



Advent 2024 Bible Academy Lessons

Based on *The Cast of Christmas* Sermon Series

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The Cast of Christmas **Advent Bible Academy**

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LESSON 1- The Prophets

Introduction

This lesson will center on the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6, which foretells the coming of Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. We will be encouraged to embrace these attributes of Christ, allowing them to guide and transform our lives. The casting call is personal, and it comes with the responsibility of sharing the good news of Jesus with others. We will be challenged to be bold in our faith, to not shy away from proclaiming the gospel, and to trust that God will use us for His glory.

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Bible Reading

Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Observation Questions

1. What are the four titles given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6, and what do they signify about His character and role?
2. What was the significance of Isaiah's response (in Isaiah 6:1-8) to God's call, and how did it reflect his willingness to serve despite his feelings of inadequacy?

Interpretation Questions

1. In what ways do the titles of Jesus in Isaiah 9:6 provide guidance and comfort to believers today? How can these attributes influence our daily lives?
2. How does the concept of a "personal casting call" challenge believers to share the gospel and live out their faith boldly?

Application Questions

1. As we prepare for the Advent season, what specific actions can you take to reflect on your role in God's story and be ready for His return?
2. Reflect on a time when prayer brought about a change in your life. How can you incorporate more intentional prayer into your daily routine?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with grateful hearts, acknowledging the powerful message we have received about the casting call of our lives. Just as You called Isaiah to proclaim Your truth, we recognize that You have a purpose for each of us. We thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. May we always remember that the government rests on His shoulders, and we are never alone in our struggles.

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: The Transformative Power of Prayer

Prayer is not just a ritual; it is a powerful connection with God that can transform our circumstances and bring peace to our hearts. Through prayer, we acknowledge our dependence on God and invite His presence into our lives. It is a means of communication that allows us to express our deepest concerns, seek guidance, and find solace. As we pray, we are reminded that God is faithful to hear us and respond according to His will. We are encouraged to pray not only for ourselves but also for others, trusting in God's ability to meet every need.

James 5:16 (ESV): "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

Reflection: Think of a specific situation in your life where you need God's intervention. How can you commit to praying about this situation daily, trusting in God's power to bring change?

Day 2: The Comfort and Authority in Jesus' Name

The name of Jesus holds immense power and authority. It is a name that brings comfort, healing, and salvation to those who call upon it. Embracing the name of Jesus means recognizing His presence and the authority He holds over all things. As we call upon His name, we are reminded of His promise to be with us, guiding and comforting us through life's challenges. By embracing the name of Jesus, we open ourselves to experience His peace and guidance in our lives.

Acts 4:12 (ESV): "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Reflection: In what areas of your life do you need to experience the comfort and authority of Jesus' name? How can you intentionally call upon His name in those areas today?

Day 3: Responding to God's Call with Courage

Like Isaiah, we are called to respond to God's invitation to be part of His story. Despite our feelings of inadequacy, God equips and empowers us to fulfill the roles He has assigned. Our willingness to say "Here I am, send me" opens the door for God to use us in remarkable ways. Responding to God's call requires courage and faith, trusting that He will provide what we need to accomplish His purposes.

Isaiah 6:8 (ESV): "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'"

Reflection: What is one area where you feel God is calling you to step out in faith? How can you take a practical step today to respond to His call?

Day 4: Embracing the Attributes of Christ

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. These attributes provide us with guidance, strength, and comfort. By embracing who Christ is, we allow His character to shape and transform our lives, leading us to live out our faith boldly. As we reflect on these attributes, we are encouraged to let them guide our actions and decisions, trusting in Christ's wisdom and power.

Isaiah 9:6 (ESV): "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."

Reflection: Which attribute of Christ do you need to embrace more fully in your life right now? How can you allow this attribute to influence your daily decisions and interactions?

Day 5: Embracing Your Unique Role in God's Story

Each of us has a unique role in God's grand narrative. This casting call is personal and comes with the responsibility of sharing the gospel. We are encouraged to be bold in our faith, to not shy away from proclaiming the good news, and to trust that God will use us for His glory. Embracing our role means recognizing the gifts and opportunities God has given us and using them to further His kingdom.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV): "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Reflection: What unique gifts or opportunities has God given you to share the gospel? How can you use them this week to make an impact for His kingdom?

LESSON 2 – The Angels

Introduction

In this lesson, we will explore the profound narrative of the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, as recounted in the Gospel of Luke. This story is a pivotal moment in the Christian faith, marking the announcement of Jesus Christ's birth. Gabriel, whose name means "warrior of God," is a messenger with a significant role in God's divine plan. His visit to Mary was not just an announcement but an endorsement of God's favor upon her. Gabriel's message to Mary was one of hope and fulfillment. He assured her that she was highly favored and that the Lord was with her. This assurance is a reminder to us all that no matter the circumstances, God's presence is constant.

