SEE HEAR LOVE

celebrates

ADVENT

SEE HEAR LOVE

HOPE

PREPARING OUR HEARTS & MINDS
FOR THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Activity

One morning this week, wake up early, put on a few warm layers, and watch the sunrise with friends or family. (I know this sounds wild - wake up early and go out in the cold? Yuck!) But we often experience God in stillness and silence, in the quiet of the morning.

While the sun rises, **read Isaiah 60: 1-2, 19-21.** Discuss or reflect on where you see the hope of Jesus in the world. You might even close your eyes and imagine what the hope of Jesus looks like and what it feels like. Does it feel like the sun bursting over the horizon in the darkness of the morning? Or warmth resting on your face in the dead of winter? What do you feel? Describe below.

In the passage, God speaks through the prophet, assuring His people that God's light will shine on them, and they will be a light for all to see. How might God be inviting you to let His light shine through you during this advent season? Before answering, pause and let God bring to mind who you can bring light and hope to... could be a neighbour, family member, grocery store cashier, the person you see at Starbucks all of the time.

Next Steps

Share your Activity answers and discuss with one another.

Pray the prayer below, and ask God to give you the courage to be a signpost of hope.

*As you light the **first purple candle** of your Advent wreath, you can recite the Blessing below together!*

Prayer

Jesus, darkness covers the earth right now, and it is hard to see any hope on the horizon. We need the hope of Christ to break in, to shine on us, and seep into every dark corner and crevice of our nation and world. Help me to not only see your light but to be your light. Ignite your Holy Spirit in me that I may bring your hope to our world.

Amen!

Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may *abound in hope.*

SEE
HEAR
LOVE

PEACE

BECOMING A PEACEMAKER IN A WORLD OF HOSTILITY & UNREST

Activity

In Jesus' kingdom - the world that he is making - peace reigns. The peace that Jesus promises is more than the absence of anxiety or conflict - it is wholeness, radical, and uncomfortable. Jesus' kingdom exists and spreads when the hungry are fed, when someone rides their bike to reduce their carbon footprint, when the fatherless are cared for by a loving community, when enemies reconcile against all the odds, when someone loves their neighbour, etc.

This week, as you drive through your city and neighbourhood, look for signs of life and signs of death, the presence of wholeness and the absence of wholeness. Reflect on, or discuss with friends or your family how your neighbourhood might be different if God was in charge. How would your city be different? What would it look like if God made things right?

After you discuss and reflect, ask God how you can pursue his peace this week; what tangible impact can you have in your neighbuorhood and city? How can you practically show love to your neighbor this week? Discuss ideas together, and decide how you will show peace this week.

Next Steps

Share your Activity answers and discuss with one another.

Pray the prayer below.

*As you light the **second purple candle** of your Advent wreath, you can recite the Blessing below together!*

Prayer

Jesus, we recognize that we desperately need peace - the kind that transforms and lasts. Help us keep our hearts focused on you, teach us how to maintain a humble posture, and open our eyes to see the humanity in every person.

Jesus, teach us to walk in the rhythms of your peace.

Amen!

Blessing

May we choose to embrace Jesus' way of peace for the flourishing of others as we join God in the world he is making. Go in peace.

Make peace.

Be at peace.

SEE HEAR LOVE

JOY

CHOOSING JOY DURING DIFFICULT & HARD TIMES

Activity

We often distract ourselves from pain and sorrow, soothing our discomfort with fleeting pleasures like a good cup of coffee, a night out with friends, a shopping spree, a Netflix binge etc. We all do this, and these things are not necessarily bad, but pleasure can quickly become an end in itself - we can spend more effort trying to feel comfortable and happy than we do trying to grow closer to Jesus. What if instead of avoiding our sorrow, we leaned into it and searched incessantly for the presence of God?

This week, choose one day to limit these pleasures. You might fast from social media or television. Maybe you turn off your phone for the evening. You could choose to fast from food or eat simpler. If you feel brave, you could do something for an entire week - like skip Starbucks, only eat meals from home, or choose not to buy anything you don't need. Write your choice here!

As you resist these things, feast and celebrate who God is. Use this as a breath prayer or mantra, **"The joy of the Lord is my strength!"** You might also start the day with a gratitude practice, like writing down a few things you are thankful for in a journal. Or write them down here!

Next Steps

Share your Activity answers and discuss with one another.

Pray the prayer below.

*As you light the **pink candle** of your Advent wreath, you can recite the Blessing below together!*

Prayer

Jesus, 2020 has been a year of sorrow - we long for your tangible presence this season. Please help us to experience joy as we search for you and focus on our life-giving transformative relationship with you. *Amen!*

Blessing

As you turn your focus to Jesus during this season and put your trust in Him, may *everlasting joy* fill your hearts, even in the moments that are filled with sorrow.

SEE HEAR LOVE

LOVE

CHRIST IS BORN!
LOVE HAS COME TO THE WORLD!

Activity

For one week, make a conscious effort to notice and pay attention to the things you find beautiful or things that you are thankful for. It might be Christmas lights, a delicious cup of coffee, a lovely conversation you have with a friend, an incredible view, something nice a neighbor does for you, etc. Imagine that each of these is a romantic gesture from God - ways that God is tangibly pursuing you and showing you how much he loves you. Soak in the feeling and the moment, allow yourself to feel the love and joy. Write down some of the things you are thankful for!

At the end of the week, reflect with friends or family members about the experience. What were you thankful for or what did you find yourself enjoying? What did you notice about your attitude or perspective throughout the week? Write your answers below!

Next Steps

Share your Activity answers and discuss with one another.

Pray the prayer below.

*As you light the **third purple candle** of your Advent wreath, you can recite the Blessing below together!*

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for your radical love that knows no bounds. May your unfailing love consume us more and more each day, transforming our hearts so that we can love as you love.

Amen!

Blessing

May you have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep *is the love of Christ* and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.