

Study

Read the text twice

Look at the painting

Read the Painting Caption

Questions

What jumps off the page at you?

FGP

List the various references to people, places and events.

3s/ FB

The Painting Caption for The Incarnation canvas states, “Unlike most traditional images of Jesus’ birth, Iain was keen for this painting to reflect what birth really looks like”. Discuss how the list of people, places and events you made in question 2 helps us understand the reality of Jesus’ birth.

3s/ FB

What elements of the text help us to see the “every day” nature of Jesus’ birth and what elements give us a sense of this being “unique”?

FGP

“She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” (v7) What do you think Luke is trying to tell us about Jesus in this verse?

3s/ FB

Through a range of different events, God works to have his son born in Bethlehem, in fulfilment of prophecy (Micah 5:2). But the circumstances of Jesus’ birth are far from ideal. How can this story encourage us about God’s activity in our own lives?

FGP

Study Key

3s / FB - Groups of 3 with feedback to whole group

FGP - Full Group

GPS - Larger groups of 6 (if desired)



The Project

The Gospel Sketchbook is a three-year project based in St George’s Tron, Church, Glasgow, in which Artist in Residence Iain Campbell is painting 24 canvases from Luke’s Gospel, one for each chapter.

Key to each painting is reflecting on the Biblical text and how it might apply to contemporary Glasgow.

The Study

The following Bible Study considers both the Biblical text and the painting on which it is based, encouraging participants to think about how to apply the Biblical text to their context. The study is designed to be used with *The Portrait Gospel*, a special edition of Luke’s Gospel that features Our Last Supper on the cover, the first canvas painted as part of this project.

Conversations Bible Study

Each of the individual studies uses the Conversations style. Conversations is a method of Bible study developed by the Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual

Bible Study Group. Conversations seeks to encourage people to actively engage with the Bible and apply it to life.

The questions are designed to stimulate conversation within groups where people may have varying backgrounds and knowledge of the Bible. You will notice a similar pattern of questions used throughout the studies. All of the questions are ‘open’ questions which don’t presume an answer but instead invite people to reflect personally on the text. The first question is always, “What jumps off the page at you?” – an opportunity for people to begin to share their thoughts on a passage. Then there are ‘listing’ questions that encourage a closer reading of the text, ‘theological’ questions that seek to understand the meaning, and finally ‘contextual’ questions that begin to apply the text to life.

We hope you find this a refreshing and stimulating way to study the Bible.

More Bible study resources that utilise the Conversations method can be found at: scottishbiblesociety.org/equip

The Incarnation

Study 2 • Luke 2:1-7



Text: Luke 2:1-7 Page 17 of The Portrait Gospel

¹ In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Painting Caption

Unlike most traditional images of Jesus' birth, Iain was keen for this painting to reflect what birth really looks like. Traditional images of this moment can feel naïve and can seem to deny the incarnation; God in a real human body. Jesus being born as a completely vulnerable person is one of the ways God chooses to identify with us.

The painting was based on a photograph by Chris Hoskins, taken at the birth of his second son, Eli. Chris is known for his Scottish landscape photography and his humanitarian work with charities like Tearfund. When Iain first saw the photograph, he was struck by the power of the image and was strongly reminded of the birth of own children. the image depicts an occurrence which is simultaneously every-day and unique.