From Longing to Wonder - Advent Workshop

[00:00:00] **Matt Rhodes:** welcome, everyone, to From Longing to Wonder. We're going to be experiencing a moment in the Advent story tonight with the shepherds.

[00:00:09] My name is Matt Rhodes, if we haven't met. So good to have you here with us tonight. We're super excited for this. We, Jan and I originally did this workshop, think it was in 2017.

[00:00:22] **Jan Johnson:** Yes.

[00:00:22] **Matt Rhodes:** So it is nine years ago that we first did this workshop, so we decided it's time to bring it back and do it again.

[00:00:31] So we're really excited that you're here with us tonight. So as we and we can see our map here. Let me zoom out so you can see just how many people are joining us. Oh, we have someone from South America, great. And if you didn't get a chance, you can go ahead and put your, where you're joining us from in the chat so we can see you on the map All right.

[00:00:54] So we currently have 136 people joining us here tonight. We had over 500 sign up for this, so a lot of you will be watching via the replay, and that's great, and we welcome you. So as we join tonight, would love to know, how are you doing? Drop an emoji in the chat. Let me know how are you arriving in our space here tonight?

[00:01:17] Whether that's you're longing, you're grieving, you're doing great. Drop an emoji in the chat. And if you... Right below the chat, there's a little emoji button. So you'll find kind of all the different emojis. So you can just put an emoji depending on how you are doing in the chat

[00:01:35] And I'll give you a minute to do that as we're letting a few more people in here, so

[00:01:40] All right. Welcome. Whatever state you're in tonight, we are glad that you're here with us to enjoy this hour together. Again, my name is Matt Rhodes. I'd

love for you also to put in the chat one word, how does the Christmas season feel to you right now? I know it's not quite Christmas yet. We still got Thanksgiving to go, but we are gearing up for Thanksgiving and the Advent season soon after.

[00:02:06] So if you wanna just write a word what-- how are you coming into this Advent season that we're coming up on? So we have anticipation, joyful, far away, overwhelming, expectant, exciting, overwhelming, mixed feelings. Far away, too soon, anticipatory, grateful displaced. Okay. Very excited, vulnerable, fun, uncertain.

[00:02:41] Yeah, so we all bring a lot of different emotion into the Advent season as we prepare for Christmas. And some of you are prayerful and excited. Others are feeling hurried and rushed, conflicted. So-- And we just wanna acknowledge, like, all of those are legitimate ways to enter into the season. All right.

[00:03:04] I'm gonna... one more question before we get started. What's your biggest wish for the season? What are you hoping for, from this Christmas season? Oh. And sorry, this was supposed to be a poll, and I didn't do that quite right. So are you wanting... And you can just enter in a one, two, three, four, five, six...

[00:03:27] Oh, this went way off of what I thought it would do, so that's all right. So I saw peace, connection intimacy, connecting with God, restoration, time with my kid from college. Oh, me too. Peace with my family, reconciliation, rekindled hope that sustains, connection, peace, rekindled hope leaning into finishing well, family time, connection.

[00:03:58] Great. Yeah, lots of good things to anticipate All right. Welcome to the workshop from Longing to Wonder. We're glad you're here. We wanna thank our sponsor, Dallas Willard Ministries, and they are the ones that are helping us produce this workshop and the upcoming Advent experience that we'll be telling you more about later this evening.

[00:04:26] So I want to introduce you to Jan Johnson. If you don't know her, she's an author, a speaker, a spiritual director. We've been doing courses online together for over a decade. You may know some of her books, Meeting God in Scripture, which is what we're the process that we're gonna be using of scripture meditation can be found in that book.

[00:04:47] And just a little sneak peek, we are doing a full course or a full workshop on Meeting God in Scripture in the spring, which I'm thrilled about. That was, Jan, my first, Yeah ... workshop that we did together. All right. So here's a little taste of what we're gonna be experiencing tonight, and I'll turn it over to Jan for this.

[00:05:08] So welcome, Jan. Glad to have you here.

[00:05:11] **Jan Johnson:** Oh, it's good to be with all of you. I- It's- I'm glad I get to see so many of your faces. We're going to take a few minutes to slow down, to connect with God, to interact with God about what the coming of Jesus meant then, and even more what it means today, how Jesus comes to meet me today.

