



SONGS OF THE SEASON

Week 1 Small Group: Born to Deliver

December 1, 2019

Isaiah 40:1-5

OPENING PRAYER:

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come into our midst. Come into our hearts. Come into our homes and our community, into our schools and workplaces. May we welcome you everywhere, making room for you, preparing for you, anticipating your arrival with joy and reverence. We commit this season of Advent to becoming ready. Shine your light in those nooks and crannies we keep in the shadows. Sweep the cobwebs from our long-hidden doubt and fear. Repair our torn and wounded places. We long for your arrival. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What is your favorite Christmas memory? Why?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Isaiah 40:1-5.

- This is a common prophecy read during Advent. Why do you believe that is? Why do you believe John the Baptist quotes from Isaiah 40 when he prophesies about Jesus?
- What speaks to you in this prophecy?
- What about Jesus' birth brings you comfort? Hope?
- Take time and read the entire chapter. Isaiah 40 is considered a passage on comfort and God's strength. What do you hear in this entire chapter? What is life changing?

NEXT STEPS:

- 25 days until Christmas. How will you live differently?
- What one thing/action per week will you do to bring hope to another this Advent season?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Gracious God, we are a people of many distractions, pulled in different directions, responding to multiple and often conflicting needs. We thank you for the gifts of Sabbath and worship, for a space and a time to set aside everything that tugs at us and instead focus our hearts and minds on you. Draw us more deeply into your presence. Grant us rest as we rely on your provision, and faith as we trust in your grace. Quiet our spirits so we may hear your Spirit speaking to us. Amen.



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Week 2 Small Group: Path of Peace

December 8, 2019

Isaiah 2:2-5

OPENING PRAYER:

Holy and ineffable God, you are the creator of the world and everything in it. We come before you to praise and glorify you. We rejoice in the wonders of your creation and all the ways you provide for us and sustain us. Open our hearts and minds to your Word and fill us with your Spirit. Amen.

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What is your favorite superhero and why?
- When you look at your family, who is the peacemaker and where does peace need to be made?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Isaiah 2:2-5.

- As we begin Advent, what does it mean to prepare for the last days?
- What do swords look like in your life? (words, tweets, looks, actions) What would it look like to turn your swords into plowshares?
- What does it mean to you if Jesus was to initiate the era of peace?
- How does this passage shape your everyday life? How does this passage impact your preparation for Christmas?
- What does it mean this Christmas to walk in the path of peace?

NEXT STEPS:

- Pray with God over the anger you are carrying? How will you address each anger and walk with Jesus in peace towards Christmas?
- Pray over a broken relationship in your life? How can you make peace with this situation? (face to face confrontation, write a letter, write your feelings and burn them ...)
- How will you change your life this Advent?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Surprising God, your word set wonder in motion. Like Mary, we are filled with amazement that you have found favor with us and that you choose to be present to the world through us. We join Mary in giving birth to hope, to love, to peace for all creation, in all corners of the world. We praise you for the gift of your Son, whom we follow. Surprising God, bless us again and open us to the wonder of your love flowing in us and through us. Amen.



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Week 3 Small Group: Rejoice! Rejoice!

December 15, 2019

Isaiah 35

OPENING PRAYER:

Holy and ineffable God, you are the creator of the world and everything in it. We come before you to praise and glorify you. We rejoice in the wonders of your creation and all the ways you provide for us and sustain us. Open our hearts and minds to your Word and fill us with your Spirit. Amen.

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What are you most excited about in the next 3 days?
- Only a few days left until Christmas eve. How will you rejoice this Christmas?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Isaiah 35.

- How do you see the work of the messiah in this chapter? How do you see this in your everyday life?
- As you read v. 8, what does it mean for you to live on the highway of holiness? What does that look like each and every day?
- Jesus's birth fulfills this passage; however, it is also a passage for today and the future. How do you see this exists right now? Considering this passage, what will that look like to you when Jesus comes again?

