

LEADER'S GUIDE

An Upside Down Christmas

A video series *by*
The Work Of The People

We try to create videos that are, above all, honest; we do so prayerfully and expectantly. We hope what we create is anointed to affect change. As you use this guide to lead discussion, we urge you, therefore, to press into honesty for the sake of those you lead.

[Mary] talks about basically everything that we know socially and politically and economically and religiously being totally completely turned upside down.

Ron Lewis



An Upside Down Christmas

This collection of videos is meant to facilitate discussion around some uncommon themes during the Advent season. Jesus' birth ushers in a new Kingdom, an upside down Kingdom. A Kingdom where weakness wins over power, where the first are last, where death is life. Jesus lives out a radically new way of living. He proclaims this way of living is the way God intended for us, the Torah pointed to and was an invitation to this way of living and Jesus' life, death and resurrection are a living example of the power of this way of living. This way—The Way—isn't easy. It involves a radically counter-cultural generosity. Not just a generosity with money, but a giving away of one's very self. The upside down Kingdom Jesus ushered in is one in which the Creator of the Universe comes to us as a suffering servant, and asks us to do likewise.

As you lead your group through these videos may you find the time and space to live truly upside down, counter to our culture of consumption, power and entitlement.

What would Jesus buy?

This video is an invitation to enter God's upside down way.

Is the church a living example of God's upside down way?

The church calendar is one of the great treasures of the church. It pulls us out of earth's time and earth's ways and aligns us to God's time and God's ways. God's way is to bring peace. But God doesn't bring peace to already happy lives, he brings peace to those who are suffering. To bring peace to suffering he first had to enter the suffering.

1. **Is Advent a good time to talk about suffering? Why or why not?** *Might as well jump right in. This might be the only question you need.*
2. **How might we enter God's way with people close to us?** *Try to press toward the concept of "close to us." It is sometimes easier to feel compassion towards people who seem exotic. We can maintain an "us/them" disposition and we can engage on our own terms. It is sometimes more difficult to feel compassion toward those close to us, uncomfortably similar to us. When people are close it's more difficult to maintain engagement exclusively on our own terms. With all this in mind then, "How might we enter God's way..." Dig for concrete answers. Lead by example.*

Italic text is specifically for the leader's consideration. We suggest the leader first view the video, then read through our questions and suggestions. You can use our questions to get things started, or simply use the questions as inspiration for your own.

1 child dies every 15 seconds because they lack access to clean water. On Christmas eve 40,000 men, women, and children will likely die from diseases they received from polluted drinking water.
adventconspiracy.org



Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel

This video is an invitation to hear many gentle whispers this Advent season.

Where do we find Jesus this Advent season? Perhaps looking to the loud and powerful is the wrong place. "Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper." (I Kings 19:11-13)

Is the church a picture of power, or is the church a picture of gentle whispers?

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1. **Emmanuel means "God With Us." Is Jesus still with us? Where is he?** *Asking "Is Jesus still with us," is a somewhat rhetorical question in a church setting. However, the follow up, "Where is he?" should prove challenging if you press past the metaphoric language i.e. "at the right hand of the Father" Where is that?*
2. **If we can't see Jesus with our eyes, how do we know Jesus is with us? How do we "see" him?**
3. **How might we create space to be with, present to, a servant to those around us this Advent season?** *This could elicit abstract "feel good" answers. Press toward concrete specific action.*

Oh, come, oh,
come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive
Israel, That mourns
in lonely exile here
Until the Son of
God appear. Re-
joice! Rejoice! Em-
manuel Shall come
to you, O Israel!



From Now On...

This video is an invitation to consider the world altering reality of the Christmas season.

The Magnificat is a forceful piece of poetry. It's also revolutionary, especially when sung by a culturally powerless teenage girl who, by all appearances, is an adulteress.

During the Christmas season, is the church a light in the darkness? Or is the church another decorative light among many decorative lights?

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1. **Should the church approach the Christmas season with lightness? Or should the church predominantly reflect the depth of the Advent season? Why?**
2. **“How can you illustrate and live out this upside down Christmas?” What might pastor Ron mean by “illustrate?”**
3. **“How might we truly embrace the presence, the Emmanuel, God With Us, in an upside down revolutionary kind of way this Christmas?”**

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.
Matthew 1:24 (NIV)



SUBVERSIVE