[00:05:37] In my day by day life, everyday life that we can connect with God. And so we will be doing exactly what it says on the screen. We'll be studying a passage, and then we'll be meditating on it and entering into it. And when we study, we're gonna be looking at what it was really like then and what it was like for the people who participated.

[00:05:58] I've had a whole bunch of fun thinking about that, and identifying with these shepherds. So as we start out, the birth of Christ, and we'll be doing this in a four-part class too, an online retreat. The birth of Christ is about a lot of underdogs, a lot of have-nots in the society, the marginalized, the outsiders.

[00:06:23] And as we think about that, what it means to be an outsider, because the, the story is about a young couple who had sunk to the lowest rung of the ladder. They... He- She was pregnant before they were married. She ends up, a young couple, as political refugees in a strange land. They're complete outsiders in Egypt.

[00:06:44] So when have- ever have you felt like an underdog? Maybe in your family or at your job or among friends, in sports, yes, or academics, or anything other. You can type in the chat. When have you felt like I'm just not quite like the rest of them. I don't have everything going for me that the rest of them do"?

[00:07:10] **Matt Rhodes:** And for some reason, our four and five and six option weren't on there for some reason, but.

[00:07:17] **Jan Johnson:** That was good to leave out sports, yes.

[00:07:19] **Matt Rhodes:** Yeah. I don't know why they dropped off. That's been- I'm- Yeah. I

[00:07:24] **Jan Johnson:** was always the last one chosen, for good

[00:07:26] **Matt Rhodes:** reason. Yeah. All right. Quite a few twos, at my job. Interesting.

[00:07:32] In my family, among friends.

[00:07:35] There was a four

[00:07:37] **Jan Johnson:** That's interesting that we have about half are at my job because that would be our friends tonight that we're gonna look at their job did not make them someone who's accepted in society

[00:07:52] **Matt Rhodes:** All right. Thanks for participating in the poll. I'm sorry we lost a couple of those options, but we'll skip back to this. Sports and academics was the other one, or other. Someone said at school and among my friends. Someone said when I was younger

[00:08:10] Couple fours and fives. All right

[00:08:13] **Jan Johnson:** So let's go ahead and begin. We're going to be looking at the shepherds as underdogs. And to hear it with fresh ears, I'm actually going to read it from the message. And if you wanna go back and do this on your own, use the Bible translation you're most comfortable with. But I wanted to help you slide into their space.

[00:08:36] It starts out, "There were sheepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep." Now, let's pause for a moment, because we think of shepherds as nice people who are on the stained glass window holding a lamb, and they- they're very welcome in our church, right? That's not what these guys were.

[00:08:57] The shepherds in the 1st century were the, the poor of Palestine. The rabbis labeled them unclean, like the lepers, so they couldn't go to synagogue. They were lowly, uneducated types. These were the people that nobody ever

invited over. They were the bottom of society. They slept outside, so they didn't always smell good.

[00:09:24] Yet they're the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus. And so we continue Suddenly, God's angel stood among them, and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody worldwide. A savior has been born in David's town, a savior who is Messiah and Master.

[00:10:05] This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." Now, we wanna think about this for a minute. These poor shepherds were no doubt terrified. There, there's a good reason why the angels always start out with, "Don't be afraid," because everybody was afraid. And so then the angels not only are going to appear to them, but they're going to give them a mission.

[00:10:33] These are people who are never given a mission. They're never asked to do something really important, and it, that mission is that they would visit the Messiah. This is radical because any decent Messiah they could think of would reject these unclean shepherds. And how could they visit them? They wouldn't be welcome.

[00:10:55] They couldn't come near a house that would have the Messiah in it, right? And the angels, it's like they knew that, and so they convince them with one small detail. The small detail was that you would find him in a manger. And so these shepherds are going, "A food trough? The baby's going to be lying in a food trough?"

[00:11:19] They were very familiar with food troughs, and they would know that in a food trough, it, this was gonna be an ordinary peasant home. No one was gonna look at them and say, "Oh, unclean shepherds, get out." This is a place where they would be welcome. So they've had... Just think of all the shocks they've had in a few minutes.

[00:11:42] The angels appeared they tell them where to go to see the Messiah, and then they're gonna be welcomed in the home of the Messiah that they had heard about all their lives. So th- this was no doubt overwhelming. And so then it closes with, in, in this part it says, "At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises.

