

# ADAM HAMILTON

# INCARNATION

REDISCOVERING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

## Virtual Leader Guide

by Mike Poteet

### INTRODUCTION

Advent and Christmas 2020 promise to be substantially different from years past for many U.S. congregations. Worship and other activities, including Christian education, will likely take place, exclusively or in part, online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its associated public health concerns. Even so, now more than ever, we need to experience the hope and joy that comes to us in Jesus Christ, whose birth we await during the Advent season. Engaging deeply in worship and study in the weeks leading up to Christmas can help us remember and recommit to this hope and inspire us to bring that same gift of hope to others.

This resource will help you lead an effective and enriching group study of Adam Hamilton's book *Incarnation* on an online video conferencing platform such as Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or other virtual meeting platform of your choice.

### Basic Features for Virtual Meetings

This Leader Guide assumes you are using a platform that supports the following features:

- **Synchronous video and audio:** Your participants can see and speak to each other live, in real time. Participants have the ability to turn their video off and on, and to mute and unmute their audio.
- **Chat:** Your participants can send text messages to the whole group or individuals from within the virtual meeting. Participants can put active hyperlinks (for example, "clickable" internet addresses) into the chat for other participants' convenience.
- **Screen Sharing:** Participants can share the contents of their screen with other participants (the meeting host's permission may be required).
- **Video Sharing:** Participants (or the host) can share videos and computer audio via screen share, so that all participants can view the *Incarnation* videos each week.

- **Breakout Rooms:** Meeting hosts can automatically or manually send participants into virtual smaller groups and can determine whether the rooms end automatically after a set period of time. Hosts can communicate with all breakout rooms.

Check with your pastor or director of discipleship to see if your church has a preferred platform or an account with one or more of these platforms that you might use. In most instances, only the host will need to be signed in to the account; others can participate without being registered.

Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams all offer free versions of their platform, which you can use if your church doesn't have an account. However, there may be some restrictions (for instance, Zoom's free version limits meetings to 40 minutes). Check each platform's website to be sure you are aware of any such restrictions before you sign up.

Once you have selected a platform, familiarize yourself with all of its features and controls so that you can facilitate virtual meetings comfortably. The platform's website will have lists of features and helpful tutorials, often third-party sites will have useful information or instructions as well.

This Leader Guide also assumes, but does not require, access to slide-creation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides.

## **Video Sharing**

Your purchase of the *Incarnation* Virtual Advent Kit includes a 45-day access pass to Amplify Media, where you can find all of the *Incarnation* videos (go to [amplifymedia.com](https://amplifymedia.com) and search "Incarnation"). Follow the instructions in the Virtual Advent Kit for signing up and using your pass, which allows you to access Amplify from November 16 through December 31.

Playing the videos via Amplify in your web browser makes it easy to share them with participants in your group session each week (follow your videoconferencing platform's instructions for sharing videos).

## **Communicating with Your Group**

The *Incarnation* Virtual Advent Kit includes weekly emails to send to your group as well as Facebook posts that you can use each week to spark reflection and discussion about the book and your upcoming group sessions. Feel free to use these as they are or adapt them to meet the unique needs of your group.

## **Tips for Leading Your Virtual Sessions**

- Familiarize yourself with the controls and features of your videoconferencing platform, using instructions or tutorials available via the platform’s website or third-party sites.
- Advertise your virtual study on your church’s website and/or in your church’s newsletter. Request that pastors or other worship leaders announce it in worship services.
- Encourage people to register for the online study using an event planning tool such as SignUpGenius so you have a database of participants and their email addresses.
- Before each session, send an email to participants reminding them of the event and giving them the link they will need to join the online meeting.
- As leader, log into the virtual meeting early. You want to be a good host who is present to welcome participants by name as they arrive.
- Be sure you are leading the session from a well-lit place in front of a background free from excessive distractions.
- During each session, pay attention to who is speaking and who is not. Because of video and audio lags as well as internet connections of varying quality, some participants may inadvertently speak over each other without realizing they are doing so. As needed, directly prompt specific people to speak if they wish (for example, “Alan, it looked like you were about to say something when Sarah was speaking”). If your group is especially large, you may want to agree with members on a procedure for being recognized to speak (for example, participants might “raise hands” digitally or type “call on me” in the chat feature).
- Remember some participants may wish to simply observe and listen—do not pressure anyone to speak who does not wish to.
- Always get your group’s permission before recording your online sessions. While those who are unable to attend the meeting may appreciate the chance to view it later, respect the privacy of your participants.
- Communicate with your group in between sessions by sending the *Incarnation* emails (available in the *Incarnation Virtual Advent Kit*) and by using the *Incarnation* Facebook posts to spark ongoing discussion (also available in the *Incarnation Virtual Advent Kit*).

In challenging times, modern technology has powerful potential to bring God’s people together in new and nourishing ways. May such be your experience during this virtual study!

## **ORDER OF SECTIONS**

Session 1: Presidents and Kings

Session 2: The Savior and Our Need for Saving

Session 3: Emmanuel in the Midst of a Pandemic

Session 4: Light of the World, Word of God, and Lord