



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
12/06/2020:
“Song of Silence”
Luke 1:5-25; 57-80

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?”

This year's theme for Advent is "Comfort and Joy," and the sermons are all based in the Gospel of Luke. Last week, we looked at the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth from Luke 1:39-56. This week, we're looking at the material that comes before and just after that section, meeting Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, and learning the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy (Luke 1:5-25; 57-80).

Q – In response to the angel's announcement that Elizabeth would bear a child, Zechariah asked: "How can I be sure of this?" (Luke 1:18). Pastor Bryan shared his own assessment of this response—"Now, you can't really blame him for asking, the question, right?"—as well as the angel's judgment—"And now you will be silent and not be able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words."

- What do you make of Zechariah's response? In what ways can you identify with it?
- When have you found it challenging to feel sure about something you really wanted to believe?
- What promises from Scripture or aspects of your faith would you like to feel more sure of?

Q – As we heard in the story, Zechariah lost his ability both to speak and to hear for nine months—he experienced nine months of silence. Reflecting on this, Pastor Bryan talked about how silence can be terrifying, or, at the very least, uncomfortable.

- When have you find silence uncomfortable? What's so uncomfortable about it?
- Why do you think we often find it uncomfortable when there are periods of silence in a group meeting or discussion?
- What kinds of practices do you sometimes engage in to avoid silence in your own life?

Q – Toward the end of the sermon, Pastor Bryan observed that silence can also be just what we need, and talked about how sometimes, out of silence, songs are born. He shared some of the new traditions and practices that have developed in his life as a result of silence and solitude.

- When in the past have you found silence to be just what you needed? What have you discovered in silence and stillness that you might not have discovered otherwise?
- Some of us may already have experienced new traditions and practices forming in our lives as a result of the pandemic, while others have not. What new practices do you hope might take root in your life, in the silence provided by this very different Advent and Christmas?
- What can you do to lean in to the silence and stillness and solitude of this Christmas season? What will make this challenging?

As we end our time together, let's take a few moments in silence to pray for one another, that each member of the group would find ways to lean in to the silence this Advent and be able to hear the voice of God.