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Bible Reading

Luke 1:26-31 (NIV) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

Observation Questions

1. What was the initial reaction of Mary when the angel Gabriel greeted her, and how did Gabriel address her concerns?
2. How did Mary's response to Gabriel's message evolve throughout the narrative, and what does her song, the Magnificat, signify?

Interpretation Questions

1. What does the concept of "divine selection and favor" mean in the context of Gabriel's visit to Mary, and how does it relate to the idea of grace?
2. How does the assurance of God's constant presence, as mentioned in Gabriel's message to Mary, provide comfort and guidance in challenging situations?

Application Questions

1. In what ways can you become more attentive to God's messages in your life, whether through dreams, visions, or the words of others?
2. Mary's transformation from fear to joy was marked by her song of praise. What is one way you can express gratitude and joy in your life, even amidst uncertainty?

CLOSING PRAYER

Help us to be open to your calling, just as Mary was willing to accept her role in your divine plan. May we find comfort in knowing that you are with us, guiding us through every challenge we face. We pray for those who may be struggling or feeling lost today. Touch their hearts, Lord, and let them know that they are favored and loved by you. May we carry the good news of Jesus Christ into our communities, sharing the hope that we have found in you.

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: Divine Selection and Grace

God's choice of Mary to bear Jesus is a profound example of divine selection, not based on human qualifications but on His grace and purpose. Gabriel's visit to Mary underscores that God's favor is a gift, not something earned. This narrative invites us to reflect on our own lives, recognizing that we are chosen by God for specific roles in His divine plan. It is a reminder that our worth and purpose are defined by God's grace, not by our achievements or status. Embracing this truth can transform how we view ourselves and our place in the world.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 (ESV): "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are."

Reflection: Consider a time when you felt unqualified or inadequate. How can you embrace God's grace and purpose in that situation today?

Day 2: God's Unwavering Presence

Gabriel's assurance to Mary that "the Lord is with you" serves as a powerful reminder of God's constant presence in our lives. This message is especially comforting in times of uncertainty and challenge. It reassures us that we are never alone, and God's guidance and support are always available. By acknowledging His presence, we can find peace and strength to navigate life's difficulties. This assurance encourages us to cultivate a deeper awareness of God's presence in our daily lives, trusting that He is with us in every moment.

Isaiah 41:10 (ESV): "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Reflection: In what area of your life do you need to be reminded of God's presence today? How can you actively seek His guidance and support in that area?

Day 3: The Transformative Power of God's Word

Mary's journey from fear to joy illustrates the transformative power of God's word. When Gabriel delivered God's message, it changed Mary's perspective and filled her with hope and purpose. This transformation is a testament to the impact of embracing God's messages in our lives. By being open to His voice, we allow His word to shape our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. This encourages us to actively listen for God's guidance and to trust in His promises, knowing that His word has the power to bring about profound change.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV): "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Reflection: What is one area of your life where you need to embrace God's word more fully? How can you create space to listen for His voice today?

Day 4: Embracing Our Role in God's Plan

Just as Mary accepted her role in God's plan, we are called to embrace the roles God has for us. This acceptance requires trust in God's purpose and a willingness to step into the unknown. We may not always understand why we are chosen, but we can have confidence that God equips us for the tasks He assigns. Embracing our role involves surrendering our own plans and desires to align with God's will, trusting that His plan is for our ultimate good and His glory.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV): "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Reflection: What role do you sense God is calling you to embrace in this season of your life? What steps can you take to align your actions with His purpose?

Day 5: The Transformative Power of Faith

Mary's journey from confusion to singing the Magnificat is a testament to the transformative power of faith. Her story demonstrates that when we trust in God's plan and His promises, we can move from fear to joy. Faith enables us to see beyond our current circumstances and to trust that God is working all things for our good. This transformation is not just about changing our perspective but about experiencing a deep, abiding joy that comes from knowing we are part of God's divine plan.

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV): "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Reflection: How can you cultivate a deeper faith in God's promises today? What is one step you can take to move from fear to joy in your current situation?

LESSON 3 – The Shepherds

Introduction

We will explore the profound narrative of the shepherds in the Christmas story, emphasizing their role in the divine drama of Christ's birth. This narrative, often overshadowed by more prominent figures, highlights the shepherds' unique journey from the fields to the manger, driven by a divine message and a sense of urgency. Their story is a testament to the importance of having a destination, determination, and the right information in our spiritual journey. The shepherds, often seen as humble and unassuming, were chosen to receive the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth. As we reflect on the shepherds' journey, we are reminded of the importance of being open to God's direction, having the determination to pursue His calling, and the courage to share the message of hope and salvation. In doing so, we become part of the ongoing "Cast of Christmas," playing our role in the unfolding story of God's love for humanity.

