

REMEMBERING CHRIST'S FIRST COMING, WHILE LONGING FOR HIS SECOND

Advent



THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT; THOSE WHO DWELT IN A LAND OF DEEP DARKNESS, ON THEM HAS LIGHT SHONE. - ISAIAH 9:2

FIRST WEEK OF Advent

**November 29
through December 5**

A Note from JF

Advent is my favorite time of year. Not because it means that Christmas is on it's way, though that is very good. It is my favorite time because it allows Becca and I to engage both theologically and historically with the Church. Advent is a season where we can remember Christ's first coming while longing and yerning for Christ's return so that all things are righted (Rev. 21-1-7). I hope you and your group will share in this experience together with hope and longing.

What you will need -

Advent Candles
Lighter
This packet

Four Things To Remember

One

It is important to make sure that you setup the candles, have a working lighter, and this packet in advance to group time. Making sure these things are in order will help streamline the flow of the time together with the group so that you can focus on worship and growth, rather than fumbling with these tools.

Three

Begin your time as you normally would. Whether you start with praying for our Missions Prayer Initiative Countries, your own requests, or sing a song, whatever you are accustomed to, please continue doing that. However, when you begin to utilize this curriculum, you may want to steady yourself with silence before starting. Remember, while this is just an act that has developed over centuries and there is no special power in it, silencing yourself before the Lord to remember and reflect is always a beneficial act.

Two

Each week the group leader may choose to light the candle or group members may volunteer to (carefully) pick up the candles so that they can lead the process and discussion. This will be left up to each group. However, coming up with a plan early will be most beneficial. As long as you know who will light the candle(s), read the Scripture, and facilitate discussion, you are well on your way to having a fantastic time.

Four

Walk through this curriculum, making sure to pause and reflect. But this isn't meant to be some somber act that only monks do. We are to be joyful and jubilant too. Have fun with this, maybe this will become a tradition for your Life Group or your family. Enjoy this time as we wind down another fall semester in group life.





HOPE FOR THE WEARY

THE HOPE CANDLE | The first candle of advent is the Candle of Hope, also known as the prophecy candle. It serves as a reminder that we can have hope that God will fulfill His promises concerning all He will do through Jesus. This is good, as world weariness threatens our hope daily. Romans 5:5 declares in Christ, we have *“hope [that] does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

In Psalm 71:5, the Psalmist says THE LORD IS his hope: *“For You are my hope; Lord God, You are my confidence from my youth.”* Not only is our hope in the Lord, but He Himself is our hope. This means the further we get away from God, the less hope we have, and the closer we get to God, the more hope we are going to have in our lives. The most hopeful people on the planet earth are those who live closest to God.

It makes sense then, that the Apostle Paul said it is Jesus Christ (God who came in the flesh for us) who is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1), and Paul further explained how only those who take refuge in Jesus may begin to truly grasp the profoundly good and powerful hope of God. He wrote to encourage Christians about *“the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27).

READ | Psalm 71

ASK | Briefly consider these questions together as a group:

- What does it mean to take refuge in God?
- *The Psalmist feels threatened, weary, and sometimes fearful (vv9 &18)...* What “hand of the wicked,” “wrongdoing,” and “ruthlessness” in the world feels most threatening to you? In other words, what threatens to overwhelm you and overshadow your hope?
- What are some things, apart from God, that you (or others) may attempt to put their hope in?
- What is the center of the Psalmist’s life (vv 8, 14-16, 22-24)?
- How can God restore the life of the weary?

READ | Hebrews 6:9 & 17-20

PRAY | *Heavenly Father, I am humbly yours. I come before you today in need of hope for a solid and joyful future, for love and kindness, for peace and safety. Thank you Jesus for coming as the light into the dark, that I would know of such a hope to anchor my soul. Holy Spirit, help me, by Your power, to walk in the light of Christ and live my life in His name. And through me, would you anchor others still, in the midst of whatever storms the world may bring. Amen.*