[00:12:13] 'Glory to God in the heavenly heights. Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.'" What I love about this is you've probably had the feeling sometime in your life that you are part of something bigger, something transcendent, something that you don't deserve to be part of. It's so important.

[00:12:39] And think about that. That's how the, they would have felt. The title of our workshop is From Longing to Wonder. Though that movement has been made, From Longing to Wonder. So I'm gonna ask you to close your eyes and imagine for a moment a huge number of angels in the sky, and I want you to think about what do you see?

[00:13:06] Colors, brightness, displays, faces? And type in your answers. What do you see when you close your eyes and imagine this?

[00:13:16] **Matt Rhodes:** Brightness, white glow, light, warmth and brightness, goodness, big smiles. Saw someone say, like the aurora borealis, blinding light, bright light, brilliant light Faces like the transfiguration Yes Bright glowing in the sky. Brilliant light, powerful beings shining brightly like fireworks, rays of light, faces.

[00:13:44] Vivid shining beings with joy to share. Christmas card angels Glorious brilliance, yellowy white shimmering creatures, bright light, a collage of faces, being surrounded on all sides with beautiful music, a sky full of shooting stars, joy with purpose, joy on their faces, unknown creatures. The sky would light up like the Milky Way across the universe, flashing lights, light and holy beings, joy and acceptance in the angels' faces, bright rays of light, purple luminescence, music, glorious music, brilliant color, enormous angels And I didn't think of it until we did this just now, and several of you got this, that they would have been surrounded by this.

[00:14:42] **Jan Johnson:** That whole idea of being surrounded. You know what it's like when you're in a symphony or you're in some of the majestic choirs some of us will experience at Christmas, where the music is all around you? There's a concert I go to where they come in around and they come down the aisles, and the music is all around you.

[00:15:01] But being completely surrounded, completely immersed in this and what that was like for them-

[00:15:09] That's part of what our title is about, From Longing to Wonder

[00:15:14] During this season, you wanna take some time to be able to go outside and think about what that would be like for the whole sky to light up, and not just with some, I don't know, i- impersonal lights, but beings that were personal there in front of you and singing

[00:15:35] Don't you imagine these shepherds thought about this every night before they went to sleep for the rest of their lives? This was the big moment

[00:15:47] And so we'll continue. As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the sheepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left running and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby lying in a manger. Seeing was believing.

[00:16:18] They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the sheepherders were impressed You know, it's interesting to think about that. What they're telling us is that they actually believed the sheepherders. They weren't making this up. This probably wasn't the kind of thing a sheepherder would make up.

[00:16:43] It was so beyond them. And then it finishes with, "Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The sheepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told."

[00:17:09] So at the end, they praised God for everything they'd seen and heard. Yes, for the Christ child, but also that they were welcome, also for getting to see the angels, knowing that hospitality, probably for the first time in their life, was extended to them

[00:17:32] Thinking Jesus came, yes, but even Jesus came for me, for someone like me. So I'd like for you to take a minute and ponder how would you have felt if you were one of the shepherds?

[00:17:50] What would have stood out to you most?

[00:17:53] What feelings would have come over you?

[00:17:56] **Matt Rhodes:** Overwhelmed, stunned, unworthy, frightened, awe

[00:18:01] Awestruck scene

[00:18:04] Gratitude Disbelief, special and privileged, belonging, surprised. Is this real? Amazed, thrilled, stunned, shocked, and awed, included and amazed, feeling more important, wanting to be the first one to tell Amazingly blessed. Can't believe this is happening to me. Personally seen, included, special. Acceptance. Sh- stunned and incredulous.

[00:18:43] Electrified, amazed. It's really true, Messiah is here. It's good tr- too good to be true, but it is true. Loved, amazed, blessed, included, reassurance and peace. Elevated, affirmed, humbled, free

[00:19:00] **Jan Johnson:** I really... Oh, here comes another one Believing Thank you, Kathy

[00:19:07] **Matt Rhodes:** Chosen, validated, humbled and honored A- and yes, David was a shepherd. I think that's why they had to call him in and let him have time to clean up before he came before Samuel

[00:19:20] **Jan Johnson:** As I've thought about this episode tonight, one of my favorite people in history is Vincent van Gogh, and I've read the letters that he wrote to his brother Theo, and there's a letter where he talks about being so alone and wishing there was someone who would come and sit by him at his fire and be with him.

