



Welcome to the Advent Conspiracy!

The purpose of the Advent Conspiracy is to make Christmas meaningful again by refocusing on the reason we have to celebrate. It's an opportunity to take intentional time in this advent season to Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More and Love All.

Each week of this simple small group study will follow along with the sermon series being preached on Sunday mornings at 9:30. Other congregations will also use the sermon series and this will compliment what is taught there as well. But even if you're not following the sermon series your small group can still use this study with no problems.

The goal is to help your group consider how you might lean into intentional worship of the God who is present with us through Jesus. And then, our hope is that you will commit to spending less on presents and instead invest more in giving your presence to your friends and family. And finally, this is an opportunity for you, your family and your small group to consider how you might love others by allowing them to experience the presence of Jesus through your presence in their lives.

Accompanying this small group study is a Random Acts of Kindness worksheet that you can use with your small group to brainstorm ways that as individuals or as a collective group you could actively show God's love in this advent season. I would encourage you to lean into this activity and take the opportunity to really conspire together to be the presence of God in the life of someone you know this Christmas. It doesn't need to be big and spectacular. It can be something simple done for just one person. The idea is to reclaim what makes Christmas most meaningful and it only really works if you put it into action.

We would love to hear stories from your small group about all of the random acts of kindness you take up this advent season. Please do share your stories, photos, and/or videos to Chrissy at chrissy@thebeaconchurch.com. We are praying that God uses this season to bless you with his presence in a new and meaningful way this Christmas.



ADVENT
CONSPIRACY

Week 1: Worship Fully



Conversation Starters:

1. What's your favourite Christmas song and why?
2. In one word, describe what you want to experience this Advent season.
3. What forms of worship help you connect with God?

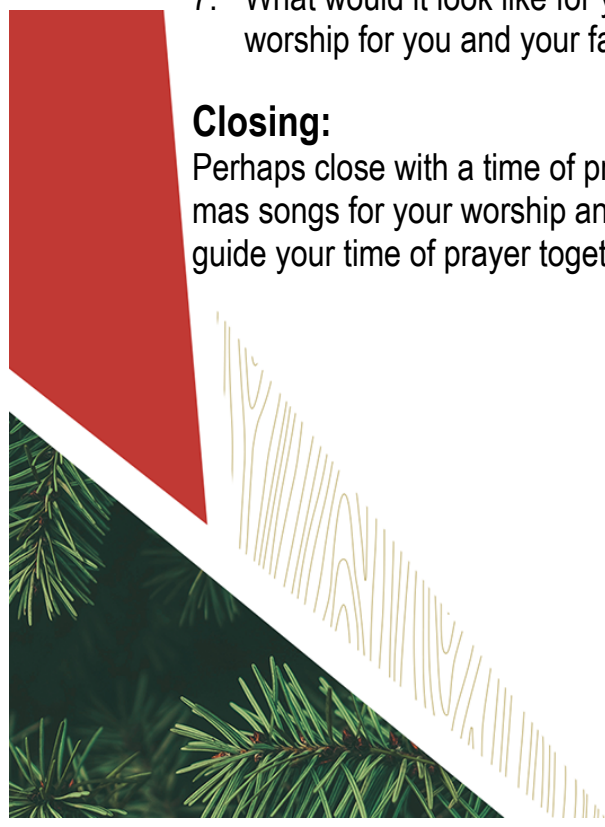
Discussion:

Read the following passages together: Luke 1:26-56, Luke 2:1-21, Matthew 2:1-12

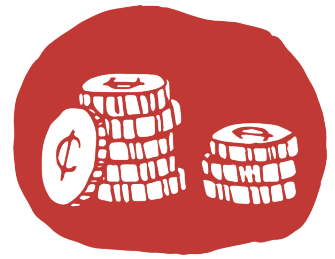
1. What were the different ways that each of the people in these passages worshipped God at the news of Jesus' birth?
2. Why do you think worship was the natural reaction of each person in these stories?
3. Who do you most identify with in the Christmas story - Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, the Shepherds, or the magi? Why?
4. Do you think worship is the natural reaction for people today at Christmas? Why or why not?
5. Do you ever find it difficult to stay in a worshipful state of mind in this season? Why or why not?
6. In each moment of worship in these passages - Mary's song in Luke 1, Zechariah's song in Luke 1, the Shepherds in Luke 2 and the Magi in Matthew 2 - again and again their worship comes from gratitude because of a promise fulfilled. They saw in Jesus the fulfillment of God's promise to them and it overflowed in gratitude and worship. In what ways has God fulfilled his promise in your life?
7. What would it look like for you to intentionally make this advent season a season of worship for you and your family?

