

WEEK TWO

Advent Devotional

Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas



RH

Hope in the Darkness

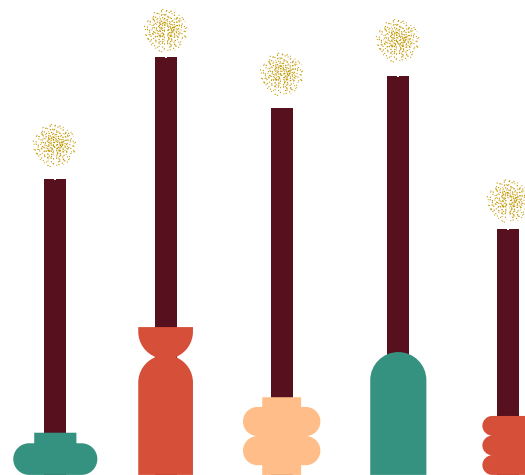
WEEK TWO

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:1-5, 9-14



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As the days grow shorter, one of the first visible signs that Christmas is coming (other than the holiday department at Costco) is the Christmas Lights that adorn our homes and fill our streets. And slowly but surely, the nights begin to glow with the light of Christmas.

The appearance of lights at Christmas carries a distinctly Christian message as each sparkling bulb set against the darkness of the night can serve as a timely reminder that Jesus is the light of the world.

In the opening words of John's gospel, John declares that Jesus has come as the Word made flesh to illuminate the darkness and reveal the glory of God to the world. But just as Christmas lights are seen best against the backdrop of the night, the light of Christ shines brightest when we view it against the darkness of our sin.

Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Jesus 700 years before his arrival and said, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2). While these words inspire hope, the full impact of their meaning is best understood in the broader context of scripture.

When Isaiah wrote these words, the Israelites lived in a time of great confusion. Many had been displaced from their homes or taken into captivity, and those who remained in the land were surrounded by enemies and lived under the constant threat of attack. Isaiah 8:19 and 22 says that in this time, "...they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness". In desperation, the Israelites looked to the earth and the wisdom of the world for answers, but there were none to be found. There was no light within them to push back the darkness.

But then, they received a promise that a light would come. And years later, the promise of light was fulfilled. A light that didn't come from inside the world, but a light that came from outside it. The light of Christ, the promised Messiah.

The gift of the light forces us to confront the truth that apart from Christ, we dwell in darkness. Looking to the earth, to the wisdom of the world, or within ourselves only ends in futility and hopelessness. We need a light from outside us. And Jesus came as the light to bring hope to a world that was lost in darkness.

In his book *Hidden Christmas*, Tim Keller says, "There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride to the depths that the gift of Jesus Christ requires us to do. Christmas means that we are so lost, so unable to save ourselves, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God himself could save us."

At Christmas, we celebrate that the light of Christ has come as a beacon of hope in the darkness of our sin. And you have been invited to step into the light.

For some, this may mean repenting of an area of sin that has created separation between you and God. For others, it may mean pursuing the truth that Jesus offers rather than the empty promises of the world. Either way, the light has come. And we no longer need to remain in darkness.

Not only is Jesus the light, Ephesians 5:8 declares, "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Not only do we have light, we are light as the Holy Spirit dwells in us. And this Christmas, we have the great privilege and joy to walk as children of light, living as a beacon of hope to a world that remains in darkness.

Take time to respond by considering the following questions.

Is there an area of your life where you are living in darkness, and where God is calling you to step into the light? What hope does Christ offer you? How can you take a step towards His loving invitation?

As you abide in God's love in your everyday experiences, how can you spread the hope of Christ to those around you? What does it practically look like to live as light at home, at work, or at school?



Family Experience

CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the **love** candle from the previous week.

As you read the following scripture, light the second candle in your Advent wreath to represent the **hope** we have in Christ.

Read: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

Isaiah 9:2

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for coming near to us in such a special way. Thank You for bringing light to our world and to our lives. Help us share the light of who you are with others through our words and actions this Christmas season and always. We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.

Listen: O Holy Night

[Click Here to Listen](#)



Family Experience

READ

Read **John 1:1-14** together as a family. Depending on the age of your children, you may or may not choose to read the personal reflection together.

DISCUSS

Take time to discuss the following questions.

Younger Kids

- 1** Read John 1:4 - "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." This verse tells us that Jesus came into the world to bring light and life to everyone. Do you think we need the light of Jesus because of the right or wrong choices we make? **(Wrong choices)** When we make right choices, we become like lights that point people to Jesus.
- 2** Read John 1:14 - "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This means that Jesus came into the world as a human in the form of a tiny baby. When do we celebrate that Jesus came into the world? **(Christmas)** During Christmas, we give gifts because Jesus is the best gift! What gift would you give Jesus to show him you love him?

Older Kids

- 1** Read John 1:4 - "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." What does this verse tell us is the reason Jesus came into the world? **(To bring light and life to all mankind.)** Why do you think we need the light of Jesus in our life?
- 2** Read John 1:9 - "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." This verse gives a heads up that the true light, Jesus, was coming into the world. How does that change how and what you think about Christmas?
- 3** Read John 1:12 - "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." What does this verse say about Jesus and what he can do for you? **(Knowing Jesus gives us the right to become children of God.)** Knowing this, do you think Jesus is someone you would want to follow?

PRAY

If celebrating advent with children, pray the following scripture over each child you are celebrating with. Feel free to add to this prayer or pray other specific requests over your child as you feel led.

God of hope, may You fill _____ with all joy and peace as he/she trusts in You, so that _____ may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **(from Romans 15:13 NIV)**

Celebrate

Choose a night this week to drive around town and look at Christmas lights. You can even make it a fun experience by wearing pajamas, bringing blankets, and loading up on snacks and hot chocolate. A quick Google search can even help you find local maps that track some of the more extravagant light displays. Be sure to crank up your favorite Christmas music for the trip!

While you drive, take time to talk about how Christmas lights can remind us that Jesus is the light in the darkness.

Discussion Prompts for Kids:

- ★ Talk about your favorite colors and observe the patterns of the lights on the houses. What are some patterns we can form in our lives that will help us remember that Jesus is the light in the darkness of sin/the world?
- ★ What are some ways our family can share the light of Jesus with others? Be specific and make a plan together.
- ★ Talk about how when we know Jesus and have Him in our life, we need not be afraid of the dark because Jesus brings light in the darkness. When we think about who Jesus is, it changes everything. When you are afraid in the dark what can you do to remind yourself that Jesus is the light? **(sing a worship song, say scripture, pray, etc.)**