[00:19:51] And so I would- I've just thought about that all along, and I'm so glad so many of you have that idea of belonging and including. That just tells us so much about what God is like

[00:20:04] That Jesus is the one who comes and sits by us at our fire, that we're not alone. We're not excluded by whomever

[00:20:16] So thank you for all of this. Thank you for entering in. It's really important when we read scripture to be able to know that this really happened, and these were real people just like you and me, and that they experienced God in ways that we can experience God. So what we're going to do here in a minute is Matt and I are gonna be reading the passage to you.

[00:20:44] But here's the process that we'll do, is that we will read... A- and I'm telling you this because I encourage you to do this at home to read the scripture passage slowly. A lot of times I read it aloud and it slow, it slows me down. And then as we read it, we'll pause, and I want you to notice what stands out to you.

[00:21:11] What does the Spirit cause to stand out to you today? Inspiration occurs as people wrote it, and inspiration occurs as you hear it, as you read it. And you want to notice how your life is touched today by this passage. In fact, I wanna gently challenge you. When you read scripture, never walk away without noticing what impresses you.

[00:21:47] And even more, our next step of prayer, when you read scripture, always respond to God. Think about, you don't wanna be the kind of person, God speaks to you and then you just walk away, or you say to yourself, "Oh, that was a good... Oh, good." No. You want to speak back to God, to say something to God. You can ask God a question or just say something or, What, but you always want to respond This is about having an interactive life with God.

[00:22:26] And so otherwise, prayer is just holy worry, "oh, gee, I don't know." No, you wanna respond to God what God has said to you. And then the, the last thing that we'll do is we'll just, I'll just invite you to soak in it. Let it go from that head to heart. They say that largest gap is the 18 inches from head to heart.

[00:22:48] And allow God to speak to you, allow God to draw up beside you, to sit beside you at your fire. And so I invite you, as we get ready to read this to you to just quiet yourself for a moment

[00:23:06] And if you wanna sit in a more comfortable spot where you can still hear you could do that

[00:23:14] And I invite you to close your eyes and to listen with the ear of your heart

[00:23:21] **Matt Rhodes:** There were sheepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep Suddenly, God's angel stood among them, and the, and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I am here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody worldwide.

[00:23:53] A savior has been born in David's town, a savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're looking for, a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

[00:24:07] **Jan Johnson:** At once, the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises. Glory to God in the heavenly heights. Peace to all men and women on earth who please him

[00:24:24] **Matt Rhodes:** As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the sheepherders talked about it, talked it over. "Let us go over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left running and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child.

[00:24:53] All who heard the shepherds were impressed

[00:24:56] **Jan Johnson:** Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them deep, dear within herself. The sheepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told

[00:25:23] So I invite you to ponder What words in the passage or what dramatic moment stands out to you? What, what moment in the story was most real to you

[00:25:39] Or if you saw yourself in the passage, where was that?

[00:25:43] And w-, if you're willing, please type that

[00:25:49] in the chat because What someone else maybe almost has it, but they need to see what you say. But I invite you to share

[00:26:02] **Matt Rhodes:** Kevin said, "Bright light, like day running toward let loose." Debbie says, "Welcomed and valued." Andy said, "Started out as an ordinary night, but was interrupted." Stephanie said, "A lowly shepherd." Carla said, "Receiving comfort." Oh, sorry, it jumped. "As a shepherd with angels surrounding me and between each shepherd."

[00:26:29] Craig said, "I was a stunned sheepherder." Kevin said, "Running toward." Adeline says, "I am one left behind to keep watch over the sheep." Chuck

said, "Let's go." Carlotta says "Receiving comfort and reassurance in the midst of a terrifying situation." "The angels withdrew back into heaven," says Maureen. Like him said, "Mary pondered."

[00:26:58] Linda says, "Praising God with a good overwhelm." Steve said, "Savior, guardian, God comes close and personal." Lisa says, "Joy of seeing the baby."

[00:27:11] Jen says validated what they said was true." Beth says, "Deep within herself, let my experience of Jesus dwell deep within m- me." Jane said, "Pure joy." Vicky says, "Undesirable." Andy says, "An event meant for everyone." Jan said, "Exactly as they were told." Anne says, "God's glory blazed around me." Anita said, "Being in the field, feeling the grass cold and wet, imagining the light above looming up as the lights and the stereo sound of music."

