# BEHOLD

Follow the Light / Celebrate the Lamb!

WEEKS 1-4 LEADER/MEMBER GUIDE

#### THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS (ADVENT SERIES)

This Study Guide is a tool to help you combine the video and Bible study into a dynamic experience. As the leader, take some time in advance to consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

With that in mind, let's preview the guide. The main body of the Study Guide is written as a conversation you would have with your group. When there's a specific question to ask, **it appears in bold type** and the paragraphs that follow after might include thoughts you could add to the discussion.

Each session has particular sections:

#### **Session Goals**

This is the point of each session—the big idea and what we hope participants walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of studying the material. All of the teaching, questions, and reflections ultimately point back to these goals.

#### Open

This is an icebreaker. Adjust it to the character of your group, but don't skip it, for several reasons. (1) Every group needs some transition time. (2) Everyone gets to know each other. (3) The introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives.

#### View

Before watching the video, take a moment or two to walk through the "things to look for" questions. They'll help concentrate attention on the most important parts of the video teaching. Then, when you watch the video, make sure to set the audio at a comfortable level and everyone can see the screen. You don't want your group to miss anything.

#### Review

People can forget what they see unless they review it right away. The discussion questions in this section help your group remember what they just viewed from the teaching and real-life stories. But other questions try to connect the video to their emotions or experience. How did you feel when the teacher said that? Is it true in your life? Do you have the same issue?

You, as the leader, will set the tone. If you offer a comment that's authentic, vulnerable, or a bit challenging, then others will feel that they have permission to do the same—and you will have meaningful discussion and growth.

## **Bible Exploration**

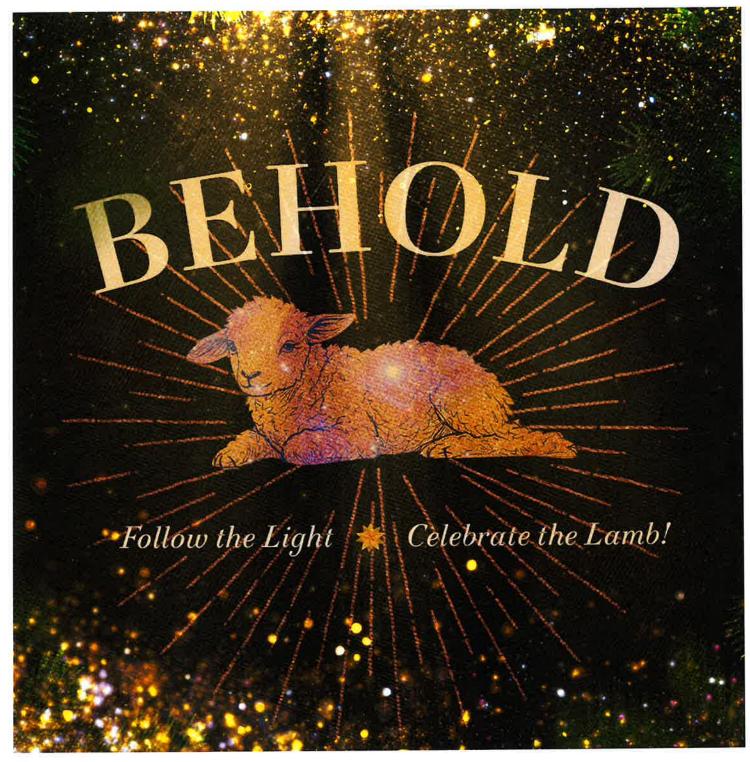
This is a Bible study, so each session is grounded in Scripture. Within your group, you may find different levels of faith. This is a time to open up the Bible and help them grow in their faith.

## **Last Word**

This is an opportunity for your group to be challenged to do something with what they've learned. This section will direct the group to reflect on how they live out their faith in their daily lives.

## **Deeper Walk**

These are suggestions for individuals to do, read, and reflect on their own during the week for further study. Encourage your group to dive deeper, but don't demand it.



## WEEK 1

# WATCH

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

## READ

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

# DISCUSS

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

# Session 1: The Wonder of His Presence

#### **NOTE TO LEADER**

We intentionally created this study guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the study guide's corresponding session, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. For more information on using this guide in your group, click the three lines in the menu bar and select How to Use This Guide. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.

## SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** We can trust God even in our unknown circumstances because we have the promise of his presence.

**Head Change:** To know God is always with us—even in our unknown circumstances.

**Heart Change:** To feel peace regardless of what difficulties we are facing.

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<b>Life Change:</b> To tell others that God is present with us.	
OPEN	
Have you ever visited a familiar place or rewatched a familiar movie with a friend or child who was seeing it for the first time? Did their response change your perspective? If so, in what ways?	
It's easy to get comfortable with a place we frequent or a movie we've seen countless times. But when we join someone witnessing it for the first time, it can be magical. In a way, we get a chance to see it again with fresh eyes. What delighted us when we first experienced it can delight us again.	
In this series, pastor Jarrett Stephens will help us revisit a familiar story—the Christmas story—but with a fresh perspective. In this session, he will explore the wonder of Christ's presence.	
VIEW	
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jarrett's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.	
What did the angels say to everyone they visited?	
According to Jarrett, what is the message of Christmas?	
Watch Session 1: <i>The Wonder of His Presence</i> (13 minutes).	

