

**5 Bible-based Sessions for Small Groups**

**to help you prepare for Inspiring Angels in Suffolk**

**at Christmastime 2022**

*"For he will command his angels*

*concerning you*

*to guard you in all your ways"*

*Psalm 91:11*

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**www.lightwave.community/resources*Introduction***

In December 2022, with your help, Inspiring Angels will be coming to Suffolk! Following the example of inspiring angels in Ipswich last year, the whole of Suffolk will be 'angel-bombed' with images of angels(messengers of good news).

The angels will be a variety of shapes and sizes all over the county- in schools, shops, on public buildings, on the pavements, in bedroom windows, wherever people's imagination takes them! It’s a wonder-ful and simple way of spreading good cheer in our straightened times and reminding us all of the good news which the angels came to bring. Here are some ways in which you and your small group or church can get involved:-

* Organise an angel trail round your community or hold a competition for the best angelic window decoration
* Have an angels festival in church
* Join in Doorstep Carols (14th December) sporting a pair of Angel Wings or a halo.
* Visit some of the many angels carved in the ceilings of our Suffolk churches (see[www.angelsandpinnacles.org.uk](http://www.angelsandpinnacles.org.uk/))
* Forget gingerbread men, get baking Christmas angels for all your loved ones
* Spread the love! Tell your colleagues, local schools, neighbours and friends
* More ideas at [www.cofesuffolk.org/exploringfaith/faith-in-action/christmas](http://www.cofesuffolk.org/exploringfaith/faith-in-action/christmas) or [www.lightwave.community/events](http://www.lightwave.community/events)

Meanwhile, this set of studies is to help you prepare for this event by taking a look at what the bible has to say about angels – What or who are they? Do they really have wings? What is their message for us today?

**Spiritual Beings in the bible**

Not everything our culture says about angels is found in the bible. The Greek word “angelos” means “messenger” – but the term is often used to refer specifically to spiritual beings. The author of Hebrews suggests that all angels are “spirits” (Hebrews 1:13-14). When Jesus appears to the disciples, he asserts that “spirits” don’t havebodies like he does (Luke 24:39).

There are several kinds of spiritual beings, all created by the one LORD God (Neh9.6, Col 1.16) For example

**“Elohim”** – means “spiritual beings”. It is often translated “gods”. But it doesn’t mean God in the same way as the one God. The one God is the Elohim of Elohim who created and is above all the others.

**The Host of Heaven** (Gen 1) – Also known as the “Sons of God” or the “Rulers and Authorities” or the “Divine Council”. God shares his rule with this Council (1 Kings 22, Job 1.6) but some rebelled and tempt humans away from God (Deut 32.8-9)

**“Cherubim” -**not chubby babies with wings, but the guardians between heaven and earth, usually depicted as hybrid winged creatures with characteristics of humans and animals to represent all of creation. They are sometimes called “living creatures” (Ezekiel 1.5-14 & Rev 4.6-8)

* They guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Gen3:24).
* God is enthroned above them/ rides on them (Ezekiel 10).
* God rides on them (Psalm 18:10)
* Two golden figures of cherubim sit above the Ark of the Covenant, where God promised to dwell among his people (Exodus 25:22, see also verses 18–21).

**Seraphim** – The name means “Burning ones” and they are mentioned in Isaiah, where they continually worship the Lord and declare his holiness, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3).

**Angels –** Angels in the bible, don’t have wings. They are often mistaken for humans. They are God’s ambassadors

They deliver God’s messages (like Gabriel to Mary in Luke 2) or carry out his commissions (rolling the stone away from the tomb or rescueing Peter from prison ( Luke 24, Acts 12)

**“The Angel of the LORD”** – Every time the “Angel of the Lord” appears, he sometimes seems like a glorious human figure and sometimes like God himself (Gen 16, Exodus 3.2-4) The Angel of the Lord is the glory of the Lord, appearing as a human. In Jesus, God goes further – not just appearing as a human but actually becoming human.

Not all spiritual beings are good –the real enemy of good is never other human beings, but rebel spiritual forces: Jesus overcame this spiritual rebellion on the cross and we continue to strive against these evil forces, wearing the armour of God (Col 2.15 (Ephesians 6)

The spiritual beings who serve God are examples and inspiration for human beings in that they -

* Worship God continually
* Proclaim his holiness and glory
* Carry God’s messages
* Do God’s will
* Share in God’s care for and governance of creation

**Session 1. “Be an Angel”**

***WELCOME (warming up together)***

***This quiz can be done as a group activity, as individuals, or in pairs. Pens/pencils and paper needed.***

***Where would you find….***

1 The Angel Islington?

2. The Angel of the North?

3. Angel Delight?

4 The city of Archangel?

5. The Angel Recording Studios?

6. The Tin Angel?

7. Angel Dust?

8. Charlie’s Angels?

9. City of Angels? (Answers at end of booklet

**OR**

Billy Graham in his book “Angels, God’s Secret Agents” (1975 wrote that during his Ministry he has read or heard of thousands of stories where men and women of all ages and from all walks of life, have been rescued from accidents or dangerous situations with what seems to have been help from angels. He asks if all these stories could have been hallucinations, or coincidence or luck?