NEXT STEPS:

- Beyond the gifts, dinner and parties – what does rejoice at Christmas mean to you? how will this year be different from last year?
- How will you incorporate Jesus into the next three days? Growing your faith from how you celebrated three years ago?
- What will rejoice look like today, tomorrow on Christmas' eve and on Christmas Day?
- How will you celebrate this Christmas as Jesus' birthday and not another family party?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Almighty God, the time of waiting is almost over. Like new parents eagerly awaiting the birth of a child, we impatiently wait with you for the birth of your Son. We stand in awe, knowing what the birth of this particular baby means for our lives yet unable to fully comprehend the depth of your love for us. We come before you in worship this morning, hoping that our thoughts, prayers and songs of praise are pleasing to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Week 4 Small Group: Lift Up Your Heads

December 22, 2019

Psalm 24

OPENING PRAYER:

Holy God, that you receive us into your presence is both gift and miracle, and we thank you. Thank you for sharing the light of your glory that we might glimpse your power and majesty. Thank you for sharing your creation that we might see signs of your beauty. Thank you for sharing your Son that we might know the depth of your love, forgiveness and mercy. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

BREAKING THE ICE:

- When you think about Christmas and Easter, are there ways you relate the two?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Psalms 22 -24

- This week's scripture is part of a series of psalms. Start by reading Psalm 22, place yourself with Jesus on his last day as he dies on the cross. Read Psalm 23 – what does this Psalm mean for you? What is God trying to teach us? Now read Psalm 24.
- What in this sequence of three psalms jumps out at you?
- Why would we read all three psalms at Advent when getting ready for Jesus' birth?
- How does Psalm 24 relate to Advent? How does it impact your journey toward Christmas?
- What would help you prepare for Christmas in light of your learnings on these passages?

NEXT STEPS:

- 10 days left – what tangible steps can you take to live differently?
- With the next 10 days, take time each day at the beginning and the end to lift up your head and give praise.
- Over the next 10 days list 10 gifts of praise each day.
- Give 10% each day of your time and financial gifts to prepare for Christ.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

God of Mary and Joseph, God of shepherd and sage, God of Jesus our Lord, quicken our mood of anticipation, yet still our anxious worry about lists and events. Hush the frantic tone in our voices. Slow the rush of our busy feet. Open us to the joy hidden in every carol, the love tucked into every card, the beauty nourished in every evergreen.

With Mary, let wonder fill our hearts and blessing be our song. With Joseph, let us listen to the whispers of the night and do what is right. With shepherds and kings, let us prepare to hear the flutter of angel wings, see the bright star and kneel in awe and joy. With Jesus, let us show your light to the world. God of the morning light and holy nights, we long for you. Amen



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Week 5: Light of the World (Christmas Eve)

December 24, 2019

Luke 2:1-20

No small groups.



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Week 6 Small Group: Go Tell It

December 29, 2019

Luke 2:8-20

OPENING PRAYER:

We rejoice, O God, at the mystery and the miracle of Christmas, at the light shining in our darkness, a light that no dread of war, no pain of human suffering, no cloud of despair can dim or put out. By that light, we pray, lead us from the tangle of our bewildered ways, from the shadows of fear, from the thickets of strife, to set our feet on the clear paths of peace, confidence and righteousness that lead to your kingdom. Amen. Waldo Beach

BREAKING THE ICE:

- What is your best memory this week?
- Where did you experience Jesus' birth?
- How can you hold on to Christmas instead of just moving on to the next holiday?

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 2:8-20.

- Why do you believe that Jesus' birth was announced to shepherds? Who would you describe as modern day shepherds? What does that mean to you? How does that change your understanding of Christmas?
- What impact does Jesus' birth have on your everyday life?
- What about this week and Luke 2 will change your life this week?

NEXT STEPS:

- Who have been your shepherds that told you about Jesus? Make a list and send them a thank you card.
- Who sees you as a shepherd? How will you help to change their lives?

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Look well, O soul, upon thyself,
Lest spiritual ambition
Should mislead and blind thee
To thy essential task-
To wait in quietness;
To knock and to persevere in humble faith.
Knock thou in love, nor fail to keep thy place before the door
That when Christ wills - and not before-
He shall open unto thee the treasures of His Love.
--Father Gilbert Shaw

Note to facilitator: Consider how you might gather this week to celebrate Christmas with one another, maybe over a meal or at a member's home. This could also be a lesson you could invite others to join, maybe bring to a senior center, or invite friends and family into your circle.



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