 Group Session

## Ice Breaker:

Christmas is filled with traditions that make the season special. Some are fun family activities, like decorating the Christmas tree, exchanging gifts, baking cookies, watching Christmas movies, or driving around to see Christmas lights. Others help us celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, such as reading the Christmas story from Luke 2, attending a Christmas Eve service, participating in Advent devotionals, or serving families in need.

**Let's go around the room and share two things:**

1. What is your favorite Christmas tradition that you currently celebrate?
2. What is one Christmas tradition you would like to start in the future, and why?

## Video: The Few Who Knew

Back in the year 1812, a fairytale story was published by the Brothers Grimm about a brother and sister named Hansel and Gretel who were children of a poor woodcutter. When a famine arrived in their village, and food was scarce, the stepmother of the children convinced their father to take them out into the woods and leave them there to fend for themselves.

Young Hansel overheard the plans of his father and stepmother so he filled his pocket with white shiny rocks and dropped them along the way so he could find his way back from the woods. After being left alone, Hansel and Gretel followed the trail of shiny white rocks, illuminated by the light of the moon, and made their way back home again.

But the wicked stepmother was unrelenting in her plans, and Hansel and Gretel were taken deep into the woods once more. As before, Hansel decided to leave a trail of clues back to their home, but this time, he used breadcrumbs to mark their path instead of shiny white rocks. Unfortunately, the forest birds ate all the crumbs he left behind, so Hansel and Gretel ended up lost in the woods.

This story is where we get the phrase "a trail of breadcrumbs" from, and it's used to describe a path that is marked by special hints or clues, so a person knows which direction to go. The story of Hansel and Gretel is only a few hundred years old, but the idea of leaving a trail of breadcrumbs so people can follow directions has been used for a very long time.

If you look back in the Old Testament, you'll discover that God, Himself, often did that through prophecies. He spoke through men who were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" and pointed His people in the direction to go. As we learned during week 1 of this study, He provided hundreds of prophecies to the Israelites so they would know where to go and who to look for when He sent His Son.

Those prophecies described where He would be born, what He would come to do, and Daniel 9 even predicted the exact date when Jesus would make His triumphal entry and present Himself as Israel's Messiah. The Bible describes that moment for us in Luke 19:41–44, saying, "And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"

What could have been a day of great celebration became a tragic day when Jesus wept because the Jewish people didn't genuinely welcome Him as their coming Messiah and they missed the pathway to peace that He offered them. Jesus knew that after they rejected Him, Jerusalem would be destroyed just a few decades later, and it happened just exactly as He said it would.

As sad as that moment was, there have always been a few who knew what God was doing and they picked up on the prophetic breadcrumbs left behind. On this final week of our Advent study, we'll look at four people who were ready for Jesus when He showed up, and we'll compare them with another person who should have known better, but he missed the coming of Jesus instead.

How did these people react when they finally got to experience – or miss – the long-awaited arrival of the Messiah? And what can we do to make sure we are following the breadcrumbs of Scripture, so we don't miss out on what God wants us to do in our lives? Let's find out as we finish this last week of Advent together.

## Discussion:

1. Have you ever missed something important because you weren't paying attention? What was it?
2. What clues did God provide to His people to prepare them for the arrival of His Son?
3. Have someone look up the dating of the Triumphal Entry by Sir Robert Anderson. What was he able to prove?
4. Reread Luke 19:41–44. What were the consequences that God's people faced for being unprepared for the day He presented Himself as their Messiah?
5. Concerning His second coming, Jesus said that no one would know the day or the hour of His return, but He did give us signs pointing to His return in Matthew 24. What are some indicators that Jesus' return may be soon?
6. Before Christ came, God spoke to people through the prophets, the Urim and Thummim, and dreams to direct their steps. How does God speak to us today?
7. Some Christians may feel like God doesn't speak to them personally, but they may not be listening to what He's trying to say. What can we do to be more attentive when God speaks to us?
8. What is one thing that God said to you this past week, and how can you respond to Him?

## Devotional Preview:

The focus for this final week of the Advent study is to think about the importance of paying attention when God has spoken. Throughout the Old Testament, God was constantly speaking to His people in numerous ways, but they often failed to listen and obey His voice. The goal for this week is to learn how to be more like those who paid attention when God spoke – they were blessed for doing so!

## Prayer:

Go around the room and have each person share at least one step they will take to try and listen to God more attentively. Pray for one another as you get ready for this final week of Advent.