

Advent

The Promise of Hope

- **Icebreaker Question: What are you most grateful for in your life right now?**

Leader: You don't have to answer all the questions below. Pick the ones that you think apply more directly to your group or make up your own that you think will help your group grow as disciples of Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation.

- As you reflect on the sermon this week, how did the Holy Spirit speak to your heart? Was there a verse/passage, or a part of the message that stood out to you? Why?
- Do you have any family or individual traditions for the Advent season? If so, what are they? What is a way your small group can experience Advent together?
- How does Biblical hope (*qāwâ, yāḥal, elpis, and elpizō*) contrast with worldly hope?
- Read **Genesis 3:1-15**. Verse 15 speaks of the “protoevangelium”, or the “first Gospel”. How are you encouraged that God always had the plan of salvation in mind and informed us of His plan as soon as sin entered the world? What does this tell you about who God is?
- Read **Matthew 1:18-25**. What do these passages reveal about God's love for the world? Jesus came in an unexpected way to the world as a baby. How has God showed up in your life in ways you did not expect?
- Read **Hebrews 10:23-25**. According to v.23, what is it about God that should motivate us to hold unswervingly, or hold fast? Think of today's culture and your own lives, why is this concept of holding fast difficult?
- The 3 application points in the message were 1) Trust God's Promises, 2) Share Hope with Others, and 3) Look Forward with Expectation. As a small group how can we encourage and equip one another to live out these points?

Prayer & Praise: Share about the needs that each of you has and pray for one another. Pray also for God to open doors for your group to take some action steps as a result of this discussion. Share wins where you have seen God at work.

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

Safe Group – This is a safe group. We will do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open & honest with their struggles and victories.

James 5:16, Ephesians 4:25

Confidentiality – Confidentiality is key. What is said in the group stays in the group. **Proverbs 11:12-13**

Listen– Be sure to listen well. Let's value one another during our discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you're going to respond or what what you're going to say next. **James 1:19**

Pause – Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

Silence – Allow silence in the group. It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

No "Crosstalk" – Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations. **Proverbs 26:20**

Don't Rescue & Don't Fix – When someone is sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and results in their not going as deep as they might have gone. Resist the desire to rescue people. Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they will ask for it. You may want to take time later to ask if you may offer some advice. **Proverbs 18:13**

Use Humor Responsibly – Fun is an essential part of Small Group; however keep sarcastic comments, jokes, and laughter to a minimum to allow for an atmosphere of authenticity and vulnerability. **Matthew 12:36**

Be Self-Aware – Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. **Proverbs 21:2**

Don't Debate Non-salvation Issues – These boundaries are essential to fight *for* relationship and unity in the group. **1 Corinthians 1:10**

"I" Statements – Use "I" statements. It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but we want to go deeper. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "they", "we", "us", "the church", etc. **Matthew 5:37**

Sharing – We want everyone to have a chance to share. Be sensitive about the amount of time you share. **James 1:19**

Start and Stop on time – Be mindful of the host and other members not to come too early or stay too late. **Proverbs 25:17**

Conflict Resolution – We will commit to Resolve conflict biblically. As humans we will need to extend grace to one another. Conflict is not bad, but an opportunity for growth. We are being changed to be more like Jesus, so conflict and change are part of the journey. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues.

Overlooking an offense. **Proverbs 19:11**
Restoring someone in sin. **Galatians 6:1-5**
Forgive a sinner. **Colossians 3:12-1**
Reconciling differences. **Matthew 5:23-24**