[00:27:51] Mary said, "The small, insignificant group received a message meant for the whole world." Michelle says, "Feverish at first, and then calm as time went on." Joy said, "Mystery. It was just as they were told." Andy said, "The Blessed Mother had experienced an angelic vision herself." Andy said, "They took off immediately to see it."

[00:28:14] Gail said, "I, even me, I am a chosen witness." Sharon said the last sentence, "They were surprised." Did they wonder if they were on some kind of boondoggle, and then it turned out to be true? Ally said, "I felt the shepherds' enthusiasm in sharing the good news." Mary said, "Everything happened exactly as it was foretold."

[00:28:39] Lynn said, "Heading back to the shepherd afterwards completely overwhelmed. Yahweh, see me. I'm not too lowly for the Messiah." Sandra says, "Finally, this time has come Steph said, "Angels brought God's glory. As a shepherd, I long for God to reveal himself to me, who is deemed unworthy by so many." Donna said, "Running to find the baby."

[00:29:08] Daisy said, "The unexpected suddenly happening. Fear, angelic choirs, Mary's large heart to contain and hold the experience." Don said, "God comes with good will toward men." Chris said that, "People were impressed and believed the shepherds' fantastic story." Bronte said, "Life changed in an instant, and immediately they run towards Jesus."

[00:29:36] Joy For All, Karen said, "What the angels told them happened exactly." Jane said, "God's glory blazed. My jaw dropped. I felt so complete and whole." "Go ahead and make known what has been told to me about this child. Tell it to others." Stacy said, "Caught up in all the shepherds-- that the shepherds felt and saw from terror to glory.

[00:29:59] What a night." Michelle said, "Nervous at first, and then calmer as time went on." Lynn had a bunch of hearts. Adeline said, "Part of something I don't understand, but let me-- let it absorb me." Constance said, "Mary keeping this deep in her heart." Kathy saying-- said, "I noticed the angels close by and not just in the heavens.

[00:30:22] Wow, right near me."

[00:30:24] Stephanie said, "Angels with spheres and with the Messiah and many, and Mary." Shelly said, "Immersed in the angels." Jennifer said, "Dearly." Rosanna said, "God with us." Deborah said or asked a question, "Were the shepherds the only ones to see the brightness in the sky? The shepherds were the ones to explain the event, affirmed and raised their statch-- their status.

[00:30:53] They belonged." Christaphee, or Christalee, I'm sorry "I imagined hearing the angels singing praise and glory to God, how that must have sounded." Michael said, "From awe to holy fear to unsustainable exhausting joy to a vessel needing to be emptied." Stephanie said, "God encouraged," or, "God encounters with angels and shepherds and then the Messiah and Mary."

[00:31:23] Jim said, "Not running away, but running towards." Pastor G said, "I like the shepherds' sense of curiosity." Sharon says, "In a way, they could relax that it was all true. But on the other hand, they had to be stoked and trying to decide what to do next."

[00:31:41] **Jan Johnson:** So as you hold those things, here's the important question that you also wanna ask when you've read scripture. Why do you think God caused that to stand out to you? Is there anything God might be inviting you to be, or to think, or to do? What is God's invitation to you tonight?

[00:32:09] And it may be something you already know, but you need today, November 16th, you need to know it more deeply

[00:32:19] And if you're willing to type that in the chat That would be lovely for us to know

[00:32:29] **Matt Rhodes:** Craig said, "To believe." Chuck said, "To go and tell." Jen said, "Because I have known the pain of others not believing me." Donna Ray said, "He wants me to continue running to Him." Amen. Jerry Lynn said, "Spend more time in His presence." Andy said, "Draw near to Jesus." Sharon said, "I want to know God well enough that I am certain that it is He when He tells me something."

[00:33:00] "That God is with me, or with us," says Deborah. Merritt says, "I am worthy to be a bearer or witness to the Good News." Beth says, "Go deeper with Jesus." Rosanna says that, "He is in charge and in control of everything." Francis says, "Watchman, raise the alarm." Kent says, "Start running toward God, not being so formal with Him."

[00:33:28] Karen says, "I can trust God will do what He says." Kevin said, "What God is inviting me to be joyful, to be excited, like my three-year-old granddaughter at the doorway of Costco, 'Oh, wow!'" Anita says that he's really calling me. That is supernatural. He is with me. Debbie says, "Rest and assurance of my desired presence."