## REVIEW This series focuses on regaining the wonder of Christmas. In this session, we looked at God's promised presence with his people. Jarrett opened this session with a story about his family's Christmas snow globe. For him, having seen it "a thousand times," it was just a decoration. But for his daughters, seeing it with fresh eyes, they were mesmerized by it. For Christians, the way we see Christmas is often the way Jarrett saw that snow globe. Sometimes it takes the fresh perspective of others to remind us of how wonderful the story of Christmas is. Have you ever found yourself indifferent to the Christmas story? If so, what have you done to reignite your wonder of the Christmas story? If the story never gets old for you, how have you kept it fresh? Jarrett discussed the stories of three angel visits. Let's take some time to review each story. Read Luke 1:26–38. The angel brought Mary good news, but God's good plan also presented real complications. As Jarrett said, "In her culture, this could cost [Mary] everything—her reputation, her marriage, possibly even her life." While God will never call us to do something that contradicts his Word, following Christ often costs us something. Maybe it's passing on a job promotion that would take you away from your family. Or swapping your luxury vacation for a

Read Matthew 1:18–25. When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, his world must have felt

mission trip. When have you obeyed God, even when it cost you something? Was it worth it?

In what ways can you focus on God's faithfulness regardless of the outcome?

completely upside down. Through a dream, the Lord sent an angel to encourage Joseph to follow through with his marriage to Mary. While God may not speak to you through a dream, he does speak through his Word and through other believers. When has God used his Word, a sermon, or a Christian to encourage you in a difficult decision? What could it look like to use Scripture or your words to encourage a believer who is struggling?

Joseph decided he would divorce Mary instead of having her stoned. While his response to Mary's situation was generous by Jewish standards. God wanted Joseph to go beyond what was socially acceptable and trust him with the outcome. Similarly, we may find that when we have a difficult decision to make, we have more than one option—one that looks right on paper, but isn't what God has called us to, and one that's more difficult but we know is what God's leading us to. How do you know what decision to make when there is more than one option? When have you known that the decision you needed to make was the more difficult choice? What was it like to trust God with the outcome?

Read Luke 2:8–15. Jarrett noted that the shepherds were in the field doing their jobs on an ordinary night. In this place, the Lord entered the shepherd's world and revealed his presence. We can remember God's presence in our ordinary moments as well. Perhaps it's in a beautiful sunrise on the way to work. Or in the kindness of a stranger. In what circumstances have you been surprised by God's presence? What are some simple ways you can remind others of God's presence?

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Jarrett said, "We can trust God to show up in our unknown circumstances because the savior the angels promised would be present with them is present with us as well." In a world where we can't control our circumstances, we have plenty of reasons to worry or be afraid, but we can trust that God is always with us—even if hard things still happen. What tempts you to be afraid or worry? What does this simple but profound instruction not to be afraid do for your heart?

Does it give you courage? Comfort you? For what reasons?

The same God who showed up for Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds shows up for us today. Recalling the ways God has provided in the past is powerful. We often call these stories testimonies. When has God provided for you in a difficult circumstance? What did it look like to trust God even when the outcome wasn't what you wanted?

Read Matthew 28:19–20. In Jesus's final words before ascending to heaven, he commissioned his disciples to spread the good news throughout the world. But before he left, he said he would be present with them always. This promise is for all believers: God is present in our unknown circumstances. As we work to share the gospel with others, we can trust that God is with us. Do you struggle to believe that God is with you? If so, for what reasons? What can you do to remember his presence?

#### **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

God's instructions not to fear and his assurance of being near to his people are found not only in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament as well. God has been making his presence known and encouraging his people from the beginning.

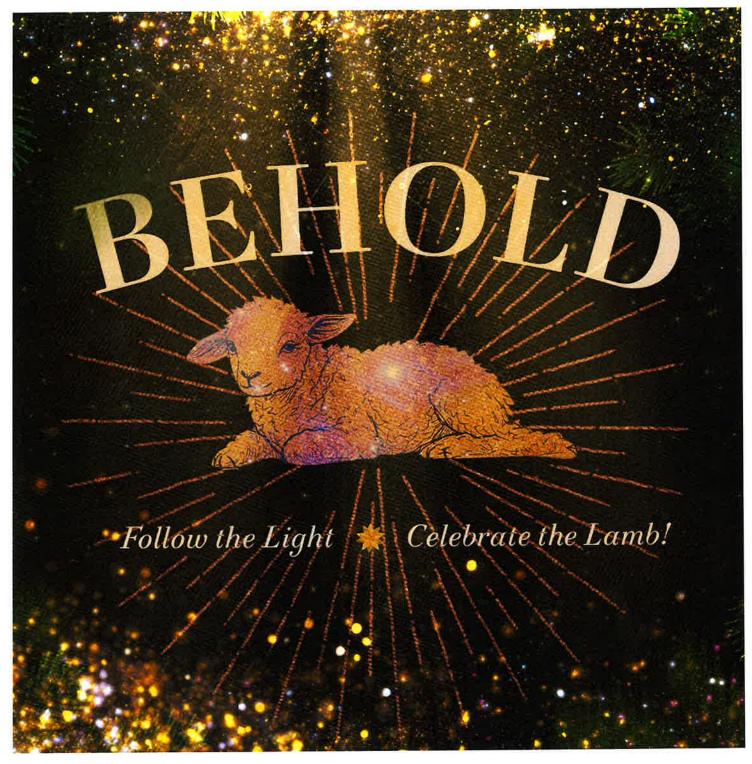
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In the book of Joshua, for instance, the opening words are similar to those that Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds heard from the angels.	
Read Joshua 1:1–9.	
Joshua waited to enter the Promised Land for a long time. From slavery in Egypt to wandering in the desert for forty years, Joshua had done a lot of waiting and watching. But after Moses died, God placed Joshua in charge and told him it was time to conquer the land. It would have been natural and understandable for Joshua to be a little hesitant. In our own lives, we may wait days, weeks, or even years for something to change. But when it happens—for good or bad—it can be hard. What changes are you facing that you are hesitant to make or embrace? For what reasons are you hesitant to make or embrace these changes? What comfort do you have in knowing that no matter your circumstances, God is with you?	
Re-read Joshua 1:8. God not only promised his presence with the Israelites, but he also instructed the Israelites to keep his Word near and internalize it. God's Word is a source of comfort, instruction, and encouragement to us as well. What Scripture passages bring you comfort when you are uncertain about your next steps? What practices (Scripture memory, regular Bible reading, displaying verses in prominent places) do you use to remember God's promise of his presence with you?	
Re-read verse 9. The message Joshua received from God is the same message Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds received. "Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you	

