

Growing Together

*Cro***X***ley Green*
BAPTIST CHURCH
Devoted to Christ, His People, His Mission

**Sunday and Mid-Week
Teaching and Discipleship
Programme**

“Come and See”

Advent and Christmas

Nov/Dec 2021

Introduction

This month, we take a break from John. Through Advent and on into the Christmas season, we look at the familiar story of the birth of Jesus as told by Luke.

An invitation often found in John is “Come and See.” Luke offers the same invitation. “Come and See” God’s new thing emerging into the world. An invitation to Elizabeth and Zachariah, Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds along with Anna and Zachariah. Some have waited for the invitation for many years. For others it’s a complete surprise.

While we may have read this story and celebrated Jesus’ birth many times through the years, let’s pray that we “Come and See” with fresh eyes.

Please pray for those for whom this story is often viewed through a traditional lens; that they might “Come and See” with fresh eyes. Whom might you invite to “Come and See”? Many people across our community need new hope this year. Things may appear to be returning to normal, yet we are changed by the experience of the past couple of years.

I pray that you will be aware of the work the Holy Spirit is doing around you. And despite the cautions we continue to live with, you will take the risk to invite someone along to our Christmas events. My hope and prayer is for all, there will be something that surprises us this year, and that we will all “Come and See” in fresh ways.

Dave Gregory

How to use this guide

For each Sunday, this booklet provides

- The week's theme and Bible passage
- A pattern to use in Discipleships groups, your own prayer times or with another person within a home allowing you to go deeper in your exploration of our Sunday themes.

Journeying with Luke - Come and See

There are no set weeks when Discipleship Groups meet. Please plan what week is best for your members but please avoid weeks with whole church events such as Church Meetings.

Week	Notes	Weekly Theme	Text
Beginning Sunday		"Come and See"	
Nov 28th		Zachariah	Luke 1v5-25
Dec 5th		Mary	Luke 1v26-38
Dec 12th		Elizabeth and Mary	Luke 1v39-56
Dec 19th		Zechariah	Luke 1v57-80
Sat Dec 25th	Christmas Day	Jesus	Luke 2v1-7
Dec 26th		Shepherds	Luke 2v8-21
Jan 2nd	Beginning of Prayer Week	Simeon and Anna	Luke 2v22-40

Discipleship Groups - Going Deeper

To help groups go deeper with Sunday topics, as well as discussion questions for each week, two more open patterns are offered that can be used with any Bible passage together.

The first - **“Listening to the Voice of God in Life”** - encourages you to explore the different ways in your life in which you have been aware of God and to share for what you are grateful to God. There is space to share how the Sunday teaching that week has both challenged and encouraged you. This wider pattern may allow you to explore the different Spiritual Pathways together and individually.

The second - **“Listening to the Voice of God in the Text”** has more of a focus upon the Biblical text used on Sunday. It still encourages members of the group to engage personally with the passage, exploring what stood out for them, what they did not understand and what challenged them.

For both patterns, discussion starters are provided which draw out themes from the text. Don't feel you have to look at every question. Use the ones that are right for your group. There may be other issues that arise for people out of the sermon too.

All the patterns end with asking how God is asking you to respond to what he is saying and showing you.

On a given evening, choose one pattern to use with your group. Or you may want to shape the evening by the specific questions. These might be helpful in combination with the patterns, so be creative and experiment!

Allow different people to share their responses to the questions. You may want to linger on some responses that might have wider relevance to people in the group.

Please remember to take time each session for prayer. Prayer suggestions are provided for each week for you to ask God to help you to respond to what he has shown you, as well as prayers for people and wider issues as well as the life of the church.

<p style="text-align: center;">Pattern 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Listening to voice of God in Life</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pattern 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Listen to the voice of God in the text</p>
<p>Where and in what ways have you been aware of God this week?</p> <p>For what are you grateful to God?</p> <p>What has prevented you being aware of God? How might you resist these things?</p> <p>In what ways did God encourage you through the Bible text/worship/sermon?</p> <p>In what ways did God challenge you?</p> <p>How is God calling you to respond in your life, relationships, and discipleship to how you have heard his voice in your journey with him this past week?</p>	<p>What stood out for you in the Bible text or sermon? Was there anything new for you?</p> <p>Was there anything that puzzled you or you did not understand?</p> <p>What challenged you in the Bible text or sermon?</p> <p>How is God calling you to respond in your life, relationships, and discipleship to how you have heard his voice in the bible text this past week?</p>

Week Beginning Sunday 28th Nov 2021 (1st in Advent)

Theme : “Come and See” - Zachariah

Bible Reading : Luke 1v5-25

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- What do you look forward to in the churches journey towards Christmas?
- Zachariah was shaken by God’s intervention in the familiar practices of his faith. Does God need to shake us out of our familiarity?
- v17 - Listen to Gabriel’s words about what the purpose of John the Baptist will be. How might they help us to prepare for Christmas so that we are a “people prepared for the Lord”?
- v25 - Elizabeth says “[God] has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people”. Who are the people out of favour today? Who are those who feel they are viewed as disgraced? How might we practically show favour to them?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- Ask God to meet you in fresh ways through Advent and Christmas
- Begin to pray for the churches Christmas programme - are there people whom God is wanting you to connect with and invite?