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Bible Reading

Luke 2:15-18: "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them."

Observation Questions

1. What was the shepherds' immediate reaction after the angels left them, according to Luke 2:15-16? How does this reflect their sense of urgency?
2. How did the shepherds respond after witnessing the birth of Jesus, and what impact did their testimony have on others?

Interpretation Questions

1. Why might God have chosen the shepherds, who were humble and often overlooked, to be the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth? What does this choice reveal about God's character?
2. How does the shepherds' role as the first evangelists challenge modern believers in their responsibility to share their faith?

Application Questions

1. Consider your own "Bethlehem"—a place or moment where you have encountered Christ. How can you share this experience with others in a meaningful way?
2. The shepherds shared their testimony with joy and conviction. How can you cultivate a similar boldness in sharing your faith with those around you?

CLOSING PRAYER

As we leave this place, may we carry the good news of Jesus Christ in our hearts and share it boldly with those around us. Let our testimonies be a light to others, just as the angels brought joy to the shepherds. We ask for Your guidance and strength to be shepherds of Your flock, leading with love and compassion. Lord, bless each person here today. May they feel Your presence and know that You are with them in every moment. We pray for those who are seeking, that they may find You and experience the joy of salvation. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

5-Day Devotional

Day 1: God Chooses the Unexpected

The shepherds, humble and often overlooked, were chosen to receive the divine announcement of Jesus' birth. This choice underscores the theme that God often uses the least expected to fulfill His purposes. The shepherds' immediate response to the angelic message—leaving their flocks to find the newborn Savior—demonstrates a profound determination and urgency that we are called to emulate in our own spiritual pursuits. Their journey to Bethlehem was not just a physical one but a spiritual pilgrimage that led them to witness the fulfillment of God's promise. This reminds us that God often uses the least expected to fulfill His purposes, challenging us to be open to His calling regardless of our status or background.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (ESV): "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

Reflection: Think of a time when you felt overlooked or insignificant. How might God be calling you to step into His purpose despite your perceived limitations?

Day 2: Urgency in Seeking Christ

The shepherds' immediate response to the angelic message exemplifies the urgency and determination we should have in our spiritual journey. Their willingness to leave everything behind to seek the Savior challenges us to prioritize our pursuit of Christ above all else. This urgency is not just about speed but about the intensity of our desire to know and follow Jesus. The shepherds' journey was marked by a sense of purpose and direction, reminding us that our spiritual journey requires a clear destination and the resolve to pursue it wholeheartedly.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV): "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Reflection: What is one thing you can set aside today to better pursue your relationship with Christ with urgency and determination?

Day 3: The Power of Personal Testimony

After witnessing the birth of Jesus, the shepherds became the first evangelists, sharing their experience with others. This highlights the importance of personal testimony in spreading the gospel and encourages us to share our encounters with Christ boldly. The shepherds' story challenges us to consider our own "Bethlehem"—the place where we encounter Christ—and to reflect on how we can share that transformative experience with the world. Personal testimony is powerful because it is a firsthand account of God's work in our lives, and it can inspire and encourage others to seek Him as well.

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV): "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

Reflection: Identify one person in your life who needs to hear your story of encountering Christ. How can you share your testimony with them this week in a way that is both bold and respectful?

Day 4: Finding Your Bethlehem

The shepherds' journey to Bethlehem symbolizes our own spiritual pilgrimage to encounter Christ. We are encouraged to identify our "Bethlehem"—the place where we meet Jesus—and to seek it with determination and faith. This journey is not just about a physical location but about a spiritual state where we are open to experiencing God's presence and receiving His promises. Finding our Bethlehem requires us to be intentional in our pursuit of God, seeking Him in prayer, worship, and the study of His Word.

Jeremiah 29:13-14 (ESV): "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."

Reflection: What is your "Bethlehem"—the place or practice where you most often encounter Christ? How can you prioritize this in your daily life to deepen your relationship with Him?

Day 5: Embracing Our Role in God's Story

The shepherds' story is a reminder that we all have a role to play in God's unfolding narrative. By embracing our part in the "cast of Christmas," we contribute to the greater story of God's love and redemption for the world. Each of us has unique gifts and experiences that God can use to further His kingdom. Embracing our role means being willing to step out in faith, trusting that God will equip us for the tasks He has prepared for us. It also means being open to the unexpected ways God might use us to impact others.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV): "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Reflection: What unique gifts or experiences has God given you that can be used to serve others and further His kingdom? How can you take a step today to embrace your role in God's story?