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## **ADVENT 2017- FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP EXPERIENCE**

### **“A Fulfilling Christmas”**

**Merry Christmas! Below is a Discipleship Guide for the first week of December.**

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father, and our Prince of Peace. What more do we need? Knowing and walking with Him provides true fulfillment for our hungry souls in a world that constantly cries for satisfaction.

### **USING THIS FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE**

This Discipleship Guide is built around the Advent season, which officially begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues until Christmas Day. One popular tradition marking the preparation for and progression of the Christmas season is an Advent wreath made up of five candles. Each week, a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas. The 4th candle, called the “Christ Candle”, is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent Jesus’ coming or ‘advent’. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the Gospel.

The guide contains five weeks of material for the whole month of December. We encourage you to gather a few candles and set them in a prominent location...maybe on your dining room table. Once each week, gather as a family, light a candle, and take a few minutes to read and reflect on the devotional material. On week 4, please use the “Christ Candle” provided by GLCC (available in the auditorium throughout December). The devotional material in this guide has been written primarily with adults and teenagers in mind. If you have elementary or preschool children, you may want to use the alternate family guide. There is also a song each week for you and/or your family to sing or listen to together (links are provided).

# **“A Fulfilling Christmas” Family Devotion**

*(For adults and teenagers.)*

## **WEEK 1 - December 3-9**

### **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME: The Promise of a Savior**

Please set aside ten minutes one night this week to talk about God’s promise of rescuing His children from sin. The only materials needed are five candles, some matches, and a Bible.

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE**

Have one member of your family light the first candle.

### **BIBLE READING**

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. [Genesis 3:15](#)

- ★ *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*
- ★ *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.  
For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.  
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. [Isaiah 9:1-7](#)*

Think of a time when you were in trouble and needed to be rescued. How did you feel in that situation? Who did you look to for help?

### **ADVENT IN THE BEGINNING**

Many of us grew up with the story of Advent beginning in a stable. But, the story actually begins in a Garden. When God created the world, all things were just as they should be. Creation

functioned in perfect order according to God's beautiful design. Man walked in unbroken relationship with Him, fully known and unafraid. But in an instant, all that changed as Adam and Eve disobeyed God's good instruction. They took of the fruit and ate of it, and sin entered the world. Fellowship was broken. Peace was shattered. Creation was thrown into chaos. Darkness, depravity, fear, shame, and selfishness flooded the human heart...separating man from God. The situation was dire.

But, right then, amidst the darkness, God spoke a word of hope: a Savior would come, born of a woman, to defeat the enemy and deliver God's people. Scholars refer to Genesis 3:15, as the "Proto-Euangelion" or the First Gospel. From the very first moment of our need for rescue, God's promise was there. Before He addressed Adam and Eve, God turned to the serpent and announced that sin would not have the final say and that the schemes of the enemy would not prevail.

### **SHADOWS, HINTS, AND WHISPERS OF HIS COMING**

Throughout the Old Testament, God spoke to His people about this promise. He gave them things to watch for in order to recognize the Savior's coming. God revealed that the Messiah would be born in the line of David (Isa. 9:6-7), of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), and in the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). The Savior would be a Man of Sorrows—crushed, despised and rejected—justifying many through what He suffered (Isa. 53). The promised Deliverer, would be a light overcoming darkness (Isa. 9:2), a Preacher of Good News to the poor (Isa. 61), and One walking in the power of the Spirit (Isa. 42:1). There were hints and shadows of Him everywhere.

God also reminded His people not to lose heart as they waited for the Savior to come. It's important to remember that God did not fulfill His promise right away. His people waited a long time. They spoke of the promised Rescuer from generation to generation, enduring cycles of war, rebellion, captivity, and restoration. They watched and waited—anxiously, expectantly—for God's faithfulness.

We can all identify with feeling hopeless, helpless, and in desperate need of rescue; especially when it comes to the weight of sin. Heavy and inescapable, we know its effects with every breath—both our own sin and that of others. Our world is full of evidence that something is wrong and needs to be made right. The reason we celebrate Advent is because the story of the Garden doesn't end with man's rebellion—but instead his redemption.

### **REFLECTION**

Consider the way God used Moses to deliver His people from bondage in Egypt (Ex. 12-14). Was there any way for the Israelites to escape their slavery apart from God's provision and power? How is sin an even harsher, more oppressive master than Pharaoh?

What is our only hope of deliverance? Think about Israel's long wait for the promised Savior to come. How do you think God's people fought against doubt, discouragement, and the temptation to believe God forgot them?

God often gives us seasons of waiting to sift and strengthen our faith. If you are in a season of waiting, what might the Lord be teaching you?

God reveals many things about His nature and character through the birth of His Son. What attributes of God do you see in this part of the Advent narrative?

### **RESPONSE**

What is one hope you have for yourself, your family, or your community as you begin the Advent season? How will you make that a reality?

### **PRAYER**

Pray for yourself and those around you, asking God to open your eyes and heart to what He has for you this Advent season.

### **SONG**

As a family, sing, listen to, or watch “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus.” As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King, Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit, Rule in all our hearts alone; By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Skit Guys (video) <https://goo.gl/ypiZWY>

Meredith Andrews <https://goo.gl/4E9217>

Christy Nockels <https://goo.gl/19pm1X>