

DIY Bible

What is DIY Bible?

Most Bible studies focus on what is in the text. Part of the idea of DIY Bible is to look at what isn't there!

Intrigued? Then read on...

DIY Bible (working title) was inspired by a Lay Reader training day in the Diocese of Lichfield. The speaker was Rev Lucy Winkett from St James' Piccadilly. At the end of the day she led us in a Bible discussion like I have never had before, based on the Prodigal Son. The answers were not to be found in the text. The questions were to engage our imaginations.

It certainly worked with me!

After the conference I asked Rev Lucy if she had put these ideas in a book. 'Write some yourself,' she said.

Two years later that germ of an idea has begun to take shape.

The idea of DIY Bible is to do exactly what it says on the tin... to do it yourself. The idea is to enter in to the scriptures with your imagination. Nothing else. No previous knowledge of the Bible is required. The answers are not obviously there in scripture... but by chatting about it and thinking about what the words are saying, it allows access to what the Bible means for us today.

Why the Bible?

The Bible isn't a history book. Christians believe that it is God's living word and therefore, God is doing something as you read. Reading the Bible means we are connecting with God. The challenge for us then, is to engage with it as something that will have an effect on us. That's where using our imaginations can help give us access. Be prepared to be moved, shocked, surprised, excited... but don't let it just pass you by.

Who is it for?

Anyone. My desire is that it will allow anyone to access the Bible, whether they have read it all their lives or never even picked one up before. I hope that theologians will enjoy the fact that there is no need to give a detailed answer and that non-theologians will not feel that someone else in their study group knows all the answers. They can't do with these questions. My hope is that everyone will then be able to come to this with a sense of anticipation and fun.

My prayer is that some people will meet intimately with God during these sessions... for others it may just spark an interest to find out more. Whatever happens, I hope they will find it an enjoyable exercise.

My hope is that it will be (to quote from a book I've read, I think by David Day): **recreative, inventive, speculative, transformative and it will take us somewhere we've never been before.**

How does it work?

First, **Read or Listen** to the designated passage of scripture together out loud (some people prefer to listen than to read) or in silence. I have used the NIV and The Message in my preparation, but any version will be fine. Then, refer to the **Chat and Imagine** questions and let your imaginations run free. It is designed as a group discussion, but I am sure it could work on your own too.

At points there are *'Pause and think'* **sections**. These are more personal questions. They are not necessarily meant to be discussed, they are for personal thought only (although, of course, some people may want to talk about what they have been thinking). For some, this will be an opportunity to pray because prayer is communicating with God – telling him your inmost thoughts and listening to what he wants to say to you. However, I have deliberately not used the word 'prayer' as there will (hopefully) be some people using this who have never prayed before. For those who have not had an encounter with Jesus yet, this might seem quite challenging. Use your discretion about whether or not to include the *'Pause and think'* **sections**. They could be suggested as an opportunity for reflection between one meeting and the next.

There are some questions that might need some prep beforehand. These are occasional '**hands-on**' options. If you think these might be good fun, then try them!

There may be some **Big Questions**. These help you think beyond the text to what life is all about.

Then, there are some **What Now?** questions. These encourage participants to think about what they have discovered and whether they should act upon it. They take a variety of forms, but are often along the lines of:

- What have you found out about God? or What does this passage tell us God is like?
- What have you found out about yourself?
- What is new for you here?
- What difference does this make to your life?
- What do you need to do about it? or What is the relevance for today?

Finally, sometimes there are **Takeaway** sections. These encourage people to try and narrow their discoveries down to one thing that they would like to take away from the session and think about before you meet again.

The most important thing is to let your imaginations go... and have fun engaging with the Word of God.

Who am I?

My name is Gill Hollis and I have had a love of reading the Bible for as long as I can remember. I have a degree in Theology and a licence as a Lay Reader and I have written Bible reading notes for adults and children in the past but I wanted to try something a bit different. My real passion and desire is to see everyone and anyone engaging with God's Word. It's not just for us educated folks. It's for everyone.

As this is my first attempt at this, I would value some feedback from anyone using it... and some ideas as to how to improve it and/or make it known. I look forward to hearing from you.

Enjoy. Have fun. Get into God's Word ... let it transform your life.

