

Advent

A SEASON OF PREPARATION



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



Week 1

Text: Matthew 1:1–18a

Topic(s): Anticipation, Waiting, Preparation

Big Idea of the Message: The “begats” of Matthew can be laborious to read, but it is through this repetition, ordinariness, and human brokenness that God has chosen to enter into the world through Jesus.

Application Point: Advent means “arrival.” It is a season of waiting, anticipation, and preparation, as we seek to make ourselves ready for an encounter with Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week’s message?
2. A traditional worship service usually opens with a prayer of preparation. The pastor will pray on behalf of the congregation to help the people center their minds and hearts for worship. In what way are the “begats” in Matthew like God’s prayer of preparation?
3. In what ways can you find meaning in the birth of Christ over and above the traditions and customs of the Christmas season?
4. As you get ready for the Christmas season once again, ask yourself how comfortable you are with waiting.
5. A good exercise to put into practice during Advent is to avoid checking your phone when you are stopped at a traffic light or waiting in line at a grocery store. This can encourage you to become comfortable with waiting. How does the thought of intentionally waiting make you feel?
6. Is there anything you are waiting on that is bringing you trouble or hurting your faith?
7. How can I pray for you?



Week 2

Text: Mark 1:1–8

Topic: Waiting, Preparation, Confession and Repentance

Big Idea of the Message: John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by teaching people of the importance of confessing and repenting from their sins.

Application Point: Spiritual disciplines help us spend some time in self-reflection so that we can confess sin and repent.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Is anyone here from a church background that practices private confession with a priest? If so, what has your experience of that been?
3. The Protestant understanding of confession of sin is different from our higher church brethren: we can confess our sins directly to Jesus. How does Jesus function as your priest in your daily walk?
4. Do you practice any spiritual disciplines? Which ones? How have you grown through the practice of disciplines? If you don't practice any spiritual disciplines, why not?
5. During a season of waiting, when God seems distant, have you considered that there may be sin in your life that you need to confess? If you have experienced this, would you be willing to share with the group what happened after you confessed your sin?
6. How can I pray for you?



Week 3

Text: Matthew 1:18–25

Topic: Waiting, Assurance, Forgiveness, Acceptance

Big Idea of the Message: We have an assurance of forgiveness in Jesus.

Application Point: God shows us that he has provided the solution to every problem in Jesus, because, in Jesus, God has reconciled himself to the world through the forgiveness of our sins.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that assurance is part of our faith. How important is it to you to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have been forgiven?
3. In what way does an assurance of pardon help you relax and be more comfortable in your own skin?
4. Did the story of the judge sentencing her child touch you? Did it help you understand how we are forgiven?
5. What was your reaction to the quote from Daniel Taylor about how radically different God is from society, in that he doesn't affirm our ugliness but instead forgives it?
6. Is there anything else from the reading today that you would like to discuss?
7. How can I pray for you?



Week 4

Text: Luke 1:46–55

Topic: Waiting, Assurance, Forgiveness, Acceptance

Big Idea of the Message: The good news of Jesus makes our souls sing with joy.

Application Point: The best part about waiting is when the waiting is over and the big event has arrived. That's when you celebrate!

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Why is this topic of gratitude easier taught than lived out?
3. What about the gospel of God's grace brings you joy?
4. Do you believe the good news truly is *good*? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever been waiting on good news, and when it came to you, all you could do was shout for joy? Are you willing to share that story with the group?
6. How would you describe your experience of Advent and the holiday season: are you ready for it to be over or are you enjoying this season?
7. How can you encourage an environment of joyful thanksgiving on Christmas morning?
8. How can I pray for you?