SERMON STUDY GUIDE
““I Wonder...” Shepherd Monologue”
For the monologue preached on 12/15
and based on the text of Luke 2:4-20

How to use the Groups Study Guide
Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).

2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It’s recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.

3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the Group Life Team

Arriving to the time of Advent is always bittersweet. Another year is rapidly coming to a close and we wonder how did that happen so quickly? Yet, before we get to the dawn of a new year, we get to experience the beauty and joy of Christmas – the story of Jesus coming near.

“Advent” means “expectant” and throughout the ages, followers of Jesus would use this time to prepare their hearts for Christmas with spiritual practices including various readings, different forms of fasting, focused prayer, spiritual reflection, and of course, the study of Scripture.
Our Advent series is called, “Follow the Wonder” and it’s our desire that our hearts become reawakened to our child-like sense of awe and to reclaim our sense of imagination and curiosity, particularly when it comes to the grandeur and the unconditional love of God. Throughout this series, we have examined and discussed passages of Scripture that have invited our hearts to follow the wonder, and today, we want to consider what we saw in Sunday’s monologue given by Pastor Bryan.

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O – This year’s Advent monologue was played by an experienced, “I’ve seen it all” type of shepherd who encountered wonder and it led him to Jesus. While it may not have been as life-altering as this shepherd’s, describe an experience where you were surprised by something amazing in a familiar and ordinary setting. What did you learn from that experience?

I – Perhaps a modern-day equivalent of a shepherd is the over-night security guard. Similar to shepherding, it’s an under-appreciated role, and they just have to safely guard valuable possessions owned by someone else. What does it say about God that the first visitors of the baby King Jesus included the most ordinary folk of society?

A – The shepherd has a young son, Aaron, who is slowly becoming desensitized to the wonder of life, and as the shepherd says “becoming one of us.” Have you ever witnessed someone younger becoming disenchanted with life? How did that make you feel? And what might you say the next time you sense someone losing their joy and wonder for life?

A – The shepherd also has a friend named Yonas who is a bit skeptical to the whole story. We have had similar moments of either being like Yonas or having a friend like him. How do we move through our skepticism and what we can do in helping others with theirs? And what roles do things like wonder, imagination, and curiosity play?

A – A theme repeated by the shepherd is that you can look for wonder but wonder is also out there looking for us - what does that say to you? Is it possible that God created us with a sense of wonder so that we might use it to discover Him in addition to the brilliant “wonders” of life? If yes, what do you find yourself wondering about these days?

As you close your time together, slowly read this account and wonder out loud what you find to be amazing, beautiful, and transformative:

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped
him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2:4-20

a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.
b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.