Week Beginning Sunday 5th Dec 2021 (2nd in Advent)

Theme : “Come and See” - Mary

Bible Reading : Luke 1v26-38

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- v28, 30 - What do we learn about the Christian life from Mary? Do you think we should focus upon her more than we do?
- v29 - What troubles Mary? The angel suddenly appearing or the words he spoke? What is our response when God speaks to us?
- v32-35 - Look at the phrases used to describe Jesus? What do they say about him, and how should we respond to him?
- v37 - Not “nothing is impossible **for** God” but “nothing is impossible **with** God”. What difference does the change of one word make to how we view God’s work with us in our lives, communities, workplaces, and world?
- v38 - What challenge does Mary’s response bring to us when faced with God’s call or nudge to serve him?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- Pray that we would be open to God speaking this Christmas and that our response to Jesus will be as big as Mary’s.
- Pray for yourselves - is God giving you the gift of an opportunity to invite someone to church this Christmas?

Week Beginning Sunday 12th Dec 2021 (3rd in Advent)

Theme : “Come and See” - Elizabeth and Mary

Bible Reading : Luke 1v39-56

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- v41, v44 - Elizabeth says, “the child in her womb leapt for joy”. Are children more spiritual aware than we give them credit for? How can they shape our faith?
- v45 - What part does trust in God’s word play in it being fulfilled? Can our faith affect God’s plans? Could Mary have said no to God?
- v46-49 - Mary’s song is one of astonishment and gratitude. When has God astonished you? How have you responded? How has your faith been changed?
- v50-53 - Is this the way you see the world working? How do these verses keep shape our hope in and actions with God?
- v54-55 - Look up the promise that God made to Abraham (Gen 12v1-3). How do you see Jesus’ birth considering this promise? How does Christmas express God’s “remembering to be merciful”?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- For a deeper trust in God’s word and actions
- For the children and young people of the church

Week Beginning Sunday 19th Dec 2021 (4th in Advent)

Theme : “Come and See” - Zechariah

Bible Reading : Luke 1v57-80

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- v59-64 - They wanted to name the new baby with a traditional family name rather than the name “John” the angel had told Zechariah.
 - How might we limit what God wants to do when one generation expects the next or future generations faith to follow the pattern of their expression and experience of faith?
 - What might be lost if future generations take no account of a previous generations experience of faith?
 - How can different generations support one another’s faith and help each other to be faithful to God in their lives?
- v68-75 - Zechariah lives at a time when God’s people were under foreign rule. Are Zechariah’s words about a need of a saviour and salvation from our enemies relevant when most of us live very comfortable lives? How might we speak today to people about the hope Zechariah expresses?
- v76-79 - Are we called to be John the Baptist’s to people we live among today?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- For our inter-generational church - that faith might be inspired between the generations
- That people around us would be drawn to Jesus - and for the courage for use to speak of Jesus to them

Week Beginning Sunday 26th Dec 2021

Theme : “Come and See” - Shepherds

Bible Reading : Luke 2v8-21

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- v8-13 - Much is made that the first people to hear of Jesus’ birth were those on the fringe of society - shepherds in the hills. Does this speak about God’s heart for those at the edge of life and society? Or does it say something about how God see’s each of us? How does this shape our view of ourselves and God’s heart for us?
- v14-16 - The shepherds were excited by the angels the news about Jesus’ birth. What has excited you this Christmas about Jesus?
- v19 - Mary “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart”. We live in a very instant society. Yet faith can take time to deepen. How has your view of Christmas and the coming of Jesus deepened through the years?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- That the truth and wonder of Christmas would continue to deepen in you long after the season has ended

Week Beginning Sunday 2nd Dec 2021

Theme : “Come and See” - Simeon and Anna

Bible Reading : Luke 2v22-40

This is a week of prayer as we begin our journey with God and one another through a New Year. So while discussion starters are offered, please make prayer the focus of your groups meeting.

The church will be open at various times through the week, with different prayer activities available in the worship space to help people to share in the prayer week.

- Share together was struck you in Sunday’s sermon.
- v25 - What are you looking for God to do in your life, community, nation, and world as we begin a New Year? How do we need to pray?
- v25-32 - What part does patience play in seeking our Lord’s purposes? How do we keep alive our trust in him? What can we learn from Simeon?
- v33-35 - Considering what Simeon says, how might we need to prepare ourselves to better walk with Jesus through 2022?
- v36-38 - Anna spent much time “worshipping ... fasting and [in] prayer”. What part do these play in God shaping your life?

Prayer Focus

- Pray into any of issues that have arisen within your discussions
- Give thanks for anything new you have discovered about Jesus
- Pray for the prayer topics in the weekly sheet
- Pray that God would continue to help the church, its people and community recover from the legacy of COVID-19; that we may be prepared for the journey God will lead us on over the coming year
- That we would be bold in sharing the light and hope of Jesus in this New Year

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