



Christmas

AT CROSSPOINTE

SESSIONS 1-4



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SESSION 1

Read

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Watch

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Discuss

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.



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Read Genesis 8:6-12 (note the mention of 40 days of waiting). After the earth suffers long under humanity's violence, God resolves to wash away corruption while preserving Noah and his family. The rain pours down, and for months Noah sways back and forth in an ark. He needs to yakhhal (wait) in the middle of animal waste and landless seas. So what assurance is Noah waiting to receive? And how does the dove deliver that assurance?

Read Psalm 130 aloud together. The psalmist is sure that if God preserved a record of sin, everyone would be washed out—it's a scary thought. What specific things about God bring the psalmist relief? What does he yakhhal (wait) to receive from God?

Keep Psalm 130 in mind. What do you think the psalmist would do if he did not wait on God for healing and forgiveness? How do you think despair might lead to violence and corruption? Consider how the process of forgiveness removes corruption while preserving life. How is this similar and different from the flood and Noah's long wait on the ark?

Read Luke 2:22-33 and pay special attention to details about the setting. Then, check out Leviticus 12:1-8 and note the mention of 40 days of waiting (33+7). Why do Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and Simeon go to the temple that day? What is Simeon waiting on God to do for Israel?

Let's examine a few key verses, starting with Luke 3:15-16. Who does John the Baptist say the people have been waiting for? Now, read Luke 3:21-22 and compare the message that accompanied the Spirit (appearing as a dove) with the message of Noah's dove. What similarities and differences do you notice?

How does the arrival of Jesus bring relief and assurance? Take time to discuss this and any other themes, questions, or key takeaways from what you learned together.



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SESSION 2

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The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the arrival of a future king who would make a covenant of shalom (peace, well-being) with his people. This king would set the world right and heal all that has been harmed. Read Isaiah 9:6-7 aloud together. What specific words or phrases stand out to you as you observe this passage and why?

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the arrival of the Prince of Peace, whose reign would lead to eternal shalom. Jesus' arrival fulfilled Isaiah's words. Read and reflect on Luke 2:9-15 as a group. Why do you think God announced the king's arrival to no-name shepherds? What does this tell you about the nature of God and his Kingdom?

The biblical story shows how humanity of ten chooses a way of life apart from God and suffers as a result. According to Colossians 1:19-23, what did God want to do to remedy this pain, and how did he accomplish his desire through Jesus?

Jesus offers his peace to all people as a gift. How did Jesus make peace between two sharply divided people groups (Jews and Gentiles), and why did he do it (see Eph. 2:11-16)?

Now, let's carefully read Ephesians 4:1-3. How can humility, gentleness, patience, and love help maintain the unity Jesus calls his followers to? What happens to unity when one of these virtues is missing?



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SESSION 3

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When Jesus arrived, God's love became an embodied reality in our world. The God of the Bible doesn't merely express love through Jesus; he is love. As a triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—he always has been and forever will be an others-centered, self-giving, communal being who thinks, feels, and acts with pure love. Read 1 John 4:16 and John 15:9-13, taking note of the triune relationship and the theme of living and abiding. What do you observe?

Read Mark 12:29-31 and take note of how Jesus quotes the Hebrew Bible (Deut. 6:4-6; Lev. 19:34). How does loving God relate to loving other people?

The Hebrew Bible records the history of the ancient Israelites as they struggle to follow the commandment to love God and others. If Israel had difficulty with this, how can we hope to do any better? Jesus helps us when he adds a new commandment to empower the greatest commandment. Compare John 13:34 with Mark 12:29-31. What is the difference between these two commands? How does Jesus enable us to follow the greatest commandment?

Agape love is not primarily a feeling that happens to people. This kind of love is a choice to act in ways that offer well-being to others. Using Paul's definition of love from 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, consider how Jesus loves us. How is Jesus patient, kind, humble, and selfless toward us? How does this kind of love challenge more popular modern notions?

Jesus says that the ultimate standard of authentic love is how well you treat the person you can't stand—your enemy. Let that settle in as you read Luke 6:27-36. Notice how God shows kindness to ungrateful, dishonest, and violent people. What does this say about God's character? Consider how verse 36 describes God. How do you think love and mercy relate to one another?



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The Israelites choose a path apart from God. As a result, they get exiled from their land and dominated by foreign nations. But the prophet Isaiah knew that sorrow would not have the final word with these people. He looked forward to the day when Yahweh would end pain and corruption to lead them into endless, joyful living. Read Isaiah 49:13 and Isaiah 51:11. What does Isaiah tell us about God's character in these passages? What does Isaiah say will happen to God's people?

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the coming of Israel's redeemer. His prophecies were fulfilled with the arrival of Jesus. Read Luke 2:9-11. Why were the shepherds afraid? What reasons did the angels give for them to rejoice instead?

Joy can persist in the harshest of circumstances because it depends on God and his promises. Read Matthew 5:11-12, Acts 13:50-52, and Hebrews 12:1-3. According to these passages, what specific truths about God can sustain joy even through painful or dire situations?

When we see how Jesus' loving way of life has overcome death itself, joy starts to become strangely reasonable. But this doesn't mean it is wise to ignore or suppress sorrow. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. How did Paul integrate both joy and sorrow?

Take time to discuss any other themes, questions, or key takeaways from what you learned together.