[00:33:56] Maureen says, "I need to read the word more slowly and carefully." Crystal Lee says, "Rejoice and sing and dance." Jan says- ... "The word of God is true exactly as is told." Linda said, "Driving home tonight, I heard the song The Goodness of God, and I just had to praise God."

[00:34:15] **Jan Johnson:** Yes.

[00:34:17] **Matt Rhodes:** Stephanie says, "Believe and hope in Jesus, that He loves me and is working on my behalf."

[00:34:24] Believe. Josie said, "It's good to ponder a bit." Like Kim said, "Mary pondered. Think about my thinking." Stephanie says, "To look for how God speaks to people around me." Johnny says, "I'm invited to behold." Carlotta said, "Trust God's calling to and for me. Don't worry about being worthy or what the world will think."

[00:34:53] Michael says, "It fits into my current journey of learning how to finish well." Lynn says, "God is inviting me to drop the mantle unworthy, insignificant, doesn't belong, that I have accepted from others, and instead rest on the truth that I am his daughter and he adores me. I am worthy because of him."

[00:35:16] Daisy said, "Be care-- be comfortable with divine interruptions." Vicki said, "Jesus was not hidden, but available to all." Holly said, "Embrace the mystery." Steve said, "God craves to be near and intimately involved with me personally." Jane said, "Where am I missing God's blazing glory in my every day? How can I join God in putting glory into the world?"

[00:35:43] Marcella says, "In an instant, an ordinary night transformed by this message, and the shepherds were not forgotten on a lowly-- lonely field or hill. They mattered so much that God chose them for this proclamation. Need to remember I belong and I'm significant, and slow down and rest." Anne said, "God will show me His glory."

[00:36:06] Pastor G says, "When God gives a message, be excited and curious and check it out." Shelly said, "To experience firsthand the personal and great power of God with me." Kathy said, "A reminder to notice spiritual beings nearby me as He-- as His emissaries." Michelle said, "To receive Him as He comes to me right where I am, not where I wish I was."

[00:36:30] Neil says, "God reminds me not to wait till to tell others." Mary said, "I am more than my occupation."

[00:36:39] Jennifer said, "I'm seen and a blessing and matter in God's story, and to others right in my vulnerable and mundane, even when it doesn't make sense or when I struggle to believe it. But God, in His hospitality and welcome, His inclusivity and His prize."

[00:36:58] **Jan Johnson:** So now I invite you to respond to God. You might wanna use the words you've already typed. You might wanna write something down

[00:37:09] And consider God's face as God receives what you say Because you have so honored him by listening to the word and hearing it

[00:37:20] And then when you're ready, just take a moment to just soak in this. What a wonderful thing this was. And like Daisy said that I could be open to God's interruptions at any time

[00:37:34] Oh God, we thank you that you are indeed an interactive person, being, and that you love to interact with us. Thank you that we've had this opportunity to slow down and interact with you We are so honored, just like the shepherds. In the name of Jesus, in the presence of Jesus, and in the great power of Jesus, amen

[00:38:09] **Matt Rhodes:** Amen So we have a few minutes if any of you have questions or comments about the process or the passage. And then Matt's gonna tell us about the upcoming online retreat where we'll have four different sessions where we move through this. And one of my favorites is the third session about Joseph.

[00:38:33] **Jan Johnson:** Oh, yes, he gets so overlooked.

[00:38:37] **Matt Rhodes:** Yeah, before we dive into that, I'd love to hear what was one of your biggest takeaways from today? I know there was quite a bit that you said in the chat

[00:38:46] Oh, yes. Sandra is asking about the longings journal. I will get to that in just a moment

[00:38:51] The awe and wonderment of the season, process of slowing, meditating on scripture and responding. No day is ordinary to God, how he changes everything and brings hope. I love that Jan's direction to always respond to God when we read scripture Lord, you care that I show up? That they were real people like you and me, having space to listen and space to respond, to slow down.

[00:39:26] Jesus being found in a manger meant the shepherds would be both familiar and welcome The more I see him, the more I love him

[00:39:35] I'm so cuffed to have brothers and sisters all over the earth who are seeking our Father. Responding to God after reading scripture. Love the theme of making God with us into a personal experience, not just an intellectual idea. Pausing long enough to really look at the story with fresh eyes and a tender heart.

