

The ACT of ADVENT

Creative
Communications
Sample

Preparation, Prayer & Daily Action
for Teens and Young Adults

Sunday, Week One

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14

Having answers to the test before the questions are even asked would be any student's dream. Who wouldn't take advantage of that? Yet people feel they have more than enough answers for life and the future found in God's Word so often goes unread and unfollowed.

Years before Jesus was born, prophets in the Old Testament knew specific details about how it would happen. Here, Isaiah knew that Jesus would be born of a virgin and he would be called Immanuel, God with us! These prophets weren't working from a study guide; it wasn't because they had memorized impeccable notes taken during hours of class. God was with them, too, and provided for them answers centuries before things happened.

Thank you, Lord, for providing answers for our life in your Word. Help us to read, learn and inwardly digest your Word in our lives. Thanks for being Immanuel, God with us. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Write a letter to someone who needs to be reminded that God is Immanuel (God with us). Address and stamp your letter, and send it.

Monday, Week One

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2

There are tests in life that seem like they are designed for the biggest, tallest and fastest to succeed. But sometimes size doesn't mean anything. While trying to make this point to the shortest person on a basketball team may seem difficult, when it comes to life with God, sometimes the underdogs rule. God often takes the unlikely hero, or the smallest of shepherds (just ask David), to defeat the giants.

In today's scripture, Micah prophesies that small little Bethlehem will be the birthplace of the Savior. Really? Bethlehem? Nothing great had come from that place since David. God uses the unlikely, the small, the seemingly insignificant to carry out his plans. Because sometimes size doesn't mean anything.

Thanks, Lord, for the gifts you give to help us face the tests of life, even ones that seem small and insignificant. Help us to use these gifts to be a blessing to others. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Find someone who is shorter, smaller or younger than you and do something for that person that makes him/her feel important. (i.e., carry her backpack, buy him a soda/snack, give her a genuine compliment.)

Tuesday, Week One

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Luke 1:26-31

Some of the worst tests in life are the ones you did not anticipate, tests not associated with a class you signed up to take. These are tests that put your strength, character and integrity on the line. Tests like break-ups, or betrayals or illnesses of loved ones.

Mary finds herself unmarried and pregnant. She didn't sign up for this test and yet her response wasn't one of anger, frustration or resentment. Mary approaches her daunting task with the reminder from the angel Gabriel to "not be afraid," "the Lord is with you."

Dear God of peace, please remind us that in the midst of tests we do not anticipate, you are there. Because of your presence, we, like Mary, can be encouraged to not be afraid. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Make a list of people you know who are going through tests they didn't anticipate. Make a point to pray for these people by name each day this week

Wednesday, Week One

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25

Doing the right thing can sometimes make you seem like a failure in the eyes of your peers. Standing up for someone when your friends are tearing them down, walking away from someone pressuring you to do the wrong thing, or even being honest with a teacher when others are cheating—these are all tests that others are going through that impact your life.

When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he was going to quietly break off the engagement. In a dream, the Lord told Joseph that this action would be a failure. Instead, he should take Mary as his wife and help raise this child.

Joseph's whole life and reputation was on the line. What God was expecting of him was not what people did. The test he had to go through would set him up for failure in the eyes of the people around him. Yet Joseph followed God's wisdom and did the right thing.

Dear heavenly Father, help us to do the right things in life, even if it means we might be ridiculed or left out by friends or even our family. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Carry out a random act of kindness for your father or another father you admire. Do it anonymously.

Thursday, Week One

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Luke 2:4-6

A long road trip can really test any good relationship. Every family seems to have a bad road trip story that might include the car running out of gas, a flat tire on a dangerous mountain road, losing someone at rest area or resorting to stale crackers for a meal.

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was around 80 miles and would have taken 4 to 5 days. Mary and Joseph were traveling for the first time together, and Mary was 9 months pregnant. Besides all of the emotional tests that Mary and Joseph were going through, this physical test was greater than most doctors would allow a pregnant woman to go through today. Yet Luke shares nothing of complaining or struggle. It is just known that they make the journey. After all of that, Mary gives birth in a place that is less than ideal and lays the newborn King in an animals' feeding trough. What an amazing example of perseverance in a situation that neither Mary nor Joseph would have chosen for themselves.

Lord, remind us that you can use any situation for your good and gracious will. Thanks for faithful Mary and Joseph who provide us an example of two people living through an extreme test with your guidance. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Write a note of appreciation to someone you know who goes through physical challenges on a daily basis. This could be someone who overcomes a physical disability or someone who challenges themselves physically in order to grow through the process.

Friday, Week One

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 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. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:8-12

The life of a shepherd was probably not very exciting. No meet-and-greet opportunities with famous people, no court-side tickets from sales clients and no bonuses for positive feedback on sheep surveys. Yet these shepherds experienced one of the most amazing spectacles of all time: a sky full of angels singing to them and sharing with them that the Savior, the Messiah, has been born.

You might not feel that your life is full of amazing opportunities. Maybe the tests you prepare for and take will not lead you to the most exciting or flashy career. You, like the shepherds, might feel that your life is not all that extravagant. Remember that you, too, have been given the best news: that a Savior has been born in Bethlehem. You might not have seen the angels in person, but you have their stories. And their message is yours, "A Savior has been born to you."

Thank you, Lord, for sharing with us the amazing gift of your Son, our Savior, born in Bethlehem. Amen.

ACT-ing It Out

Create an invitation to one of the Christmas worship services at your church. Share the invitation with someone who needs to hear about the best story ever told.

The **ACT** of **ADVENT**

The ACT is a college readiness assessment that is taken by over 1.5 million high school students each year as they prepare for the next stage in their education. In Advent we are preparing, too, for both the coming of the King born in Bethlehem as well as Jesus' second coming. How are we doing with our Advent readiness? Are we prepared? Are we ready for the tests that will come by following Christ? Are we ready to ACT and serve those around us?

The 28 reflections and action prompts in this booklet offer scripture-based guidance for youth seeking to answer those questions.



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