Closing:

Perhaps close with a time of prayer and/or worship. You could play some favourite Christmas songs for your worship and then use the songs from Mary and Zechariah in Luke 1 to guide your time of prayer together.



Week 2: Spend Less



Conversation Starters:

1. Share the story of one of your family Christmas traditions.
2. What's the most meaningful gift you've ever received?
3. What are practical ways that someone can shop intentionally and thoughtfully?

Discussion:

Read the following passage together: Matthew 6:19-24

1. What do you think is meant by “treasures on earth” vs. “treasures in heaven”?
2. How are our hearts connected to the things we treasure?
3. How would you explain v. 22-23?
4. John Piper explains those verses this way, “Don’t lay up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven. Show that your heart is fixed on the value that God is for you in Christ. Make sure that your eye is good not bad. That is, make sure that you see heavenly treasure as infinitely more precious than earthly material treasure. When your eye sees things this way, you are full of light. And if you don’t see things this way, even the light you think you see (the glitz and flash and skin and muscle of this world) is all darkness. You are sleepwalking through life. You are serving money as a slave without even knowing it, because it has lulled you to sleep. Far better is to be swayed by the truth - the infinite value of God.” Piper connected these verses to the story in Matthew 20 of the workers in the vineyard. In Matthew 20:15, some are more concerned with the money they received and are therefore not able to see the amazing generosity and graciousness of the landowner. What are some of God’s generous gifts to us that should be valued as a most precious treasure?
5. How can you store up treasures in heaven? What does that mean practically?
6. How might you cultivate gratitude in you and your family this Christmas that fights against the pull toward consumerism?

Closing:

Perhaps close by discussing together what it would look like to practically put this ideal of spending less into practice this Christmas. Remembering, it's not about spending nothing but about making Christmas meaningful again. That could be by choosing specific meaningful gifts, choosing to make some gifts, or choosing to purchase from shops and retailers with purpose. Share your ideas and be inspired.

Week 3: Give More



Conversation Starters:

1. What's your favourite Christmas movie?
2. There's an anticipation that comes with advent. In what areas of your life are you longing to see God at work?
3. What is one prayer you have for this advent season?

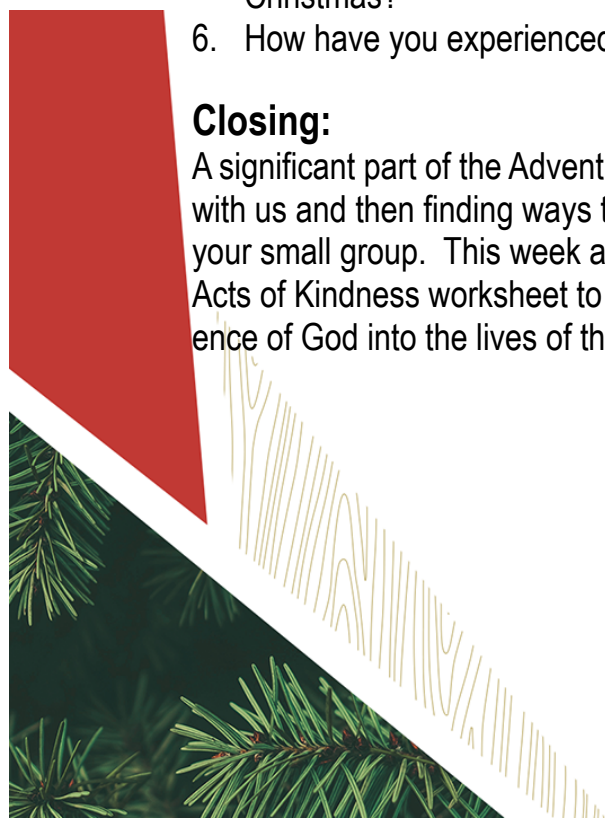
Discussion:

