



**Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!** If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions beginning at the bottom of page 2.

---

**SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE**  
for the sermon preached on December 12, 2021  
"Christmas Means You Belong"—Luke 2:8-20



Christmas means we are LOVED, in all the fullness of that word. Through the weeks of Advent this year, as we consider the experiences of various characters in the biblical narratives, we will discover multiple dimensions of what it means to be LOVED, and how the Christmas event demonstrates that love. This week, Pastor Adam leads us through the story of the angels announcing Jesus's birth to the shepherds in Luke 2, and helps us explore the gift of true belonging.

**Group Discussion Questions**

Q – Pastor Adam opened with a story of feeling like he did not belong, when he was on a trip with his swim team and got left behind. Describe a time when you experienced a sense of belonging, or a time when you felt like you didn't belong. Dig a little into the feelings involved in these kinds of experiences—why does it feel so good to belong, and why can unbelonging be so painful?

Q – Before beginning to read the story of the angels appearing to the shepherds, Adam asked us to think about "the type of person that you wouldn't want to be friends with." He noted that "most of us wouldn't admit to this, but we have people that we would prefer not to associate with."

- Why do you think it's difficult for us to admit that there are people we would prefer not to associate with?

Adam then invited us to picture that type of person in place of the shepherds in the story of Jesus's birth in Luke 2.

- What does a focus on the low social status of the shepherds help us to understand about the Christmas story? If you were able to imagine a more personal, contemporary unfavored person in the shepherds' place, what does that help you to appreciate about the story of Jesus's birth?

Q – Invite a member of the group to read Luke 2:8-12 aloud:

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

- In your own words, what did the angel announce?
- Why is the birth of the Messiah "good news that will cause great joy for all the people"?

Q – Adam talked about how, at its best, the church "offers each of us an extended spiritual family—a family not based on biology, ethnicity, nationality, or ideology, but on what Jesus has done. . . . This truth can offer us belonging and empower us to offer it to others."

- Who do you know who might be struggling to find a place where they feel like they can belong? Or who is that person who you personally find it difficult to welcome or accept?
- What is one concrete step that you could take to offer one of these people a greater sense of belonging?

Q – We have been reflecting this Advent on one verse from the First Letter of John: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

- What is the connection between Christmas and our belonging to God?
- In what way can the message of Christmas offer hope to anyone who has struggled to find a sense of belonging?
- What is one way you can lean in this Christmas season to accept and embrace your status of belonging to God more fully?

### How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
  - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
  - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.

- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

**Group Leader Support:** Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor Tim or Pastor Rachel from the Group Life team.