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wherever you go." In what ways does it	
encourage you to know that the message of	
God's presence is found in both the Old and	
New Testaments? What other verses do you	
know that talk about God's presence?	
Miow that tank about out o process.	
The sade a difference between impering your	
There's a difference between ignoring your	
situation and finding comfort in God's presence	
even as you face hardship. As Jarrett	
acknowledged, you don't have to be afraid, "not	
because your circumstances aren't real. Not	
because the fear isn't justified. But because you	
don't have to face it alone." What is difficult in	
your life right now? What hope did this	
session give you, even as you face hardship?	
Who in your life is helping you feel less alone?	
Who do you know who needs to hear that God	
is with them in their struggles?	
LAST WORD	
Jarrett closed this session with a reminder: "The	
savior who was promised to Mary, Joseph, and	
the shepherds—he's here, he's present, he's with	
you right now in this very moment." Christmas	
reminds us that regardless of our circumstances,	
we don't have to be afraid, and we are never	
alone—God is always with us. This week,	
remember that Christ is present with you always,	
and look for ways to share his presence with	
others.	
others.	
DEEPER WALK	
DEEPER WALK	
Read: Study Joshua 1:1–9. Make observations	
on what God instructs Joshua to do and what	
promises he gives. For example, in verse 2, God	
instructs Joshua to cross the Jordan with the	
Israelites. In verse 5, God promises to be with Joshua. In what ways does this passage	

encourage you?

Write: Reflect on how God has made his presence known in your life in past situations.  Journal your gratitude for how he has provided for you. In whatever circumstances you face right now, remind yourself that he is always with you.	
<b>Pray:</b> Thank God for his presence in your life. If you are experiencing unknown circumstances, ask God to help you to rely on him instead of living in fear.	
Memorize: Commit Joshua 1:9 to memory: "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (CSB).	



## WEEK 2

## WATCH

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

## READ

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

## DISCUSS

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

Session 2: The Wonder of His Good News	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.	
Main Idea: We can receive, celebrate, and share the good news that God sent his Son, Jesus, who took on human flesh to redeem us from our sin.	
<b>Head Change:</b> To know the good news that God sent his Son, Jesus, to redeem the world.	
<b>Heart Change:</b> To feel joy that Jesus came to save us.	
<b>Life Change:</b> To receive the good news for yourself and share it with others.	
<u>OPEN</u>	
When someone says to you, "I've got good news and bad news," do you want to hear the good news first or the bad news? Why?	
In choosing good news or bad news first, we may want to get the disappointment out of the way so we can focus on the good news. Or perhaps hearing what's going well first will help us handle what has gone wrong. Regardless of the order, no one wants to get bad news.	
But when the angels proclaimed the birth of Christ to the shepherds, it was <i>all</i> good news. In this session, Jarrett will teach us what the good news is and how we can share it with others.	

VIEW	
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jarrett's teaching.	
As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.	
What three titles does Luke 2:11 give Jesus?	
According to Jarrett, what do we need to do with the good news?	
Watch Session 2: <i>The Wonder of His Good News</i> (11 minutes).	
REVIEW	
This series focuses on regaining the wonder of Christmas. In this session, we looked at the	<u> </u>
wonder of the good news of Christ's incarnation.  Jesus took on flesh and lived among us so we	<u></u>
could experience salvation.	
Read Luke 2:10–17.	
Jarrett opened this session by pointing out how	
often we hear bad news. Whether it's natural	
disasters, economic struggles, or a personal	
conflict, there's a lot of bad news to take in. But	
the news of Christ's birth is always good news. While we can't ignore our difficult	
circumstances, we can view them through the	
lens of the good news of Jesus. Does the bad	
news you hear about or personally experience	
make it hard for you to see the good news of the gospel? If so, in what ways? What can you	
do to focus on the good news of Jesus while	
knowing the bad still exists?	
December 2012 1 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11	
Re-read Luke 2:10. Jarrett pointed out three titles used to describe Jesus found in this verse:	

 Savior: Jesus was born to save all humanity from their sins. Christ: Jesus was the promised Messiah foretold in prophecy. Lord: Jesus is God, "majesty in a manger," who humbled himself to become human. Which of these three titles is the most meaningful for you? What makes it significant for you? How might viewing these three titles and their meanings together impact the way you think about Christmas this year? Jarrett observed that the angel did not bring good information or good advice; he brought good news. While we can draw information and advice from the story of Christ's birth, what we really need is the wonderful news that Christ came to save us. Prior to this session, how have you looked at the birth of Christ: good information, good advice, or good news? Why would you say it's important that we view the birth of Christ primarily as good news? While the good news begins with the birth of Christ, it extends to what Jesus did for us through his life, death, and resurrection. Because Christmas focuses on the birth of Christ, it can be easy to forget why Jesus came and what his life, death, and resurrection accomplished. When you think about the Christmas story, do you think about the entire gospel message, or is this a new concept for you? If it's new, how does it add to the significance of Christmas for you?