[00:39:54] Great

[00:39:55] All right. Fantastic. I'd love also to know how are you doing after this scripture meditation experience? So drop an emoji in the chat. Let us know where you're at now

[00:40:08] Great. I love these

[00:40:10] Jane said perfect peace

[00:40:12] Jen said, "I can't find a calm emoji, but okay."

[00:40:17] Ooh, I like the sun emoji. That's fun Yes

[00:40:20] Oh, there we go. The dove. Oh, there, there's the peace emoji Great All right. How would you rate this experience for you? You may have done this before, you may not have, so I'm just curious to hear. And these didn't have great numbers because one being not great to five being great. Maybe you are new to meditating on scripture, so maybe this was completely new to you.

[00:40:53] Maybe you do it a lot. And for some reason they're not showing up. I see lots of fives, some fours, some awesome, great.

[00:41:01] 246.

[00:41:04] Great. All right. I wanna tell you a little bit about what we have coming up, and thank you all for participating in that even though it wasn't showing up on our poll there. Right after Thanksgiving, the Sunday after Thanksgiving is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent is the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, and Advent means coming or coming near, and so we as Christians celebrate this season of Christ coming, and also we want to, as someone mentioned, we wanna run towards Christ in this season.

[00:41:38] So we're gonna present you with an opportunity to do that alongside us. Bringing Advent to life is the online experience that Jan and I are going to be offering to help us slow down, to interact with God about what the coming of Jesus meant then, as well as what it means in our life here and now today.

[00:41:58] I think it was Maureen in the chat said, "I need to read the Word more slowly and carefully." I love that, Maureen, because, yeah, it's easy to rush through the season, particularly with Christmas and all of the activity and the parties and

the lights and the gifts and all the activity. I think sometimes we are, like, so caught up in that we don't really take the opportunity to slow down and just rest in what God has given us.

[00:42:26] So if you'd like to participate in that, we're going to be doing that over a four-week period on Monday nights starting November 30th. So four Monday nights. We're going to first look at a couple whose longing of a lifetime is about to be fulfilled. That's Zechariah and Elizabeth. And then a young woman who longs for God's wisdom and finds it in an older woman.

[00:42:52] That's the story of Mary coming to Elizabeth when they're both pregnant. And then as Jan already mentioned, week three will be Joseph focused on him as a man who longs to do right and chooses grace over anger. And then the final week the Sunday before Christmas, will be a couple who watch the longing of God and the world come true in the birth of Jesus.

[00:43:14] So that's kind of the outline of each of the stories that we'll be diving into. So we'd love to invite you to join us for Bringing Advent to Life. Again, it's a four-week experience on Monday evenings starting November 30th, and then three Monday nights in December, the last one being the 21st, so right before Christmas.

[00:43:39] Someone mentioned the Longings Journal. I just wanted to drop that in the chat so that you have... Jan said, "I want you to try this out at home." And- ... we created a way for you to try it out. So if you want to experience something like this, I'm gonna jump over here. I just dropped that link in the chat.

[00:44:01] We've created this Longings Journal that you-- It's a free guided journal, and it kinda walks you through the exact same steps that Jan did with you tonight, but it's interactive. So even though Jan won't, and myself, won't be there to guide you through this journal, you can do this on your own as part of this experience, where it will guide you through noticing things, and then it will have you name your longing.

[00:44:28] And you can type right in here all of your responses. And then it will also guide you through some different-- if you need prompts along the way. But the great thing is, once you complete this you can save this and print it out, or save it as a PDF. But it guides you through that process.

[00:44:47] So we have-- That's just our free gift to you for showing up. And if you wanna do this on your own this is just a, one-time kind of experience that you can try out on your own. But if you'd like to join us for Bringing Advent to Life, the... Excuse me. The link is right here. If you go to... And I'll put this in the chat here, 'cause I know that's a crazy long link.

[00:45:15] So let me drop that in the chat. So if you want to join us the-- as I said, the Longings Journal is free. You can go do that on your own. Bringing Advent to Life is the four-week experience that you can do alongside us. And we'd love to have you join us for that. Again, we start November 30th. So you can go ahead and enroll now in that if you would like to join us.

[00:45:41] Here's what is included in that. So we're gonna do this live during those four weeks. And just like that Longing Journal, we have a four-week scripture meditation ver- journal. So each week there's a new journal that you can walk through on your own, and we'll also be doing that live together.