Read the following passages together: Matthew 1:22-23, John 1:1-14

1. Matthew tells us that Jesus was the fulfilment of God's promise to be "with us." How does John 1 describe the way that Jesus fulfilled this promise?
2. Twice in John 1 it says the world has not understood - v. 5 the word "overcome" could also be "understood" and again in v. 10 it says they could not recognise him. What is it about the message of Jesus as God with us that you think is so difficult for people to understand or recognise?
3. John 1:12-13 describes the gift we receive because of Jesus' presence in the world. How would you describe the significance of that gift?
4. John 1:14 in the Message translation says, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish." What would it mean for the church to embody this truth in your community?
5. How might Christians help people to understand or recognise Jesus particularly at Christmas?
6. How have you experienced God's presence with you in this season?

Closing:

A significant part of the Advent Conspiracy is about celebrating the gift of God's presence with us and then finding ways to share that same gift with others - both inside and outside your small group. This week and/or next week it would be really good to use the Random Acts of Kindness worksheet to conspire as a small group to bring a little more of the presence of God into the lives of the people around you.



Week 4: Love All



Conversation Starters:

1. If you could spend Christmas anywhere in the world, where would you go and who would you bring with you?
2. What are some special Christmas foods you grew up with?
3. Advent is a busy season for many of us, how do you intentionally slow down and stay present?

Discussion:

Read the following passage together: Matthew 22:34-40, 1 John 4:7-12

1. According to these passages, what is the reason we should love God?
2. What do you think it means to love your neighbour as you love yourself?
3. How would you explain the meaning of Matthew 22:40?
4. According to 1 John 4, what is the reason we should love other people?
5. What does 1 John 4 say will be the result of our love for other people?
6. 1 John 4:9-10 tells us the way that God demonstrated his love for us. How do you think the example that Jesus set for us should impact the way we love others? What would it look like to love other people the way that Jesus loved us?

Closing:

A significant part of the Advent Conspiracy is about celebrating the gift of God's presence with us and then finding ways to share that same gift with others - both inside and outside your small group. If you've not yet started or if you didn't finish, it would be really good to use the Random Acts of Kindness worksheet to conspire as a small group to bring a little more of the presence of God into the lives of the people around you. Perhaps close your time with some clear ways you are going to put your advent conspiracy into action over the next week or two.



Random Acts of Kindness Worksheet

As you fill in this worksheet, use it to help you to brainstorm ideas for you, your family and/or your small group to conspire together to Give More of God's presence and to Love All this advent season. It might be useful to brainstorm ideas that would work in person or not in person so you can adjust as the circumstances require. Suggestions will be made that you can use or to help prompt other ideas.

Your Small Group

Begin by listing all of the members of your small group, even those who aren't able to attend as regularly as they might like.

List some ways you could demonstrate love and kindness toward those in your small group: is there someone who isn't often able to come who could use extra love and care from your group? Could you divide up and have a secret Santa or secret buddy that you emphasise a meaningful or personally made gift? Could create a social opportunity that feels joy filled and fun amidst the restrictions currently (be creative!!)?



Your Family

List some intentional ways you could make this Christmas especially meaningful - focused less on gifts and more on presence with each other and with God for your immediate family (those you live with or see regularly). Could you use the Advent Family Kit and try to do some family activities (with or without kids) throughout December? Could you create a family project to share love with others by saving change, donating to a local charity or doing some other act of love or service together? Could you make a list of people you know who could use some extra love this season and revive a Christmas card tradition?

List some ways you could bring intentional meaning and care to those family who you may not get to see so often, especially if you'll miss seeing them this Christmas. Could you create some personal or handmade gifts that would be meaningful to them? Could you do some baking and share with them? How about watching a Christmas movie together over Zoom (it works!)?



Your Friends/Neighbours/Coworkers

Make a list of people you know in any sphere of life from neighbours, friends, coworkers, school mates, etc.

Decide whether you will do something as a whole small group for 1 or 2 families or whether you would do something as an individual. Could you make a Christmas hamper and leave it as a Secret Santa for someone who needs the extra love? Do you know a family you could bless with gifts who might not be able to afford it this year? Could your small group bake (or buy!) cookies and give Christmas cards to everyone on the block? Could you decorate your block and serve hot chocolate and play Christmas music outdoors for a little outdoor party (depending on government guidelines)?

