

SESSION 4 - THE JOY OF ADVENT: MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

Joy isn't meant to be contained. It's meant to spill over, as the song in your heart comes out in the praises on your lips. Joy is contagious, and it only gets better as it is shared exponentially with others. One of the best pictures we have of this is a wedding. The guests at a wedding are there to share in the joy of the bride and groom and help them celebrate this joyous moment.

The Bible tells us that the Church is the bride of Christ, and Christ coming to earth is the most joyous occasion! At that first Christmas, the angels rejoiced as they celebrated the coming of Jesus to save His people. And one day in the future, Christ will again come for His bride so that we can spend eternity with Him in heaven. On that day, we'll join in with the angels as our joy overflows in songs of praise!

Read: Luke 2:8-20 and Psalm 100: 1-5

Looking back: What have been some of your greatest moments of joy? How have you experienced that joy is contagious?

Looking forward: As the shepherds shared what they learned about Jesus, the Bible says everyone who heard them was amazed. The joy of the shepherds was spreading! How will you help spread joy this Christmas season?

When we face difficult circumstances, how can we hold both joy and grief together?



SESSION 5 - THE PEACE OF ADVENT: A PEACE THAT NEVER ENDS

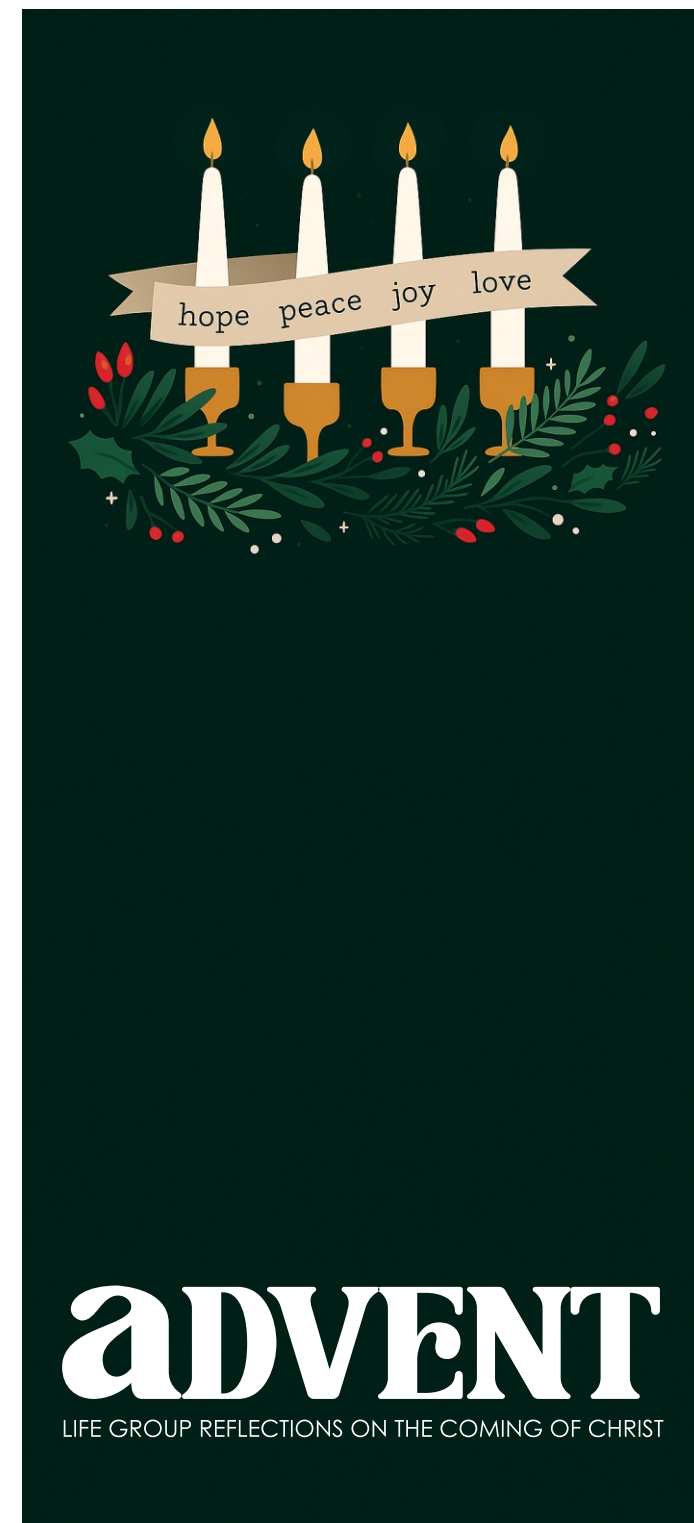
Isaiah prophesied that all nations would one day stream to the mountain of God. The Lord would be Lord of all, and all conflict would finally cease. A true peace, such as had never been seen on earth, would be established under the rule of the Prince of Peace. At the time of the birth of Jesus, the people of Israel were a seemingly insignificant nation. From exile under the Assyrians and Babylonians, and then ruled by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, the Israelites had witnessed the rise and fall of one nation after another. One conquering nation would rise to power, only to fall to the next. Conflict and oppression were Israel's constant companion, and they knew little of peace. And into this chaos and pain, Jesus came. That first Christmas, He came to conquer the chaos in our hearts. And one day in the future, He will come again as the Prince of Peace to set up a kingdom that will never fall.