Jarrett gave three ways we can respond to the good news. The first is to receive the good news. He said, "The good news of Jesus is for

you. Salvation has your name on it, but like any	
gift that's given, you have to receive it." Have you received this gift for yourself? If not, and	
you're hesitant to receive salvation, what	
questions do you have?	
The second response to the good news is to	
celebrate it. Jarrett said, "As you contemplate	
the good news and think about the extent that	
God went to make sure you could receive it, it	
ought to enlarge your heart to where you can't help but worship." He gave a list of reasons we	
can celebrate the good news:	
can celebrate the good news.	
<ul> <li>Your sins have been forgiven (1 John 2:12).</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>You've been reconciled to God (2</li> </ul>	
Corinthians 5:18).	
<ul> <li>You can now live with a purpose bigger</li> </ul>	
than yourself (Ephesians 2:10).	
<ul> <li>You now have peace with God (Romans</li> </ul>	•
5:1).	
Nothing can separate you from the love of  Cod (Domono 9:39, 30)	
God (Romans 8:38–39).	
Which of these reasons is the easiest for you	
to celebrate? Would you add anything to this	
list? Have life circumstances (job, health,	
relationships) gotten in the way of you being able to celebrate what Christ has done? If	
yes, how so?	(**************************************
yes, now so:	
It's easy to get caught up in the commercialism	
of Christmas. While gifts, food, and time with	
family are not bad, the ultimate reason for	
Christmas is the very good news of Christ, who	2
came to redeem us from our sins. <b>How do you</b>	
celebrate the gospel at Christmastime? What	
have you found helps you focus on the good	/ <del>-</del>

news of the gospel amid gifts, food, and time

with family?

Third, we need to share the good news. We may
be tempted to limit our gospel conversations due
to the busyness of the Christmas season. But
Christmas is one of the best times to share the
gospel. Whether with a coworker at the holiday
work party, a neighbor at a get-together, or a
parent at your child's school program, busy
moments are full of gospel opportunities. <b>What</b>
events in your schedule are coming up that
might give you an opportunity to share the
gospel? Who might you see this Christmas
season who needs to hear this good news
from you?

Jarrett described the shepherds' enthusiasm this way: "They couldn't keep quiet. They had to tell people what they had seen and heard—they were the first human witnesses who told others about Jesus." Who do you know who shares the gospel with an enthusiasm like the shepherds? In what ways has revisiting Christ's birth announcement rekindled your desire to share the gospel?

Jarrett gave several ways we can share this good news.

- A simple invitation to church.
- Serve in Jesus's name.
- Support a mission or ministry opportunity.

Would you like to try one of these ideas?
What other ways could you share the good news this Christmas? Does anyone specific come to mind that you'd like to pray for an opportunity to share with?

#### **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Jarrett closed this session saying, "The single
best way to share the good news is to simply
open your mouth and speak it to people who
need to hear it." Let's look at a passage where
that is exactly how someone heard the good
news of Jesus.

Read Acts 8:26-40.

Philip encountered an angel who instructed him to go to Gaza. By being where God instructed him to go, he encountered the Ethiopian court official. We probably won't be instructed by an angel to go somewhere, but there are places in our lives that we frequent daily: the gym, the school pick-up line, the grocery store, or our workplace. By simply showing up in spaces we frequent, we will encounter people who need to hear about Jesus. What are some places you frequent? Who do you see regularly who may need to hear about Jesus?

Re-read verses 29–30. When Philip heard the Ethiopian court official reading, he obeyed the urging of the Holy Spirit to approach him with a question. In our own lives, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us in conversations about the gospel. Have you followed the nudge of the Holy Spirit to start a gospel conversation? Why, or why not? If you have, how did it go?

The court official invited Philip into his chariot. Often, people who are searching are open to what we have to say about Jesus. Like the official, they might even ask questions or make comments that invite us to bring Jesus into the conversation. When have you taken a comment or question someone asked and used it to share the gospel? Have you ever fumbled an opportunity to share the good

