



ADVENT ~ LUKE STUDY



TEENTEXT *HIGH SCHOOL*
GO DEEP. BE REAL. LET GO.

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First Sunday of Advent

A New Joy

This year's Advent curriculum breaks the TeenText mold just slightly. We've moved away from the lectionary selections that are a part of our December curriculum to focus on the birth narrative from Luke's gospel. Through this narrative we explore the major themes of Advent and the ways in which Christ's birth brings us a new understanding of these themes. Throughout the study, the film, A Charlie Brown Christmas, is used to illustrate these themes. All of the clips we reference are available on YouTube and a synopsis of the film is available here (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Charlie_Brown_Christmas).

You may want to purchase the film to view in full with your group as well. Each of the lessons also highlights a traditional Christmas carol/hymn which teens are likely familiar with but may not have ever really examined closely. Our hope is that these resources, along with the text and questions, will help teens see the Advent season with new eyes.

I. WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Bible

Paper, pens, pencils, and/or markers

Computer + web access (for YouTube videos and to enlarge art/images)

II. TODAY'S TEXT: Luke 1:39-56 (NRSV)

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

III. BACKGROUND

Today's text invites us into the relationship between two relatives who carry within their wombs the future of the New Testament. Elizabeth, is pregnant with John the baptizer and Mary, is expecting Jesus. When the women greet one another, Elizabeth says that the babe within her leaped for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. For the ancient reader, this might have sounded similar to the tumbling around in the womb performed by Jacob and Esau. Continuing on with today's text, notice that the focus of Mary's Song is not terribly related to her pregnancy or her specific situation. She does give God praise, but her reason for that praise is more about justice than it is about her child! It seems that from Luke's perspective, Mary's joy is a new kind of Joy that reaches far beyond the babe that she carries within her. It's a joy that celebrates the arrival of God's kingdom in which the lowly are lifted up and grace, mercy, justice and joy reign.

IV. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions and activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God’s story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses; ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.

GO DEEP

What’s happening in the story?

1. Where does Mary travel? Does she seem eager to get there?
2. What happens upon her arrival? How does Elizabeth react? How does the baby react? What do you think this means?
3. What ‘blessing’ does Elizabeth offer? Why is this significant?
4. What is the overall attitude of these women? Of this passage?
5. What does Mary’s song seem to focus on? What acts of God does she recount? Who has God acted in favor of?
6. How does Mary’s song celebrate justice? Justice for whom?
7. How is this baby a source of a new and different joy for the meek and lowly?

BE REAL

What connections can you make between the story and the world around you?

1. What kind of joy do new babies bring? Have you experienced this ‘joy’ in your family or community? How is Mary’s joy like this? How is it unlike this?
2. What about the joy of the Christmas season? How does the community around you celebrate the season? How does our culture celebrate this season? What is the focus of or the source of such joy?
3. Is this source of this joy similar to or different from the source of Mary and Elizabeth’s?
4. Who are the meek and lowly in our society? How might Mary’s song bring them hope and joy?

LET GO

Be open to discovering how this story is happening in your own life.

1. What are you most joyful about during the Advent season? Gifts? Time off from school? Time with family?
2. Is this the ‘new joy’ that Christ brings? How is your joy like or unlike the new joy that Mary celebrates?
3. If you didn’t receive one gift and took away all the other sources of joy you named – what would Advent and Christmas look like for you? What would it feel like?
4. How does the ‘new joy’ Mary celebrates echo in your life? How can you remember and celebrate this joy during Advent?

V. SUGGESTED LINKS TO OTHER MEDIA RESOURCES

A note about links: when TeenText goes to press all links are live and in working order. Links sometimes move or are renamed. If a link does not work for you try entering the search terms in Google.

A Charlie Brown Christmas:

In the following clips from *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Charlie is frustrated with the over-commercialization of the Christmas season. In the first clip, from the intro to the film, Charlie wonders why he is without the joy he is supposed to feel this time of year. In the second, he seeks help for his ailment. Watch the clips and consider: Why is Charlie not experiencing joy during the Christmas season? What does he say should be making him happy? What does the joy of those around him seem to be focused on? Is this the joy Mary seems to have? How have you experienced this in your own life and experience of the Christmas season?

Watch the intro clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DKh0bQsE60>

Watch the second clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NJGRiV8jGM>

The hymn *Joy to the World* is sung in churches nearly every season of Advent. It has been covered by countless artists and even gets mainstream radio play during the holiday season. But, like many things heard time and time again, sometimes we don't really know what we are singing. Read the lyrics and listen to this hymn with this 'new joy' that Christ brings in mind. Is that what is celebrated in this songs? A joy so extreme that even nature celebrates!

Read the lyrics here:

<http://www.metrolyrics.com/joy-to-the-world-lyrics-christmas-carols.html>

Listen to a performance by the renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLT9dSt8cwq>

VI. BETWEEN SUNDAYS

The stories we learn from the Bible are not only helpful to us at church, but they also can help us live our lives each day. Consider the following question to see how this week's text might be challenging them to live differently as they go about their normal routines (school / sports / social events):

Mary's song focuses on justice and the joy that this babe will bring to the meek and the lowly. How is God calling you to, not only celebrate this joy, but to participate in bringing the new joy of Christ to the meek and lowly this holiday season?