

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Word: blessings for a new beginning *adapted from *A Sanctified Art Advent Series, 2024*

Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare our homes and our hearts to celebrate Christmas once again, when the birth of Jesus ushered in a new age; new ways of living and loving with hope, joy, and purpose. Advent is a journey toward this new beginning. And like on any journey, we need reminders, words of blessing that feel like steady ground as we step forward into the unknown.

Join us this Advent as we return to the familiar scriptures and traditions that root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. You are a blessing, we can't go alone, hope is always worth the risk, and love knows your name.

As you journey through this season, may you find words for courage and hope to begin again as we look forward to celebrating the ultimate Word coming to us; the Emmanuel, God with us.

Message Description:

One of life's most essential lessons is that we are never meant to go alone. And yet, modern culture pushes us more and more into lonely silos. If Ruth had followed her culture's norms, she would have gone home to her family of origin after her husband died, but instead, she commits herself to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Together they form a new family and covenant. Ruth and Naomi travel together to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest, foreshadowing the journey Mary and Joseph will one day take to be counted in the census. Both Ruth and Naomi as well as Mary and Joseph are unconventional pairs, but if God can bring unlikely people together, God can form us into a covenant community too.

Key Scripture: Ruth 1

Questions based on this week's teaching:

1. Following cultural norms and expectations, Ruth "should" go home to her family of origin, but she instead commits herself to Naomi. Why do you think she makes this choice? What risks does she take? What does she give up? What does she gain?
2. Naomi resists Ruth's offer at first, thinking that she should go alone. When we are hurting, it can be tempting to turn away from love and connection. Yet, loneliness is one of the leading causes of premature death and illness. Loneliness is an epidemic. What helps you when you are feeling lonely or isolated? Can you make a commitment to check in with someone in particular this Advent season?
3. Ruth and Naomi travel together to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. This parallels Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. In both scenarios, the travel was not easy. And yet, they went together. When has companionship and community helped you weather a difficult journey?