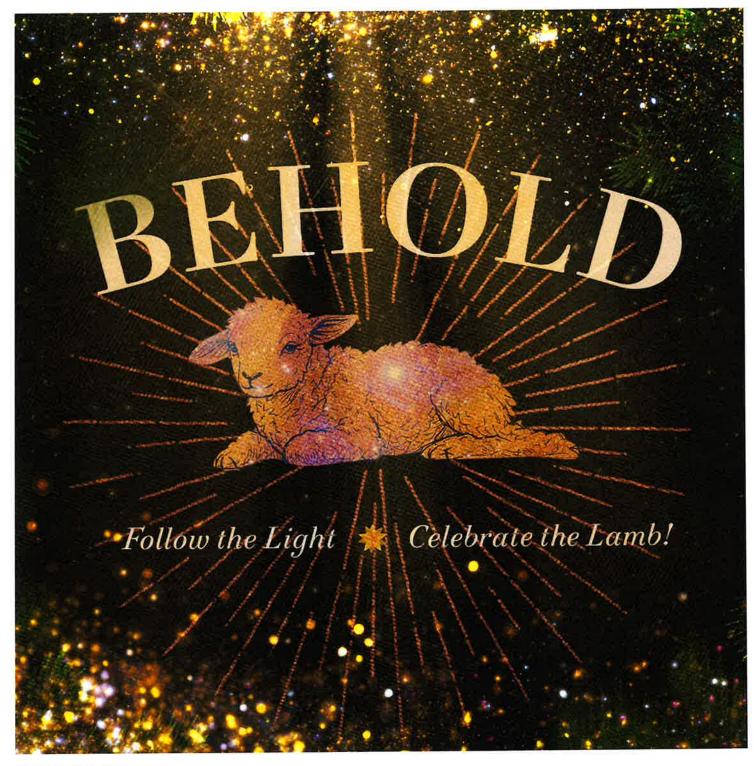
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news? If yes, what would you do differently if you could redo the conversation?	
The court official was hungry to fully understand God's Word. All Philip had to do was open his mouth and share about Jesus. When people are ready to receive Christ, it may be as simple as it was for Philip: open your mouth and share the gospel.	
Read 1 Corinthians 3:6–8. Paul reminded the Corinthians that we can neither take credit nor assume the responsibility for a person's salvation. We plant and water, but only God gives the growth. We follow the leading of the Holy Spirit by speaking the good news of the gospel. Sometimes we witness a life change, but most of the time we faithfully plant and water, trusting God will do the rest. Have you found yourself in a conversation where the person was ready to receive Christ, and you just got to reap the fruit of leading them to Christ? When have you planted or watered but not known the outcome?	
Does the thought of sharing your faith make you nervous, or are you excited to share? How might a better understanding of your role in a person's salvation remove some of the pressure to get it right when you share the gospel?	
After the Ethiopian official was baptized, Philip was carried away by the Holy Spirit. But he kept preaching the gospel wherever he went. We may get to see someone come to Christ, but not have the chance to disciple them or watch them grow in God. But wherever we are, we can share the good news of the gospel and trust God to do the rest.	

## **LAST WORD** In this session, we learned about the wonderfilled news of Christ's coming. Jarrett explained that the message of Christmas is not just good advice or information, but truly good news. Take a moment to absorb this good news, whether for the first time or with fresh understanding. Use this season to celebrate the amazing news that Jesus came to save. And look for opportunities to share this good news with your neighbors, coworkers, family, and everyone you meet during this Christmas season. **DEEPER WALK** Read: Study Luke 2:8-18. Pay attention to how the shepherds responded to the good news they heard from the angels and what they did once they saw Jesus for themselves. Meditate on how you have access to this good news today. Reflect: Take time this week to reflect on the reality that Jesus, the Son of God, came as a human to save us from our sins. Journal your gratitude for this gift from God. Pray: Pray that God would give you opportunities to share the good news with friends and family, co-workers and neighbors.

**Memorize:** "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"

(Luke 2:11, ESV).



# WEEK 3

## WATCH

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

## READ

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

# 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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Session 3: The Wonder of His Plan	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.	
Main Idea: We can have confidence in God's plan for us because Scripture reveals his continued faithfulness.	
<b>Head Change:</b> To know that God keeps his promises.	
Heart Change: To feel hopeful for Christ's promised return.	
<b>Life Change:</b> To trust God in our seasons of waiting.	
OPEN	
When it comes to buying Christmas presents, are you a planner or do you just wing it?	
Some people live for their Christmas list. They shop all year long to ensure they don't miss anyone. Other people shop last-minute, online and in stores, days or even hours before Christmas.	
When it comes to God and his gift of salvation, God didn't wing it. His plan was far from last-minute—it was years in the making. In this session, Jarrett will explore how God's plan for us was from the beginning.	

VIEW	_
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jarrett's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.	
What is the Bible's first prophecy about the coming savior?	
According to Jarrett, what is Christmas a reminder of?	
Watch Session 3: <i>The Wonder of His Plan</i> (13 minutes).	
REVIEW	
This series focuses on regaining the wonder of Christmas. In this session, we looked at God's plan for his people.	
Jarrett pointed out that, similar to how we make plans for Christmas, God has a detailed plan to rescue his people. What encouraged you the most from Jarrett's teaching about God's plan, and why?	
Read Genesis 3:15. When Adam and Eve sinned, brokenness entered the world. Yet even as God gave consequences for their disobedience, he	
still offered hope. Jarrett said, "Right at the moment of humanity's greatest failure, God	
announce[d] his rescue plan." Like Adam and Eve, we experience the consequences of our	
sins, but we also have forgiveness in Christ and hope in God's plan that he will restore us. <b>What</b>	
questions do you wrestle with when you think	
about sin and restoration? What brokenness	
do you look forward to God redeeming?	