DIY Advent

Advent 1

Chat and Imagine

- Have you ever been chosen to do a really important task?
- How did you feel?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:1-7

Chat and Imagine

- What do you think Zechariah felt like at this point?
- What do you think it means to be 'upright/righteous/blameless in the sight of God'? Do you know any people like this?

Optional challenge: v6 Which of God's commandments can you remember? You can check by reading Exodus 20:1-17. Did anything surprise you?

Pause and Think

Do you think you are 'upright in the sight of God'?
Why? Why not?
Is there anything you need to do about it?

Chat and Imagine

- How do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth were viewed by their local community?
- Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless which was a stigma in their society. Does that alter your answer to the previous question?
- Who are the people like this in *your* community? How are *they* treated? Are there any challenges for you here?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:8-10

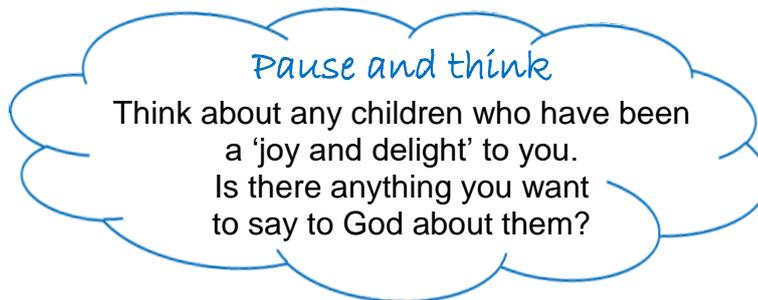
Chat and Imagine

- What's your favourite smell? Why do you like that smell so much?
- Have you ever smelt incense? What did you think of it?
- Incense is often used in places of worship. What might incense tell you about God?
- Describe what you think an angel looks like. Why do you think it looks like this?
- Have you ever seen an angel? How do you know?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:11-20

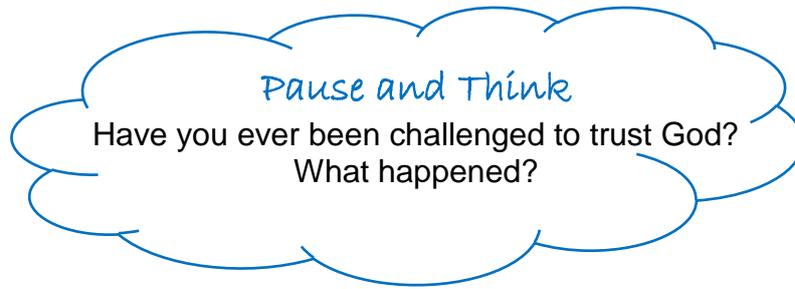
- Why do you think Zechariah was afraid of the angel? Does that alter your opinion of what an angel looks like?
- The Bible indicates that angels are messengers of God. Do you think God still uses angels today?
- What other ways does God use to deliver messages do you think?

Read or listen to the angel's message again: Luke 1:13-17



Chat and Imagine

- Can you think of other people (fact or fiction) who, from an early age, were destined for great things?
- Did they fulfil their potential?
- What do you think of Zechariah's response to the angel?
- What would you have said if you'd been there?
- Do you think Gabriel's response was fair? Why?



Read or Listen: Luke 1:21-25

Chat and Imagine

- How do you think Zechariah was feeling now?
- Imagine you're one of the worshippers outside: what conversations are you having?
- What might Elizabeth be thinking and feeling at this point?

What now?

When was the last time you thanked God for something he'd done for you?
What do you need to do about it?

Takeaway

What have you found out about God: the way he relates to people and the way he wants us to relate to him?
What does that look like for you this week?
Is there anything else that particularly struck you with these verses?

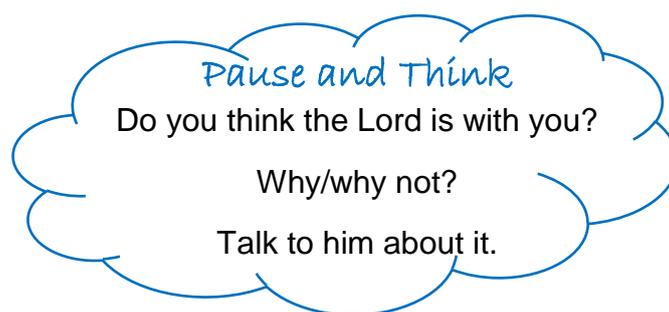
Advent 2

Chat and Imagine

- What words do you use when meeting someone for the first time? Has anyone ever introduced themselves to you in an unusual way?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:26-30

- What would you say if someone said to you the words that Gabriel spoke to Mary?