There are a numerous instances mentioned in the Bible when an angelic visitation has occurred. The writer of Hebrews (13 v2) suggests that by welcoming strangers “…some have entertained angels unawares…”

***Has there been a time in your life when you had a sense of God’s close presence? If you feel able, share your experiences with the group***

***WORSHIP (giving God the glory)***

***Spend some time thanking God for these experiences in your lives***

**OR**

***Sing or listen to a worship hymn or song about angels eg Angel voices ever singing***

***WORD (learning from the bible and applying it to our lives)***

The modern word “angel” is derived from Greek meaning “one sent” or “one going”, “a messenger”. So it is important to note that the word “angel” describes the function rather than the nature of this spiritual being. That’s why human beings can be referred to as “angels” – because they too can be God’s messengers. However, usually the word is used of spiritual beings.

Read Genesis 18.1-22

1. What indications are there that the 3 visitors appear to be normal human travellers?
2. What indications are there that at least one of the travellers is a supernatural being?
3. Discuss the verses that most speak to you from this story and pray about any applications in your own lives.

***WITNESS (sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know him especially through prayer and loving service)***

* Each identify someone for whom you can be a secret “Angel” in the sense of praying for them, caring for them and sharing with them Jesus’ good news as opportunities come. Pray for God’s blessing on them. Write a reminder down in order that you can pray for them each week in the coming months.
* Pray and plan for any Inspiring Angels Events in your locality

**Session 2. Heavenly Worshippers**

***WELCOME (warming up together)***

*What do you think it would be like to have a strong sense of God’s presence and glory. Either describe what you imagine this ould be like or tell the group of any real experience of this you have had. Where were you and what feelings did you experience?*

***WORD (learning from the bible and applying it to our lives)***

Read Isaiah 6 vv 1- 8 .

Isaiah’s vision

of the Lord came after the death of King Uzziah (also known as Azariah) in 740BC. Uzziah had been a good King until, in an act of pride, he tried to take the place of the priests by burning incense in the temple. He was hen struck with leprosy and lived as an outcast for the rest of his life. (see 2 Chronicles 26.16-21 and 2 Kings 14.21) Uzziah’s death probably meant that Isaiah was very uncertain about the future of the nation and his own future. He came to the temple, seeking comfort and was given a vision of God’s presence. This passage contains the only mention in scripture of celestial beings called seraphim. This is a Hebrew word meaning “burning ones”. (The singular of “seraphim” is “seraph”)

* ***Why might the seraphim be portrayed as burning?***
* ***Based on Isaiah’s description of the appearance, words and actions of the seraphs, what conclusions can you draw about their character?***
* ***Will Isaiah’s vision make a difference in your worship of God? (For example, does the fact that holy angels are worshipping God with you, give you greater confidence? Or how does it make you feel?)***
* ***Discuss the verses that most speak to you from this story and pray about any applications in your own lives***

***WORSHIP (giving God the glory)***

* *Spend some time thanking God for his presence*

AND/OR

* *Sing or listen to a worship hymn or song about angels eg Ye holy angels bright, Holyholy,holy or I the Lord of Sea and Sky which is based on Isaiah Ch6*

***WITNESS (sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know him especially through prayer and loving service)***

* *Pray for God’s blessing on the people you identified for whom you are seeking to “be an angel”.*
* *Pray and plan for any Inspiring Angels Events in your locality*

**Session 3. A Heavenly Army**

***WELCOME (warming up together)***

We live in a dangerous world

* Ask each person to name one situation which makes them feel insecure, afraid or “at risk”?
* When do you feel most secure?

OR

Read Ephesians 6.10-20 and make 6 life-sized items of armour out of paper and sticky tape**.**

***WORD (learning from the bible and applying it to our lives***

The bible talks of the battle against evil not as a battle between nations, but as a spiritual battle which takes place in every human heart. Every Christian is involved in spiritual battle and the angels of God are often portrayed in the bible as the Lord’s army (eg. 2 Kings 6.15-17)

Read Ephesians 6.10-20

1. What evidence do you see of this spiritual struggle in a) your own life b) your church or small group c) wider society/ your nation
2. Divide into pairs or threes. Divide the following pieces of armour among the small groups

**Belt, Breastplate, Marching boots, Shield, Helmet, Sword**

Think about what that item of clothing might naturally symbolise and look at the passage says about it. Write down in your own words thoughts about the meaning and importance of that piece of armour. (If you have made the pieces of armour you could write on your creations. Or you could use pictures of Roman soldiers and write on them.