Jarrett mentioned multiple passages that contain both promises and prophecies that predicted a coming Messiah. Scholars believe there are roughly 300 prophecies fulfilled through Christ's birth. Let's take a moment to look at four of the prophecies he mentioned.  1. Through Abraham's offspring, the nations of the world would be blessed.  1. Promise in the Old Testament:     Genesis 12:1–3 2. New Testament Fulfillment: Galatians 3:8–9 2. David's throne would be established forever.  1. Promise in the Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:12–13, 16, 25–26 2. New Testament Fulfillment: Luke 1:32–33 3. The savior would be born in Bethlehem. 1. Old Testament prophecy: Micah 5:2 2. Fulfillment in New Testament:     Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4, 10–11 4. The savior would come from a virgin birth. 1. Old Testament prophecy: Isaiah 7:14 2. Fulfillment in New Testament:     Matthew 1:22–23	
What do these passages teach us about God's plan? What do these prophecies and their fulfillment teach us about God's character?  Read Luke 2:8–12. God fulfilled his promise at a moment when Israel was under Roman rule.  Many Jews were hoping the Messiah would rescue them from their oppression, but instead, Jesus came as a baby and later died on a cross.  Often, what we expect God to do is different from his plan. When has God's plan looked	

list	
different than what you expected? How did you respond? How might trust in God's plan	
help you when you are disappointed?	
Read Luke 2:13–16. After hearing the angels'	
good news, the shepherds wanted to see Jesus	
for themselves. And when they saw Jesus, they	
shared the good news with others. As Christians,	
we can share the wonder of God's plan with	
others as well. <b>Do you find yourself eager to</b> share the good news with others? Why, or	
why not? With whom could you share the	( <del>a</del>
good news of God's plan this Christmas?	-
Read Acts 1:11. Christmas not only reminds us	
about God's promise to send his Son as a baby,	
but it also points us to Christ's promised return.	
When we face hardship, we can remember that	8
Christ will come again and make "all things new"	
(Revelation 21:5). How might framing your	
difficult circumstances in light of Christ's	\$ <del></del>
return change the way you endure hardship?	9 <del></del>
How might it impact when and how you share	0
the gospel?	
Jarrett gave two applications for how we	
respond to the wonder of God's plan. First, we	
should trust God's timing. Read Galatians 4:4.	
God chose the perfect time for Christ to come	
into the world. However, in our circumstances,	
we may question God's timing. When has God's	
timing seemed perfect in your situation?	
When has it felt like God was late to answer	
your prayer? How so?	-
Secondly, Jarrett challenged us to stand on	
God's promises. Read Romans 8:1, Hebrews	
13:5, and Matthew 11:28. Which of these	
promises encourages you? For what reasons?	
What other promises from Scripture help you	
trust God's plan?	

#### **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Jarrett mentioned God's promise to bless the nations of the earth through Abraham's offspring. But like many of God's promises, waiting was involved. Let's look at how Abraham (who, prior to God renaming him, was known as Abram) trusted God's timing and stood on God's promise.

Read Genesis 12:1–3. Abraham trusted God's plan and left his family and everything he knew. All he had was the promise that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (v. 3). God may not ask us to leave our home and our family to follow his commands, but he might ask us to give up something or act in a way that feels odd or uncomfortable to us. When have you trusted God even though you didn't know the outcome? Which of God's promises do you stand on when you are uncertain of what may happen next?

Read Genesis 15:1–6. When the Lord appeared to Abraham in a vision, Abraham was honest with God. He held up God's promise of many descendants against his current reality—he had no children—and God responded with a renewed promise. In our lives, what we believe God has promised may be dissonant with what we experience in our current circumstances. But we can trust God to provide while still being honest with him about our circumstances. Is it easy for you to be honest with God? Why, or why not? In what ways does Abraham's example encourage you to be vulnerable with God in your circumstances?

Read Genesis 16:1–4. God promised Abraham a child, but he and Sarah chose to conceive a child through Hagar. When God's timeline doesn't line

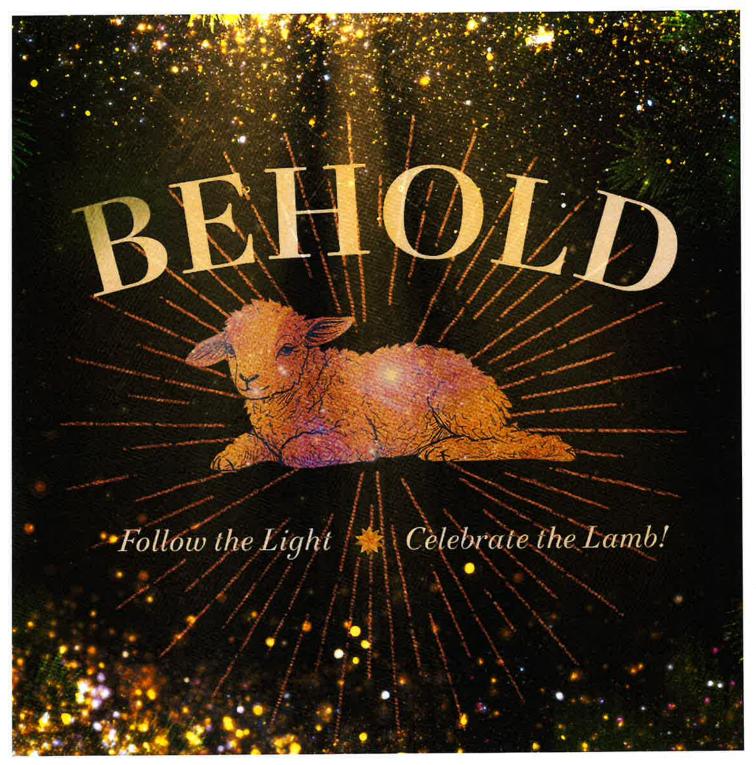
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up with ours, it can be tempting to rush or	
manipulate the situation. But we need to trust	
God's timing and stand on his promises. <b>When</b>	
have you been tempted to rush God's plan?	
How'd it go? When have you been glad you	
waited on God's timing? For what reasons?	
Read Genesis 21:1–7. Twenty-five years after	*
God promised Abraham a child, Isaac was born.	
While Abraham wavered in his confidence that	
God would give him a child, God kept reminding	
Abraham of his promise and gave him a son. <b>In</b>	
what ways are you encouraged by Abraham's	
story? When has God answered a prayer	
you've been believing him for? What prayers	
are you still waiting for him to answer?	<del></del>
Read Hebrews 11:8–12. The author of Hebrews	
wrote about Abraham's faith to encourage	
Christians not to give up in their difficulties. We	
have the examples of the people of faith found	
throughout the Bible and those in our own lives	
who stood on the promises of God and trusted	
God's timing. What story from the Bible	
encourages you in times of waiting? Who in	
your life influenced you because of their faith	
in God's plan? How do both help you to keep	-
going as you wait on God?	
LAST WORD	
While our timeline may look different than God's,	
we can trust him to keep his promises. In our	
seasons of waiting, we can follow the examples of believers who have gone before us—like	
Almahama who trusted Code timing and stood	

