

HomeGroup **LEADER'S** Discussion Questions Advent Week 1: Dec 5-11

NOTE: THIS WEEK'S AND NEXT WEEK'S QUESTIONS ARE MORE SPECIFIC TO THE SERMON THAN WHAT WILL FOLLOW THE REST OF DECEMBER. FOR THOSE WEEKS, WE'LL USE A MORE GENERIC FORMAT. WE ARE ENCOURAGING GROUPS TO TAKE A BREAK FROM MEETING THE WEEKS OF DEC 20TH, 27TH, AND JAN 3RD.

PICK 2-3 QUESTIONS FROM BELOW FOR YOUR DISCUSSION.

Hope. To some it's merely a wish. For the Christian, hope is a matter of waiting, not wishing. We wait, in hope, knowing that the outcome is certain even if the timing is unknown. These next few weeks we will give our attention to Advent—the coming of Christ—as the basis of our hope. The Light has penetrated the darkness. The silence has been broken. The Child has been born!

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

CONNECT

- 1. What was your favorite Thanksgiving dish, dessert, or activity last week?
- 2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how hopeful is your outlook on life as we begin to celebrate Advent? This could be a good question for gauging where people are emotionally and spiritually right now. It may be an opportunity to offer encouragement and to simply give people a chance to be heard.

LEARN

3. For background on our main verses, Isaiah 8 expresses how God's people would be "thrust into thick darkness" as they turned away from Him (v. 22). How is a refusal to follow God comparable to "walking in darkness"?

There could be a number of good ways to answer this. For example, when people refuse to follow God their ultimate priorities and ambitions are given to things that are not of ultimate value, they forfeit the true wisdom from above for earthly wisdom (cf. James 3:13-18), and they look away from God for salvation (which some might label as self-fulfillment, happiness, or enlightenment). Each of these is a form of darkness or being blind to reality.

4. Read Isaiah 9, verses 2 and 6-7. Pastor Tom pointed out how this passage begins in darkness and so does the setting for Jesus' birth. Where do we see darkness in the circumstances of Jesus' birth?

You can probably think of a number of examples off the top of your head, but Pastor Tom also mentions examples. You could also refer to the Gospel narratives of Matthew (e.g.,

Herod the Great's attempt to kill Jesus), Luke (e.g., the literal darkness of night), and John (e.g., the "Isaiah 9-like" contrast between light and darkness)

5. Isaiah tells us that it's God's plan (v. 7) that this future great light (v. 2) will come from a small child (v. 6). What descriptions of this child in verses 6-7 stand out most to you? The sermon doesn't give a lot of attention to these, but it could be relevant to discuss in your group as you think about the various deeply profound phrases in these two verses.

APPLY

6. In what ways do you see darkness in our world today?

There are some ideas you could refer to the sermon for, but it would be good to hear from your group as well. You can think both on the level of systemic, widespread "darkness" and "darkness" on a more individual level.

- 7. What are you hopeful for? Would you describe your hope as waiting for something you know is certain, or more as wishing for something to happen?

 Again, the Biblical, Christian concept of hope is one of waiting for something certain rather than wishing for something to be true. This question may help us name and then distinguish between those things in our life that fall into one but not the other category.
- 8. How is Jesus' arrival a great light of hope in our day—even in 2020? This could be answered a number of ways. One possibility is that Jesus' arrival brought our salvation! It brought a fuller revelation of who God is. Also, we know that if Jesus would come in human form to die, we can be sure He will return one day to reign! You might consult a verse such as John 16:33.
- 9. Pastor Tom described God's zeal (v. 7) as "fervent passion" and "undeterred resolve" to shine this great Light into the darkness. How can we gain hope as we consider that it's God's light, not ours, that chases away darkness?

Our hope is not in ourselves! Our hope is certain because it is deeply rooted in the work of Christ and His trustworthiness. God has done for us what we could never do on our own. We can help each other gain hope from this by reminding each other that our salvation is not a human idea or effort. God initiated and accomplished it on our behalf.

10. What else did you find significant or inspiring about today's sermon?