



BE BORN
IN US
Today

WEEK 1: BE BORN IN US



*Bringing
Blessing*

WEEK 2: BE BORN IN US



*Bringing
Renewal*

WEEK 3: BE BORN IN US



*Bringing
Guidance*

WEEK 4: BE BORN IN US



*Bringing
Power*



A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**
FOR LENT

LEADER'S GUIDE

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Introduction

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

ISAIAH 9:6

Gift-giving is an important part of our Christmas celebration. We shop carefully, trying to find the perfect gift for each person. Children and adults alike look forward to finding the brightly wrapped presents under the Christmas tree. The first Christmas was all about giving. God sent to us the gift of his Son, as the angel announced: “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 clothes and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11-12). The Wise Men who followed the star to find the holy Child brought rich gifts for the young King, gold, frankincense and myrrh, but this Child came bearing gifts for us! Through faith in Jesus, we have the blessing of salvation, the renewal of life now, and one day the renewal of all creation, the daily guidance of his Word and the power of his Spirit in our lives. These are the best Christmas gifts we have ever received!

Leader's Guide For Session 1

BEFORE CLASS: Read through this session yourself. Examine the Bible readings listed and become acquainted with them.

READ: Have a member of the group read the Introduction on page 4 aloud.

READ: Read or have someone read the Opening Prayer.

SESSION 1

Be Born in Us Today Bringing Blessing

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

GENESIS 12:2



OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, during this Advent season we give you praise and thanks for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. You have blessed us through him, and we pray now that you would bless our study of your Word. By the power of your Spirit, lead us into the truth, strengthen us in faith, and help us to encourage one another. Hear our prayer and accept our praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

DISCUSSION

We are told, "Count your blessings." What blessings might you count during Advent?

INTRODUCTION

According to dictionary definitions, to bless someone is to confer favor on that person or to declare them worthy of praise. The psalmist David says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" (Psalm 103:1). A study of word origins suggests that the English word *blessing* comes from a Germanic term that means to mark or make holy with blood. That meaning is related to ancient pagan ceremonies, but it is an appropriate reminder for us, that the blessings of God are ours through Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to save us. God blesses us, now and for all eternity, through the gift of his Son. We, in turn, bless his holy name and pray that his gifts would overflow in our lives to bless others.

I WILL BLESS YOU

1. Abram's father Terah was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. Terah planned to move his family from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan, but stopped before reaching that goal. Ur was a city near the Euphrates River and the Persian Gulf in what is now the nation of Iraq. Following the Euphrates north, Terah and his clan settled in Haran, in what is now the nation of Turkey (Genesis 11:27-32). **Read Genesis 12:1-3.** Abram was living in Haran when God told him to go south to the land of Canaan. What blessings will God give to Abram? For what purpose will God bless him?

DISCUSS: Discuss the blessings that you might count during the Advent season.

READ: Read or have someone read the Introduction.

I Will Bless You

1. **Read Genesis 12:1-3.** A great nation would come from Abram; his name would be great. Those who blessed him would be blessed and those who cursed him, God would curse. God would bless Abram so that he would be a blessing, and in him all the families of earth would be blessed.

2. **Read Genesis 12:4-8.** Abram trusted God and left Haran as he had been told. Abram expresses his faith by building altars in the new land and calling on the name of the Lord. Answers will vary, but Abram served the purpose of God as he obeyed the Lord and became the father of a nation and an ancestor of the promised Messiah.
3. **Read Genesis 22:17-19.** Abraham's descendants would be as countless as the stars of the sky and the sand on the shore. In his offspring all nations would be blessed. To possess the gate of one's enemies would be to triumph over them. Answers will vary, but Jesus, the offspring of Abraham, triumphed over sin, death and Satan.
4. **Read Numbers 6:22-27.** With the giving of the blessing, God would put his name on the people of Israel and bless them. Answers will vary, but to have God's face shine on us is to have him look on us with love and grace, that is, to look on us with favor. Answers will vary.

All Generations

1. **Read Luke 1:39-45.** Mary is blessed among women, the fruit of her womb is blessed and she is blessed because she believed that the Lord would fulfill what he had said to her. Elizabeth is blessed because the mother of her Lord has come to visit her. Answers will vary, but we, too, believe the Word of the Lord. We have not seen the crucified and risen Lord, but we trust in him for salvation.
2. **Read Luke 1:46-50.** All generations would call Mary blessed because the Lord had done great things for her. Answers will vary, but Mary recognizes that she is not blessed for what she has done but for what the Lord is doing. Answers will vary, but above all else, the Lord has chosen us by grace to be his own.

2. **Read Genesis 12:4-8.** What does Abram's response to God tell us about his faith? How does Abram express his faith upon arriving in Canaan? Concerning one of Abram's descendants, Scripture says, "David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers" (Acts 13:36). How might the same thing be said of Abram?
3. After the near-sacrifice of Isaac, the Lord tells Abraham that he will be blessed, for he did not withhold his only son from God. **Read Genesis 22:17-19.** What is included in the blessing? What does it mean "to possess the gate of one's enemies" and how would this promise be fulfilled in Jesus?
4. **Read Numbers 6:22-27.** Long after Abraham, the high priest Aaron was to bless Israel, using a blessing we still use today in our worship. What is accomplished in these words of blessing and promise? What does it mean to have the Lord's face shine on us? Jesus calls us to be light in the world (Matthew 5:16). How can we reflect the shining face of God to shine on others?