we can trust him to keep his promises. In our seasons of waiting, we can follow the examples of believers who have gone before us—like Abraham—who trusted God's timing and stood on his promises. As you celebrate the birth of Christ this season, trust God because of his faithfulness in the past and look ahead to his promised return.

DEEPER WALK	
<b>Read:</b> Read Hebrews 11. Pay attention to all the people who placed their faith in God and trusted his promises. In what ways do these stories of faith encourage you as you trust God?	
Write: Take time to write a note to someone you	
know who is in a season of waiting. Use Scripture passages from this session to remind	
them that God has a plan.	
<b>Pray:</b> Pray, thanking God that he keeps his promises and trust him for his ultimate return.	
Ask the Lord to help you remain faithful as you wait.	
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Memorize: CommitHebrews 11:1 to memory:	
"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,	

the conviction of things not seen."



# WEEK 4

## WATCH

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

# READ

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

## DISCUSS

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

Session 4: The Wonder of His People	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.	
Main Idea: We can belong to God's family because his invitation for redemption extends to everyone.	
<b>Head Change:</b> To know that God offers salvation to everyone.	
<b>Heart Change:</b> To feel loved by God who sent his Son for us.	
<b>Life Change:</b> To share the good news of Christ's birth with others.	
OPEN	
Have you ever been in a situation where you felt out of place and someone went out of their way to include you? Or have you been the one to include someone? Why do you think it's important to make others feel wanted?	
At some point in our lives, we've probably been both the person searching for belonging and the one including others. Belonging is essential. It's the way God designed us to live in community and in fellowship with him. And God has always wanted us to belong to him. In this session, Jarrett will explain how God sent his Son, Jesus, to offer redemption for "all the people"—even those who feel out of place.	

VIEW	
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jarrett's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers	
the following questions.	
What does protoevangelium mean?	
What two people encountered Jesus at the temple?	
Watch Session 4: The Wonder of His People (14 minutes).	
REVIEW	
This series focuses on regaining the wonder of Christmas. In this session, we looked at God's heart to save all people from their sin.	
Read Luke 2:25–32. When Simeon saw Jesus, he recognized the baby as the promised savior and spoke prophetically that Jesus would be the	
savior not only for the people of Israel but for the entire world. We can get comfortable with the people in our small group or church and forget that there are still people who need to hear	
about God's love for them. What do you do to	
remind yourself that there are still people who need to know that God loves them?	
Jarrett reminded us of God's promises in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:3. God planned	
from the beginning to send a savior to defeat sin	
and bring salvation to "all the families of the earth." Both Jews, the nation of Israel, and	
Gentiles, anyone who is not Jewish, can receive	
the gift of Christ. What difference does it make	
that God planned to offer salvation to "all the families of the earth" from the beginning?	

What encourages you most about God's heart to save all people from their sin?	
Read John 1:10–11. Jarrett compared his daughters' dismissal of a gift to Israel's rejection of Jesus. Just as we can miss the value of a physical gift, it can be easy to miss the significance of Christ's birth, especially in busy seasons like Christmas. What have you done to make sure that you value Christ's birth even when you're busy? What practices have you implemented to help you slow down and intentionally celebrate Christ's birth?	
Read Luke 2:36–38. Anna waited many years for Jesus, and when she saw him, she couldn't help but tell other people about him. Who do you know who joyfully shares Jesus with others? What could you learn or implement from the way they share their faith?	
Using the examples of the shepherds, the magi, and Mary and Joseph, Jarrett explained that no matter our social class or religious status, we all need salvation through Jesus. But it can be easy to look at someone's outside circumstances and assume they don't want to hear about Jesus. When have you been reluctant to share the good news with someone based on their social or economic status? When have you been surprised when you shared the gospel with someone you thought wouldn't respond positively? What was the outcome?	
At the conclusion of this session, Jarrett gave two applications. The first was to recognize and receive Jesus. He said, "Whatever your story, whatever your background, whatever you've done or left undone, Jesus is for you." Who do you know who needs to receive the gift of	