[00:46:00] But you can record all of your all of your responses in there if you'd like, and then you can print them out, or you can just save them on your comp- on your computer. Don is asking, "Do participants need to attend all four sessions?" All four sessions if you choose to join. The enrollment is $67, and that will give you-- will get you the Zoom link so that you can join in.

[00:46:25] But if you are gone traveling for any of those times we'll make sure that you have access to the replay so that you can watch the video or listen to the audio. We'll also provide transcripts for all the sessions. And then there is that four-week interactive scripture meditation journal included in that.

[00:46:46] Any questions about what's included or any other questions about when it's happening?

[00:46:52] All right. When you go to that, that link that I sent you to is... That will take you-- You just have to click. You scroll down, and it will go to enroll. If you wanna go directly to the checkout page, I'll drop that link also. And what it will go to is what you see right here on my screen, where you can actually go ahead and just check out.

[00:47:13] This is completely secure. You can do PayPal. You can do any kind of credit card, and it is secure. The total is sixty-seven dollars to participate

[00:47:23] Yes, I will also email out the link for you to sign up. So if you're on the phone right now and, or listening but you can't click on a link, that's fine. We'll send it to you in email. Kent asked what time. Same time as right now. We started at 5:00 PM Mountain Time. That was 4 o'clock Pacific, 6 o'clock Central, 7 o'clock Eastern, and we'll go for about an hour the journal is a weekly journal, but you can...

[00:47:54] let me-- There are four, four they follow along the four stories that we have, but you are welcome to do them as many times as you'd like. And here's the great thing about meditating on scripture, is I do it today, and God speaks to me in one way, and then I come back and meditate on the same passage tomorrow, and God speaks to me something totally different.

[00:48:16] So that's one of the great things about meditating on scripture, is each day God's Spirit works in us anew and shows us something different. But there are just those four different passages of the stories that we'll be going through during Advent. Yes, Maureen, thank you. 2:00 PM Hawaiian time. I love it.

[00:48:37] Kevin said, "Thank you for being used by God to help my heart and soul get in the right place at the beginning of this amazing season of remembering the man who changed the world and my world." Great, Kevin. Thank you for joining us. Any questions for Jan about the process, about the experience? Oh, I should also mention, I almost forgot.

[00:48:58] If you want to lead, because we've been asked this so much in our past experience, people saying, "I wanna do this as part of a small group, like leading a small group through this. Can I do that?" And the answer is yes, you can. So if you'd like to do that, we have a leader's guide that's an additional $20.

[00:49:17] Go through the checkout process, and then at the end it will ask you if you wanna add the leader's guide. So if you want to add the leader's guide where you're going to guide a small group Bible study, people at your church, whatever you can add that leader's guide. And what's included in that is we have a short 30-minute training video that's on demand, so you can watch it whenever you want.

[00:49:40] Jan walks you through the process of how to lead people through the scripture meditation or what we call Lectio Divina. And there's some resources in there, some tips. There's a how to do Lectio Divina in a, as a group, and it also includes our permission to use all those materials with your small group.

[00:49:59] And I should mention, if you're just doing this as an individual or as a couple or with your family, you do not need to get the leader's guide, unless you want to. But if you're just doing this, with your spouse or with your family you are not required to get the leader's guide to have our permission to do that.

[00:50:15] But if you're doing this as a small group, we'd ask you, get that resource because it does include the license to do it as a small group. All right. And I should mention to Don's question, "How do I get access to the videos afterwards?" All that will be in our online learning portal. So we'll record each of the Mondays, and then on Tuesday morning, those will all be loaded up in there.

[00:50:39] So if you weren't able to come on Monday, you can go back and watch the video, listen to the audio, read the transcript, however works best for you. So that will be in the online learning portal. All right. Anything I missed, Jan, or any questions?

[00:50:57] **Jan Johnson:** No.

[00:50:58] **Matt Rhodes:** All right.

[00:50:59] Thank you all for being here tonight, and we just wanna end with a blessing. So let me just read this blessing over you as you depart. This is a blessing by Jane Richardson, who's a poet called On That Night

[00:51:15] On that night when you are holding your very last hope, thinking to let it go as too small to be saved or sanctified. On that night when you turn away at last from the far horizon over which you had thought your life would come to find you. On that night, believe me, this is where the ache will give way to the mystery And the blessing that seems so distant will quietly come to meet you, holding your heart in its two luminous hands Amen.