



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
12/20/2020:
Monologue Sunday: Luke

How to use the Study Guide During Virtual Online Group Meetings

Group life is even more critical during this incredible season. Over and over, group leaders are reporting that suddenly there is a new hunger to connect, share, pray, and meditate on Scripture together, and so we are making these guides available weekly and suggesting a new format during this season.

As you know, our Group Life’s vision is to “practice the way of Jesus.” And while Jesus never had to lead a Torah study over Zoom, he was strategic in his teaching ministry, and we want to be as well.

There are a number of differences between meeting in person and meeting online, ranging from the obvious to the subtle. One is, given our attention spans for online meetings, we want to encourage you to limit the length of your call between 45-60 minutes and we are calling this “Check-In Plus One.” Meaning, spend a few minutes checking in with your group and see if there are any new needs with them (or even amongst their neighbors). The “One” is to spend time in study. As our virtual season continues, our desire for meaningful content and interaction will grow. Given our new format, the study guides based on Sunday’s Sermon will be designed to be more application based (as opposed to unpacking the text with the Inductive Bible Study method). You might consider sharing the passage beforehand with your group in hopes that they might spend more time with the Scripture before the gathering.

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do in practicing the way of Jesus in community.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Tim Ghali and Pastor Rachel Keeler on behalf of the Group Life Team

For the Leader: “Check-In Plus One”

Welcome everyone to the Zoom call and outline the goal of this call being 45 minutes. Spend 15-20 minutes checking in with one another, then move into a time of prayer, and then spend some time discussing the application of the Scripture passage.

A “Check-in” question might be, “How are you doing, and is there anything new that has arisen in your life or in your neighborhood that we can pray about?”

Our theme for Advent this year is “Comfort and Joy,” and the sermons for this series have all come out of the Gospel of Luke.

Q – This week we celebrate our annual tradition of Monologue Sunday, looking at the Christmas story from the perspective of one of the characters in it. This year, that character is not *in* the story, but *behind* it—it is the evangelist Luke himself.

- Have you ever thought about the human authors who gave us the Gospels? About what motivated them to write, about how they did their research and how they wrote?
- What was your reaction to considering the Christmas story from Luke’s perspective? Do you see anything differently as a result?

Q – Pastor Bryan’s interpretation of Luke reflected: “I’m not a particularly religious person, and I’m not a Jew, so their practices and prophets were of little interest to me. Yet if even some of what was said about this Jesus was true—his care for the poor, for the sick, for people the world tends to overlook—I had to admit, he sounded pretty refreshing, for a religious guy. Like someone we needed more of.”

- In what ways do religious “practices and prophets” sometimes stand in the way of people coming to know the true story of Jesus?
- How can you share the story of Jesus in a way that is attractive, refreshing, and compelling to those who have a negative impression of religion, or simply aren’t interested?

Q – Part of the story Luke tells involves the differing responses to the angel on the part of Zechariah and Mary: one reacted with fear, and one with acceptance.

- Luke says of Zechariah: “Like many people who wander in and out of this story, when the supernatural steps right in their path—Zechariah was afraid.” Why would an encounter with God cause someone to feel afraid? When have you experienced fear in this way?
- Luke describes Mary as saying to the angel: “Yes. I don’t understand, but I believe.” What is the relationship between believing and understanding? When have you believed something you did not understand?

Q – At almost the very beginning of the monologue, Luke says: “The right stories change you. They become a part of you, and you aren’t the same anymore. But this story is different – because after it becomes a part of you, *you* become a part of *it*.”

- What do you love about the Christmas story? Is there a particular detail you cherish?
- How has knowing the Christmas story changed you? How might your life be different if you didn’t know this story?
- How have you already become a part of this story? In what other ways would you like to become a part of this story?

Let’s pray for one another, that the story of Christ’s birth will touch our hearts in a new way this Christmas.