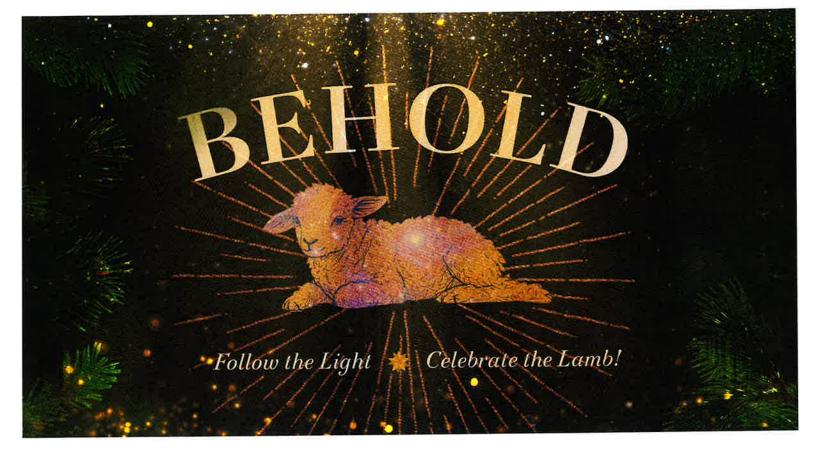
Jesus this Christmas? What reasons have you heard from others for why they can't receive	
the gift of Jesus? How could you respond to	
those reasons?	
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Second, Jarrett said to share the gift of Jesus	
with others. Like Anna, we have the joyous	
opportunity to tell others that Jesus came to	
save everyone. <b>In what ways can you share</b>	
Jesus in your Christmas celebrations this	
year? How might what you've learned in this	
study help you share the news that everyone	
can receive God's gift of salvation?	
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BIBLE EXPLORATION	
Jarrett said Jesus's earthly ministry shows that	<del>)</del>
God has always cared for all nations. Just as	
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Simeon prophesied, Jesus's ministry was a light	
for the Gentiles. Let's look at the story of one of	
the Gentiles that Jesus interacted with: the	
woman at the well.	
Read John 4:7–15. When Jesus spoke to the	
Samaritan woman—since Samaritans and Jews	
were enemies—he was demonstrating his love	
for all people. We don't always get along with	
everyone around us, but even when we don't like	
someone, we still need to look for ways to share	
the good news of Jesus with them. Are you	
reluctant to share Christ with people you	
don't like? Why, or why not? How might	
relying on the Holy Spirit help you share the	
gospel regardless of how you feel about the	
person in front of you?	
While we may feel most comfortable with people	
like us, we also interact with people who are	
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different from us—in our workplace, our	
neighborhood, and in the places we frequent.	
What do you do to make sure you're around	

people who are different from you? How	
might your differences create opportunities	
for gospel conversations?	
Read John 4:16–26. The Samaritan woman's life	
was transformed through her encounter with	
Jesus, but it began with a simple conversation	
about water. We can be intimidated to share our	
faith with others, but starting conversations with	
something we have in common is a great first	
step. <b>Does starting a faith conversation</b>	
intimidate you? Why, or why not? In what	
ways could beginning a conversation with	
something you have in common help remove	
some of the intimidation you feel?	
Read John 4:27–30. When the woman left for	
town, she immediately shared her story—her	
conversation with Jesus. We can do the same.	<del>,</del>
We don't need a great theological explanation	
for why people need to get saved. We can just	
share our salvation story and trust God to work.	
When have you shared your salvation story	
with someone? What was the outcome? What	
would it look like to intentionally weave your	
story into the conversations you have every	
day?	
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Read John 4:31–38. The disciples were focused	·
on the wrong details. While they were worried	
about whether Jesus had food and why he was	
talking to a Samaritan, Jesus was pointing out	
the abundant harvest of people who needed to	( <del></del>
hear the good news. It's easy to get focused on	
our Christmas plans, food, gifts, and who we will	
spend Christmas with, but there are people we	2
see every day who need to hear about God's	a-
redemption plan for them. Who do you see	

regularly that needs to know that Jesus's love

is for them? What first step could you take to share that news with them?	
Read John 4:39–42. The woman told the people in town about Jesus, but they had to see him for themselves. Although we get to share the gospel with others, we can't control the outcome. We simply introduce them to Jesus and pray that they receive him. What do you do to encourage yourself to share the good news even if you're not sure of the outcome? Who do you hope to introduce to Jesus this Christmas?	
LAST WORD	
As Jarrett said, "God's heart is for all people." He wants everyone—both Jews and Gentiles, the rich and the poor, the outcasts and the socially acceptable—to experience salvation. God sent his Son, Jesus, so people from every tribe, people group, and language could meet the savior of the world (Revelation 7:9). This Christmas, share this good news with everyone you can and find ways to intentionally celebrate the wonder of God's love.	
DEEPER WALK	
<b>Read:</b> Read Luke 2:1–38. As you read the Christmas story, consider what you've learned through this study. Take time to marvel at God's great love for all the people of the world.	
Write: Make a list of the places you frequent (work, grocery store, park, gym) and the people you often see in these spaces. Look for opportunities to start gospel conversations.	
<b>Pray:</b> Pray for opportunities to share the love of God with the people you encounter this Christmas season. Ask God to open your eyes to	

see those who need to hear the good news (John 4:35).	
Memorize: Commit Luke 2:10–11 to memory: "And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'" (ESV).	



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