- Think back to the last study: What same words does Gabriel use to Zechariah and to Mary?
- What does that tell you about God?

Chat and Imagine

- What good news have you heard recently, in your life or in the world in general?
- Where was God in that news?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:31-37

- Our media tends to focus on bad news, but this message focuses on good news. What good news does the angel bring to Mary?
- Look at v34 again. How come Mary's allowed to ask a question but Zechariah isn't?
- Is there anything in Gabriel's reply that surprises you?
- Now read v37 again in as many different Bible versions as you can find. How does this verse make you feel?

'hands-on'

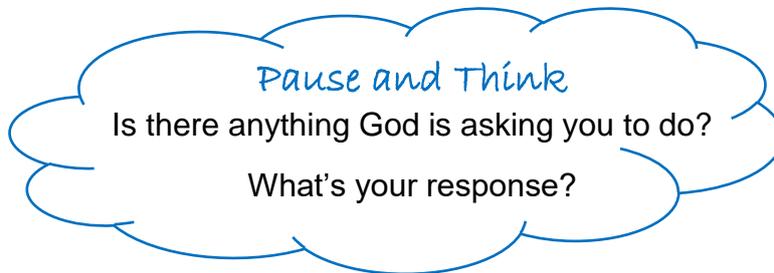
If your group feels like it, why not make a poster or collage of this verse and stick it up in church. Or you could make individual posters to stick on your fridge.

Chat and Imagine

- If you'd been Mary, what response do you think you'd have given to Gabriel?
- What does she actually say?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:38

- If you were to meet Mary, what would you like to say to her?

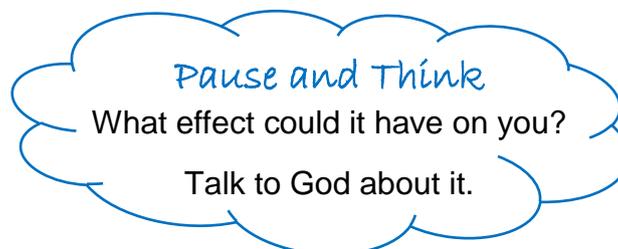


Chat and Imagine

- If you had no verbal language, how would you express sorrow or joy?
- Think about babies: in what way do they respond to good things?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:39-45

- What do you think it means to be 'filled with the Holy Spirit'?
- What effect did it have on Elizabeth?
- Can you think of any other promises God has made?



Chat and Imagine

- Think of a time when you were really overjoyed about something.
- What did you do?

- Mary breaks into spontaneous song. Imagine this is a musical. Where would she be and what would she be doing while she was singing?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:46-56

- What do you learn about Mary from her song?
- What do you learn about God from Mary's song?
- Can you think of any 'mighty deeds' that God has done?

What now?

Who are the 'humble' and 'hungry' in our society?

What does it mean for them to be 'lifted up' or 'filled'?

Is God asking you to do anything here?

'hands-on'

Imagine you are writing a song or poem about God like Mary did... focus on what you believe he has done for you and then on what evidence you have for what he's doing for the world.

Takeaway

Has anything surprised you in today's study?

What are you going to do about it?

Advent 3

Chat and Imagine

- Do you know why your parents choose your name?
- If you have children, talk about why you chose their names.
- What's the most unusual name you've ever heard for a baby?
- What might it feel like to be unable to speak for nine months?
- How do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth had explained his silence to their family and friends?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:57-66

- Why was Zechariah now able to speak again?
- What does that tell you about God?
- If you'd had a lengthy enforced silence, what would be the first thing you'd say when you could talk again?
- What was the first thing Zechariah did after he could speak again?
- What does this tell you about God's choice of Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary?

What now?

What did the neighbours say and do after this day?

Is there anything you need to say to God or to do after reading this part of the story?

