

From Prophecy to Reality: The Journey to Christmas

Session 1 | The Anticipation

Discussion Guide

As Christians, we often think of the story of God and humanity in three acts: (i) creation, (ii) fall, and (iii) Jesus. While each of these acts is fundamental to our understanding and how we live out our faith in Jesus, we are missing huge chunks of the story that can deepen and enrich our faith when we skip nearly the entire Old Testament. The Old Testament not only tells the complex, and often heart-breaking story, of God's people and their mission to be a light to the world, but also helps us to know who Jesus is and why He came.

In this Session, we will examine some key Old Testament passages and concepts to help us better understand our Savior, Jesus Christ, and why there was such anticipation for His arrival.

- OPENING COMMUNITY BUILDER QUESTIONS -

Select one or more of the questions below to get your group discussion started.

1. What do you anticipate most during the Christmas season?
2. What is a favorite Christmas tradition in your family?
3. What is your biggest stressor during the Christmas season? Share why.

If you think your group needs a little bit more warming up before diving into the Bible passages for this week, try discussing this community-building question:

- Consider something you have greatly anticipated in the past. What was it? What created the anticipation?

- JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES -
LUKE 24:13–35 AND 24:36–49

Study Questions

Read the Scripture passages referenced above aloud as a group. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss.

1. Focus your attention on verses 25–27 and 44–49. What do you understand Jesus to be saying about Himself and the Old Testament Scriptures in these verses?
2. What stories or verses from the Old Testament come to mind for you when you hear Jesus' words that the Scriptures concerned Him?
3. Why do you think it was important for Jesus' disciples to know that He was fulfilling what was written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms?
4. What impact does the fact that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament Scriptures have on your faith in or relationship with Jesus?

- THE GOSPEL IN ADVANCE -
GENESIS 12:1–5 AND GALATIANS 3:7–9

Study Questions

Read the Scripture passages referenced above aloud as a group two or three times each. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss.

1. What stood out to you the most in the passage about Abram (whose name is later changed to Abraham)? Why?
 - To what responsibilities did God call Abram?
 - What promises did God make to Abram?
2. Where do you see Jesus in the verses from Genesis? In other words, what do God's words to Abram have to do with Jesus?
3. How does God's call and promise to Abram anticipate the coming of Jesus?
4. Why do you think Paul calls God's statement to Abram ("All nations will be blessed through you") the gospel, announced in advance?
 - How would you explain the gospel with the calling of Abram in mind?

- ANTICIPATING JESUS -

ISAIAH 7:1–17; 9:1–7 AND MATTHEW 1:18–25

Study Questions

Read the passages of Scripture referenced above aloud as a group two times each, and include multiple readers. Then select a few of the questions below to discuss. If you'd like to learn or share more about Isaiah and specifically these chapters, we suggest reading the introduction to Isaiah to the NIV Bible: <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-isaiah/>

1. What stood out to you most as we read these passages? Why?
2. According to Isaiah 7, what was the purpose of a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a son?
3. What does it mean that the child born and the son given, referenced in Isaiah 9, would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace?
 - Which of these names of the Savior resonates most with you right now? Why?
4. Why would it have been good news to God's people that God would come to be with them in the future?
5. Why do you think Matthew quoted Isaiah 7 in his Gospel account?
6. Why does it matter that the prophecies in Isaiah 7 and 9 were fulfilled in Jesus?
7. Why does it matter to your faith that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in Isaiah 7 and 9?

- CLOSING THOUGHTS -

As your time comes to an end, remind your group members when you're meeting next and to read the second week of devotionals that will be sent out via email this week in preparation for that meeting. Close your time together by praying for whatever difficulties or needs were shared during your gathering.