Read: Isaiah 2: 1-4, 9:6-7, and Matthew 2:1-12

Looking back: How is Matthew 2 a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah?

Looking forward: James 4:1-3 tells us that the source of conflict comes from wanting things we can't or don't have. How is Jesus the antidote to this source of conflict?

Where in the world are peacemakers needed right now? What might it look like to bring Jesus' kind of peace to these places?



SESSION 1 - UNWRAPPING ADVENT

Advent comes from the Latin word 'adventus', meaning 'coming.'

Advent means 'arrival' and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person...

Advent reminds us of the importance of waiting.

Advent whispers our need for a Saviour.

Advent teaches us God's timing is always better than ours...

Read: Galatians 4:4-5

Looking back: what memories do you have of Christmas growing up? what were some of your Christmas Family Traditions?

Looking forward: What do you most/least look forward to at Christmas? How do you prepare? Sometimes, walking with God requires us to wait. What, in our lives, are we waiting for at the moment?

What can you do as a group in the Christmas period to reach out to others in our community?

How can you demonstrate the Hope, Love, Peace and Joy we discover in Christ?

Over the next four sessions, there are video links to the Bible Project's Advent video series - use them to spark further conversations on each week's theme.



SESSION 2 - THE HOPE OF ADVENT: UNTO US, A CHILD IS BORN

It had been over 400 years since the people of Israel had last heard from God. The prophets had long ago promised that one day God would send the Messiah, the promised deliverer who would bring about God's salvation. And so, the people of Israel continued to wait and hope. They held onto the prophecies found in books like Isaiah and Jeremiah and looked forward to the day when God would make all things right with the world.

Advent is not just about looking back at the first time Jesus came into our world at Christmas, but also about looking forward to when He comes again! At His first coming, Jesus came to give His life and save us from our sins. At His second coming, Jesus will come to judge the world and finally usher in the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16 and Isaiah 9:2-

Looking back: What are some of the phrases that stand out to you from these verses? How did Jesus fulfill these prophecies and bring hope to the people of Israel?

Looking forward: What do you think it will be like to live fully in the presence of God? What are you looking forward to the most about heaven?

Consider the parts of life that feel most exhausting right now - what could it look like to put your hope in God for strength and direction?



SESSION 3 - THE LOVE OF ADVENT: LOVE COME DOWN

Love has moved people to do incredible things. Out of love, a man will turn his life upside-down to win the heart of the woman he loves. Out of love, a new parent will lose countless hours of sleep caring for a new baby. Out of love, a soldier will lay his life down for his country. Out of love, a teacher will give hours upon hours to help students reach their full potential. Out of love, a stranger will offer help to someone in need.

The greatest sacrifice ever made was also born out of love. It was love that moved God to send Jesus to earth. It was love that moved the King of Kings to be born in a manger, and it was also love that moved that same King to stretch out His arms on the cross and take on the sins of the world.

Read: John 3:16-17 and Matthew 1:18-25

Looking back: What are some of the greatest acts of love you have witnessed? How do you see love playing out in the story of the birth of Jesus?

Looking forward: Everything that God does is done out of love because God is love. Even the justice and judgment of God are done out of love. When Jesus comes again to judge the world, how will that reflect God's love for the world?

How would you describe the difference between Jesus' way of love and the common understanding of love as something you can fall in or out of?