Chat and Imagine

- Talk about a promise someone has made to you that they have kept. How does it make you feel?
- How do you feel when people don't keep their promises?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:67-75

Chat and Imagine

- Zechariah also burst into song! Set this song in the musical backdrop as well. Who might sing along with him?
- Zechariah sang about promises God had made. How many can you find?
- What do they tell you about God?

Pause and Think

Do you think God made these promises just for Zechariah?
What might they mean for you?

What Now?

What is the purpose of promises?

Read vv74-75 again. What does Zechariah say is the purpose of God's promises?

What might it mean for you to serve God?

Chat and Imagine

- When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Did it happen? Is that a source of satisfaction, relief or amusement?

Read or Listen: Luke 1:76-80

- How do you think John felt knowing this about himself?
- Why do you think he lived in the wilderness?
- Do you know any people like John? What marks them out?

Pause and Think

Do you think God has special jobs for everyone to do?
What might he be asking of you?

Big question

If you were told that the saviour of the world was here, what sign would you look for?

Chat and Imagine

- When was the last time you filled in a census form?
- Have you ever looked for your ancestors on old census documents? How was that for you?

Read or Listen: Luke 2:1-3

- Why do you think Luke includes these details? Look back to Luke 1:1-4 for a clue. Do you think these details add to the story?

Chat and Imagine

- What's the most arduous/difficult journey you've ever undertaken? Why was it such hard work?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph talked about while they were travelling?
- What's the most unusual place you've heard of for a baby to be born?

Read or Listen: Luke 2:4-7

- Can you find any mention of a stable? Does that bring up any thoughts or questions?
- How would you feel about putting your baby in an animal's feeding trough?

What Now?

Which people in our world have to put their babies in unpleasant places? Is there anything you can do to help them?

Chat and Imagine

- What do you think Mary and Joseph were feeling at this point?

What Now?

Think back to what Gabriel said about this baby in **Luke 1:35**. What does his birth tell you about God?

Takeaway

What have you found out about God: the way he relates to people and the way he wants us to relate to him?

What does that look like for you this week?

Is there anything else that particularly struck you with these verses?

Advent 4

Challenge

The main challenge for this session is to try and read the stories as if you haven't read them before. See what happens!

Chat and Imagine

- What's the best news you've ever heard?

Big Question

What would be good news for everyone?

Chat and Imagine

- What do you feel about sheep?
- Imagine what it must be like to be out in the fields at night. No lighting. No phones...

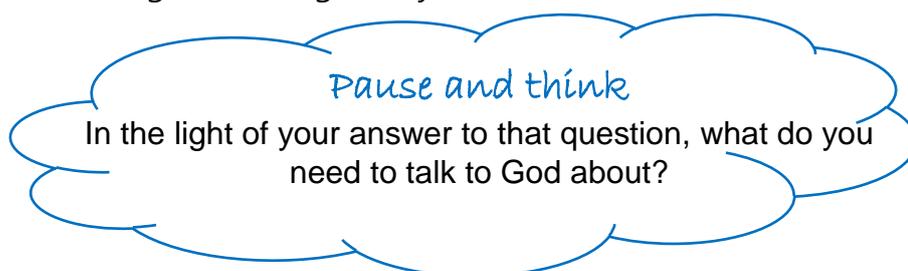
Read or Listen: Luke 2:8-12

Chat and Imagine

- What were the shepherds doing and talking about?
- Why do you think the shepherds were the first to hear the news?
- What do you think 'the glory of the Lord' looks like? How would you feel if you saw it?

Big Question

The angel said that 'a saviour has been born for you'. What do we need saving from? What does the angel's message tell you about God?



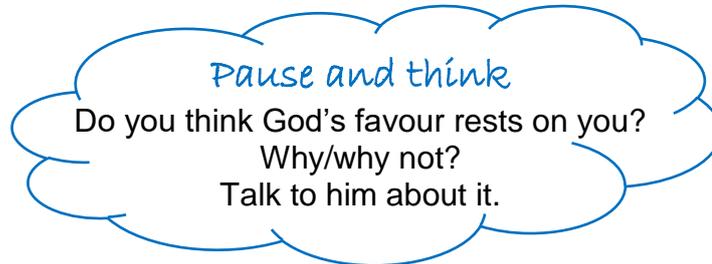
Chat and Imagine

- What do you think a choir of angels sounds like?

