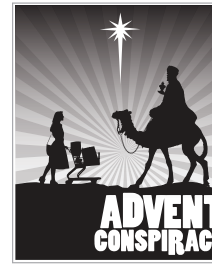


Community Group Homework

For the week of November 15, 2009



seasonal sermon series
Sermon #1
Ephesians 4

Rev. Bill Impey
Grace ...a community church
November 15, 2009

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back over your sermon notes, was there any particular point or passage of Scripture that most challenged, confused or caught your attention?

- *Share it with your group.*

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Most of us have both positive & negative memories about the Christmas season. - *What are some of your positive memories?*

- *Do you still look forward to the Christmas season? if so, what do you enjoy about the season? If you don't, why not?*

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The Advent Conspiracy is an invitation to "remain in the gospel of Jesus." *What does that mean for you?*
2. What choices do you need to ensure worship remains a part of Christmas? How could you remind & encourage each other as friends to do this? As a family? As a church?
3. Read Luke 2:8-20. *How is the way the shepherds worship different from our celebration of Christmas? What can you do to recapture that sense of wonder and gratitude?*

TAKING IT HOME

God walked among us and the story forever changed. This is what we celebrate each Christmas. This is the story we tell to the world each year. What if the choices that we make this year about our spending and the way we give gifts to one another were a part of our worship?

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Introduction

Incarnation = “embodied in FLESH”.

The Incarnation was when **GOD** became **MAN**.

Matt. 1:18-23

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

Advent = (Latin: adventus) “the COMING”.

Matt. 13:44

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Next week: “Worship Fully”

ADVENT CONSPIRACY

Americans spend \$450 billion (450,000,000,000) celebrating Christmas. Yet, after 2 months of shopping malls, traffic jams, and Rudolf on the radio, most experience an empty feeling of missed purpose on Dec 26th. Is this what you want out of Christmas?

The true story of God's love thru Christ's birth is subversive; it tells of an upside-down kingdom. It's a story of promise & hope, in which the blind see, the lame walk, and the least become the greatest. Advent was a world changing event, that focused on the birth of Christ. What if we traded our celebration of stuff, for a celebration of hope? What if we made unbelievable memories with family & friends, while saving lives at the same time? This is what the **ADVENT CONSPIRACY** is all about.

Worship FullyNovember 22

Christmas is a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. Entering the story of advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

Spend LessNovember 29

Our culture guilts us into overspending. This Christmas we're asking you to consider buying **one less gift**. It sounds insignificant, yet thru this sacrifice you'll experience a miracle: that will cause you to truly celebrate Christ during the advent.

Give MoreDecember 6

God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. That's why we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends & family, and give to people in need. This Christmas, give more of yourself. Write mom a letter; take the kids sledding, bake some cookies, sing some carols; give to the truly needy.

Love AllDecember 20

Jesus loved in ways never imagined. Though we was rich, he became poor...to love the needy, the forgotten, the overlooked, and the sick. This Christmas we can join Him. By spending less you'll have resources to help the helpless. One less gift will become one unbelievable present in the name of Christ.

Ideas To Help You - "Give More & Love All"

Spending time together

- Prepare a feast for a special evening with family or close friends
- Give your child a baseball bat for a trip to the batting cages together
- Buy two copies of a book and meet weekly with a friend to discuss what you've read
- Hand-paint decorate & bake pottery mugs with your kids (available at craft stores)
- Wrap a \$5 gift card for a coffee date with a close friend
- Help your neighbor set up their Christmas ornaments
- Wrap popcorn and a \$5 video store gift card, for a movie night with a friend
- Cook a meal for someone's aging parents
- Take a friend to a free concert at the park - don't forget the food
- Create an elaborate scavenger hunt for your nieces and nephews
- Host Monday Night Football with your friends and make homemade pizzas
- Go on a long day-hike in the mountains with your spouse - pack in a picnic lunch
- Help someone with arthritis wrap their presents
- Go ice-skiing with your kids & invite another family to join you
- Bundle up the family and walk thru a neighborhood with lots of Christmas lights

Creative activity coupons

- "Use-our-house-while-we're-on-vacation" coupon for someone
- "House-project" coupon to help your friend finish that DIY Project
- "Out-of-town adventure together" coupon with your child
- "Babysitting" coupon for those parents who could use a night out
- "Yard-work" coupon for an elderly person in your life
- "Walk-your-dog" or "housesit-your-cat" coupon, paired with can pet food for your neighbor
- "Change-your-oil" coupon for a friend with less car expertise than yourself

Things to make

- Record a "Best of 2009" mix CD for friends
- Compile a book of your favorite recipes for a neighbor
- Create a photo album of the kids for the distant relatives
- Cut up old magazines and make funny Christmas cards
- Sew, knit, or crochet something for a friend or family member
- Record an interview with grandparents on the history of their life to give the family
- Build a raised garden bed for herbs or vegetables
- Write a meaningful and intentional letter of appreciation
- Bake a loaf of bread and deliver it with fresh jam or jelly
- Make a memory book for a friend of a trip you took together
- Bake Christmas goodies for your friends and family, teachers, fire department, etc...

Give around the world

- Buy a goat or a fruit tree in your friend's name for someone who needs it; check out the gift catalogs from [World Vision](#) or [Samaritan's Purse](#)
- Participate in Grace's Thanksgiving Offering on Sundays in November. We're buying life sustain trees for those in need thru our relief agency, [CAMA Services](#)
- Partnering with [Living Water International](#) to build wells for clean water in developing countries

The Advent Conspiracy isn't about not spending money or not shopping. It isn't just to do good in the world. It's okay to spend some money (sometimes creating something cool can be much more expensive - so be aware of that). Don't create a whole separate set of pressures, worry, and guilt by feeling like you can't spend a dime. Just step out of the consumerism, be thoughtful and enjoy the celebration!