

*Q: Why Rejoice?*

*A: God reveals himself in unexpected ways.*

Luke 1:37, Galatians 4:4-5

**The paradox of God.**

**Living life in an unexpected way.**

**Pulling back the curtain.**

## **NEXT STEPS**

*Use these study questions to turn a message into a conversation.*

### **Food for thought**

The depth of God's love shown to us by the sending of His Son Jesus is an incredible reality to grasp. Yet, equally amazing is that as followers of Jesus, He is alive in us! How do the following verses describe what it means to have Jesus alive in us far beyond the story of the manger? *John 16:33, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:1, Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 4:15, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 2:9-10*

Jesus' work in our life helps guide us through those sudden, needed detours similar to what Joseph, Mary and the Wise Men experienced. How might the following verses help you through the detours God may call you to take as you follow Him? *Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:26-39*

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The story of Christ's birth is a miraculous story of love expressed in an unlikely way. It's a story of promise, hope and a revolutionary love that is still changing the world to this day.

What if Christmas became a world-changing event again by turning our focus back to the birth of Christ? What could happen to your family if this focus was celebrated in loud, bold and totally unexpected ways? What if you could actually trade your season of stress for a season celebration and unbelievable memories with your friends and family? What if all of this could change a life at the same time? It can.

**Welcome to Advent Conspiracy**

**[Worship Fully]** It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

**[Spend Less]** Before you think we're getting all Scrooge on you, let us explain what we mean. We like gifts. Our kids really like gifts. But consider this: America spends an average of \$450 billion a year every Christmas. How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation? How many times have you received a gift out of that same obligation? Thanks, but no thanks, right? We're asking people to consider buying ONE LESS GIFT this Christmas. Just one. Sounds insignificant, yet many who have taken this small sacrifice have experienced something nothing less than a miracle: They have been more available to celebrate Christ during the advent season.

**[Give More]** God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. So it's no wonder why we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends and family in the most memorable ways possible. Time is the real gift Christmas offers us, and no matter how hard we look, it can't be found at the mall. Time to make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. Time to write mom a letter. Time to take the kids sledding. Time to bake really good cookies and sing really bad Christmas carols. Time to make love visible through relational giving.

**[Love All]** When Jesus loved, He loved in ways never imagined. Though rich, he became poor to love the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. He played to the margins. By spending less at Christmas we have the opportunity to join Him in giving resources to those who need help the most. As we, as a community of faith, continue to take hold of these simple steps in Advent Conspiracy we have been able to feed and help and support many individuals and families in our community. One less gift, unbelievable presence in the name of Christ.

**This week look for ways to join the Advent Conspiracy by making it a part of your week.**

**Worship fully.** Be surprised by God this week. Open yourself to unexpected moments with God. Worship him in the unusual moments when you sense his presence.

**Spend less.** Look for ways to give relationally to friends and family. Look for unexpected way to reduce spending so you can be more generous.

**Give more.** When we look, we can find ways to help others in unexpected ways, help fix something, provide childcare, give a gas card, spend a special day with a child or friend. Look beyond the obvious to the unexpected; be creative in your generosity.

**Love all.** Give the gift of invitation. Invite someone to join you in worship this season. When we see with new eyes, sometimes we see someone overlooked that we can love. Sometimes they are so close to us we miss it. Don't make the mistake in thinking you know the answer to an invitation—you maybe be surprised.