Read or Listen: Luke 2:13-14

'hands-on'

Get creative: Write a tune for the words the angels sang.



Look back to the **Big Question** at the start of this week. What sign are the shepherds given?

Does this surprise you?

What does it say about God?

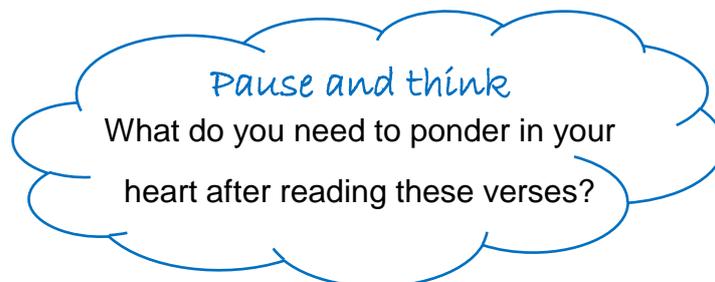
Read or Listen: Luke 2:15-20

Chat and Imagine

- What happened to the sheep?
- Describe the conversation between Mary, Joseph and the shepherds.
- Why do you think the people were amazed at what the shepherds told them?
- Read **v19** again. What does this tell you about Mary?
- What does it tell you about God's choice of Mary?

What Now?

What can you learn from the shepherds?



Chat and Imagine

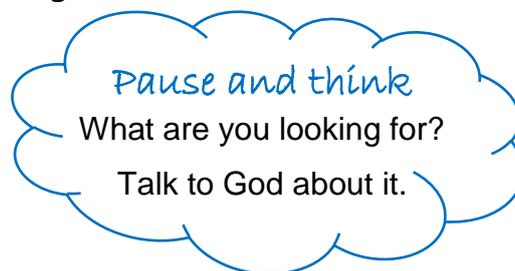
- Talk about your experiences with using maps and satnavs. Have you ever tried navigating by the stars?
- How would you feel if you were a king and someone came and asked you where the new king was?
- Note: the 'Magi' in this story are often referred to as the wise men (and, sometimes as three kings). What does it mean to be wise?

Read or Listen: Matthew 2:1-2

- How wise was it of the magi to ask the king the question?

Chat and Imagine

- Who were these magi? Give them names and a backstory. Where were they from? How did they know each other? How do you think they travelled to Jerusalem? What did they do and talk about on the journey? And how long did it take?
- What were they looking for?



Chat and Imagine

- Can you think of leaders, fact or fiction, who have tried scheming to get what they want?

Read or Listen: Matthew 2:3-8

Chat and Imagine

- How do you think Herod felt when he heard the words in v6?
- Why did Herod meet the magi in secret?
- What do you think they said to him?
- What's the most unusual present you've ever given or been given?

Read or Listen: Matthew 2:9-11

Big Questions

What does 'to worship' actually mean, do you think?

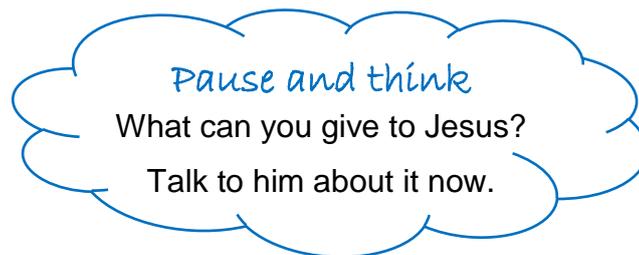
What could the magi see in this small child that made them want to worship him?

What Now?

What can you see in Jesus that makes you want to worship?

Chat and Imagine

- Frankincense and myrrh are aromatic resins that are used for perfume, or as incense or for medicine. Why do you think the magi gave these, and the gold, to Jesus?
- What do you think Mary, Joseph and Jesus did with these 'treasures' over the years?



Chat and Imagine

- Have you ever had a really compelling dream? What did you do about it?

Read or Listen: Matthew 2:12

When, do you think, did the wise men show their greatest wisdom in this story?

Takeaway

What one thing has struck you in this story that you've never thought about before?

What effect will that have on your Christmas this year?