Share what you have written with the wider group.

1. The imagery of the battle is only one biblical description of the Christian life. It is also compared to a walk, a race, a rest and a challenging adventure! What happens if we see the Christian life only as a battle?

What happens if we ignore the fact that Christian life involves spiritual battle?

1. Prayer is crucial in the battle and Paul did not hesitate to ask the Ephesian Christians to pray specific things for him (vs 19-20) Share some specific requests with the members of the group which will help you be more victorious in your daily battles/ temptations. Then pray for each other.

***WORSHIP 1 (giving God the glory)***

Distribute among the small group members the pieces of paper on which you wrote the meaning and importance of each piece of armour. Play some music (Perhaps the hymn: Be thou my vision) during which each person should in their hearts and minds thank God for this spiritual armour. At the end of the music the people holding the papers should turn what is written on their piece of paper into a simple prayer of praise said out loud. eg. “Thankyou for the helmet of salvation. Thank you Lord for protecting our minds Lord from temptation. Thankyou we can know that we are saved.....”

***WITNESS (sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know him especially through prayer and loving service)***

* In the first session, you were asked to each identify someone for whom you can be a secret “Angel” in the sense of praying for them, caring for them and sharing with them Jesus’ good news as opportunities come. Find the list you wrote down and c*ontinue to pray for* God’s blessing on them and on anyone whom you hope to invite to an Inspiring Angels event Write any new names down in order that you can pray for them each week in the coming months.
* Pray particularly for any areas in your life or the life of your community in which you sense that there is a bit of a spiritual struggle going on – eg. this might be praying for an end to misunderstandings or negative gossip and for God’s peace to prevail

***WORSHIP 2 (giving God the glory)***

Finish this session, with a good time of praising God for the victory of Good over Evil, Light over darkness. You might do this by giving everybody 3 candles and asking them to think of 3 areas where good has prevailed over evil. They should say a short prayer thanking God as they light each candle and place it in a designated place. This should help everyone to be encouraged by all that God is doing and fill the room with candlelight light.

***EXTRA: St Michael and All Angels***

The feast of St Michael and all angels is on 29th Sept and is the reason why this time of year is known as Michaelmas.

St Michael is not the patron saint of Marks and Spencer. He is an [archangel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archangel) (The word saint simply means “holy”) In Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition, Michael is viewed as the field commander of the [Army of God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavenly_host). He is mentioned by name in the [Book of Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Daniel), the [Book of Jude](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Jude), and the [Book of Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation), in which he leads God's armies against the Devil's forces during his uprising. In the book of Daniel, Michael appears as "one of the chief princes" who in [Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel)'s vision comes to [Gabriel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel)'s aid in his contest with the angel of [Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persia) Michael is also described there as the advocate of the [Children of Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_Israel) and as a "great prince who stands up for the children of your [Daniel's] people".

In Hebrew, *Michael* means "who is like [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Judaism)" (*mi*-who, *ke*-as or like, [*El*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_(deity))-deity), which in [Talmudic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) tradition is interpreted as a rhetorical question: "[Who is like God?](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Who_is_like_God%3F)" (which expects an answer in the negative) to imply that *no one* is like God. In this way, Michael’s name is a therefore a reminder of humility before God. By tradition it is also the war cry of the hosts of heaven in spiritual battle.

Here is the account of heavenly battle in Revelation 12.7-12:-

***7 Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. 8 And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. 9 This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. 10 Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens,***

***“It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God,***

***and the authority of his Christ.[***[***a***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%2012.7-12&version=NIVUK;MSG;GNT;NLT#fen-NIVUK-en-MSG-en-GNT-en-NLT-30862a)***]For the accuser of our brothers and sisters[***[***b***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%2012.7-12&version=NIVUK;MSG;GNT;NLT#fen-NIVUK-en-MSG-en-GNT-en-NLT-30862b)***]has been thrown down to earth— the one who accuses them before our God day and night.11 And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony.and they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice!***

*Note that the victory over Satan is won by the blood of the lamb and their testimony.*