ALL GENERATIONS

1. The time came for the promise to Abraham to be fulfilled. The offspring of Abraham, the blessing for the nations, would soon be born. **Read Luke 1:39-45.** For what three reasons does Elizabeth say that Mary is blessed? Although Elizabeth does not use the word *blessed* to refer to herself, how is she blessed in this encounter with Mary? In what way might verse 45 apply to us today (see John 20:29)?
2. Speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary praises God for the blessing she has received—and the blessings that will come to Israel. **Read Luke 1:46-50.** Why will future generations call

Mary blessed? Has Mary brought these blessings on herself? Why or why not? How will the future generations themselves be blessed? What great things has the Lord done for you?

3. **Read Luke 1:51-56.** How does God deal with people in ways the world might not expect? What does Mary say about the blessing given to Abraham?
4. Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to redeem Mary's firstborn Son according to the Law (Exodus 13:11-16). Simeon, led by the Spirit into the temple, finds there the fulfillment of God's personal promise to him and the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and all of Israel. **Read Luke 2:25-35.** Simeon holds the holy Child and blesses God. Who, according to Simeon, will the Child be? What does Simeon say that suggests that the promised blessing for all people on earth will not be easily achieved?
5. We are among those who fear God and receive his mercy promised, as Mary said, "from generation to generation." What are some ways in which we might hand that blessing on to others?

3. **Read Luke 1:51-56.** The world might expect God to work through those who are mighty and important. Instead he has chosen to work through those of humble estate and has filled the hungry with good things. God has remembered the promises he made to Abraham and to his descendants.

4. **Read Luke 2:25-35.** The Child will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. Simeon says that the Child will cause the rise and fall of many in Israel, and he will be a sign that will be opposed. A sword will pierce Mary's soul. These things indicate the controversy and trouble that will surround the Child.

5. Answers will vary.

Blessed Along with Abraham

1. **Read Romans 4:1-8.** By faith we are counted as righteous before God. Our sins are forgiven; God does not count our sins against us. The blessings of faith are a gift of God's grace. Earthly wages are the result of our own work.
2. **Read Galatians 3:1-6.** The Galatians began to think that salvation depended on their own works and effort, even though they had begun in faith. The first came to faith by the power of the Spirit when they heard the Gospel. **Read Galatians 3:7-9.** Those who are of faith are the children of Abraham. The Gospel was preached to Abraham too, when God said that all nations would be blessed in his offspring. Abraham received that promise in faith. **Read Galatians 3:10-11.** If we try to rely on obedience to the Law to save ourselves, we are under a curse because we cannot keep the Law perfectly. **Read James 2:10.** We have no excuse because whoever keeps the whole Law but fails to keep one point of it, is guilty of transgressing all of the Law. **Read Galatians 3:12-14.** Jesus lifted the curse by becoming a curse for us; he took the curse of our disobedience onto himself.
3. **Read Revelation 7:9-14.** There is a countless multitude of saints, from every nation, surrounding the throne and praising the Lamb who was slain for them. These saints have been made righteous by being washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.

BLESSED ALONG WITH ABRAHAM

1. **Read Romans 4:1-8.** According to these verses, what blessing is ours by faith? How does this blessing differ from the blessing that is the income we receive from our daily work? What does it mean to be justified before God?
2. **Read Galatians 3:1-6.** How had the Galatian Christians begun their turn from faith in Christ? How had they first come to faith? **Read Galatians 3:7-9.** Who are the sons (and daughters!) of Abraham? What argument does Paul make to support that truth? **Read Galatians 3:10-11.** What is left to us if we rely on trying to save ourselves through our own works, our own efforts? **Read James 2:10.** What excuse can we make for ourselves? According to Old Testament law, if a person is put to death and hung on a tree, the body must be taken down and buried the same day. A hanged man was cursed by God and the land would be defiled if the body was left on the tree (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). **Read Galatians 3:12-14.** If we attempt to save ourselves by living according to the law, we are under a curse because we cannot keep the law perfectly. How did Jesus lift the curse?
3. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as countless as the stars in the sky or grains of sand on the shore (Genesis 22:17). **Read Revelation 7:9-14.** How do these verses show us the ultimate fulfillment of that promise? How have these saints been made righteous, just as their ancestor Abraham was?

RESPONSIVE READING PSALM 28:6-9

L *BLESSED BE THE LORD!*

C **FOR HE HAS HEARD THE VOICE OF MY PLEAS FOR MERCY.**

L *THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD;*

C **IN HIM MY HEART TRUSTS,**

L *AND I AM HELPED;*

C **MY HEART EXULTS, AND WITH MY SONG I GIVE THANKS TO HIM.**

L *THE LORD IS THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE;*

C **HE IS THE SAVING REFUGE OF HIS ANOINTED.**

L *OH, SAVE YOUR PEOPLE AND BLESS YOUR HERITAGE!*

C **BE THEIR SHEPHERD AND CARRY THEM FOREVER.**

READ: Read responsively the verses of the psalm.

SING: Sing (or speak) this hymn.

HYMN.....ONCE HE CAME IN BLESSING

Once he came in blessing,
All our sins redressing;
Came in likeness lowly,
Son of God most holy;
Bore the cross to save us;
Hope and freedom gave us.

Come, then, O Lord Jesus,
From our sins release us.
Keep our hearts believing,
That we, grace receiving,
Ever may confess you
Till in heav'n we bless you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, through your redeeming death and triumphant resurrection, the blessings of Abraham are ours through faith in your name. During this Advent season, we look forward to your second Advent, to the day of our resurrection and to that eternal day when we will stand with the countless multitude of saints and bless your holy name. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

BRING BLESSING

Collect small gifts for nursing home residents—warm socks, hand lotion, pens, stamps, stationery and crossword puzzle books; check with the home to see what gifts are acceptable or needed. Place the items in gift bags, along with a note expressing Jesus' love.

READ: Have someone read the Closing Prayer or read the prayer in unison.

SHARE: Suggest to participants that they bring blessing by sharing gifts with nursing home residents.