

# PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 1 December 1, 2024

“A People Prepared for the Lord”

### OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, who was and is to come, as we prepare to celebrate your Son’s birth, keep us mindful of your call to prepare for his future coming and to stay alert for his presence among and within us today. By your Spirit, may you use our study this season of John the Baptist’s life, work, and witness to Jesus to make us more ready to prepare Christ’s way in the world and in our lives. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

#### Malachi 4:5-6 (NIV)

*<sup>5</sup> “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. <sup>6</sup> He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”*

#### Luke 1:6 (NIV)

*Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly.*

#### Luke 1:8-10 (NIV)

*<sup>8</sup> Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup> he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.*

#### Luke 1:13, 17 (NIV)

*<sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John... <sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

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## INTRODUCTION

Advent is a 4-week season of preparation. John the Baptist was the messenger sent to prepare the people for the arrival of the long-awaited messianic king. What lessons can we learn about preparing ourselves for the celebration of Jesus’ birth and preparing our hearts for his second coming from the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist?

We learned from the Angel Gabriel that God heard the prayers of Zechariah and Elizabeth about their struggles with not having a child. Just like Zechariah and Elizabeth, God hears all of our prayers too. And just like Zechariah and Elizabeth, God calls people to work for his purpose regardless of how old you are. This week ask yourself: “What breaks my heart and what can I do about it?” This may be where God wants to use you to become an instrument of hope.

## QUESTIONS

1. How do you prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth and prepare your hearts for his second coming?
2. What is the purpose of prayer?
3. Looking back at your life, are you glad God didn’t answer some of your prayers? Discuss.
4. Can you live with hope that, in the end, God’s promises will prove true (even if differently than you can picture now), as they did for Sarah, Abraham, Zechariah and Elizabeth?
5. Where do you think God is calling you to be an instrument of hope?

## FINAL APPLICATION

This week, ask yourself “what breaks my heart and what can I do about it?”