*Links with other parts of the bible:* [*Revelation 12:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%2012.7-12&version=NIVUK;MSG;GNT;NLT#en-NIVUK-en-MSG-en-GNT-33897) [*Dan 10:13; Dan 10:21; Rev 12:1; Jude 1:9;*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev12:7;Dan10:13;Dan10:21;Rev12:1;Jude1:9;&version=GNT)[*Revelation 12:9*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%2012.7-12&version=NIVUK;MSG;GNT;NLT#en-NIVUK-en-MSG-en-GNT-33899) [*Gen 3:1; Rev 12:9; Luke 10:18;*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev12:9;Gen3:1;Rev12:9;Luke10:18;&version=GNT) *Revelation 12:10*[*; Job 1:9-Job 1:11; Zech 3:1;*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rev12:10;Job1:9-Job1:11;Zech3:1;&version=GNT)

**Session 4. A Heavenly Messenger**

***WELCOME (warming up together)***

Think of something great. What does “great” mean to you? Share your ideas. -

***WORSHIP (giving God the glory)***

As you listen to some quiet music write down on post it notes some words which declae God’s greatness. They could be words used by some of the angels in the bible or your own words. At the end someone from the group should read the post its aloud, turning them into a prayer of praise.

***WORD (learning from the bible and applying it to our lives***

In today’s passage, an angel comes to Mary and proclaims that she will miraculously bear a child, and that he will be great. Let’s see what greatness means for Jesus..

Read Luke 1.26-38

1. What do we learn about Joseph in verse 27? Why do you think this might be significant?

2. How does the angel encourage Mary? (verses 28-31) Have you ever experienced God’s goodness or “favour” in an unusual way? Talk about it. How did it feel? How did you respond?

3. In verse 32 Gabriel says that Jesus will be “great” and describes some things that he will be or do. What are these things connected with Jesus’ greatness?

4. In the context of the ancient world, what would it mean to have a king whose kingdom would never end? How does this speak to us today?

5. What progression do you see in Mary’s responses in verses 29, 34, and 38? How does Gabriel answer her question about how this could happen (verses 35-37)? Have you ever experienced going from confusion to questioning to faith? What was the situation?

6. In pairs or threes share with each other what particularly speaks to you from this passage and pray for grace to apply what you have learned.

***WITNESS (sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know him especially through prayer and loving service)***

* In the first session, you were asked to each identify someone for whom you can be a secret “Angel” in the sense of praying for them, caring for them and sharing with them Jesus’ good news as opportunities come. Find the list you wrote down and c*ontinue to pray for* God’s blessing on them and on anyone whom you hope to invite to an Inspiring Angels event Write any new names down in order that you can pray for them each week in the coming months.
* In verse 37 Gabriel says “No word from God will ever fail”. What steps of faith is God calling you to take this week based on his Word? Share and offer these challenges to God in your concluding prayers.

**Session 5: A Heavenly Choir**

***WELCOME (warming up together)***

When have you experienced good news? Think of a time you received good news and share a little about it. Today, we will read about some good news brought by angels to some unlikely witnesses. We’ll ponder what it means that Jesus is “good news.”

***WORSHIP (giving God the glory)***

Spend a moment outside in the dark, imagining the experience of the shepherds watching their sheep on the first Christmas eve, Come in to a room lit only by candles and prayerfully listen to “It came upon a midnight clear.” or a similar carol Silently thank God for the good news message of the angels

***WORD (learning from the bible and applying it to our lives***

Read Luke 2.1-7

Put yourselves in the story. Imagine you were Joseph or Mary – what do you think this time in their lives was like for them?

Read Luke 2.8-14

1. Shepherds were poor, lower-class people in their society, despised by religious Jews because their work kept them away from many religious activities. Notice the contrast between these majestic titles for Jesus and the poor situation into which he was born in verses 6-7. Looking at verses 8-14, why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first ones to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus?

2. Put yourselves in the story again. This time imagibe you are one of the shepherds. What does “good news of great joy for all people.” mean to you?

***WITNESS (sharing the good news of Jesus with those who do not yet know him especially through prayer and loving service)***

Read Luke 2.15-20

After seeing Jesus, the shepherds spread the word to anyone willing to listen and were full of praise to God.

* During these sessions you have prayed for someone for whom you have tried to be a secret “Angel” in the sense of praying for them, caring for them and sharing with them Jesus’ good news as opportunities come. Pray for them again tonight
* Pray for any Inspiring Angels events you are involved with that they may witness to the Good News of Jesus.
* End the study by sharing some things each person is thankful for, and then spending time in prayer praising and thanking God.

***SESSION 1 Answers to the quiz:***

1. On a Monopoly Board 2. Gateshead 3. In a dessert Bowl

4. European Northern Russia 5. Islington, London

6. Coventry (it’s a live music venue) 7. In a pharmacy (it’s the common name of the drug phencyclidine)

8. Miami, Florida

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