

3 WEEKS





As we prepare

our hearts for Christmas, this series helps us rediscover the hope and peace that Jesus came to bring. We'll be reminded that true hope has a name, Jesus, and His perfect timing and promised return gives us confidence, even in the waiting.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Week 1

Hope When It Feels Hopeless.....4

Week 2

Peace for the Anxious Mind6

Week 3

The Genealogy of Jesus
(Christmas at the Orpheum).....8

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group.....14

Group Agreement15

Hope When It Feels Hopeless

Week 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking It Off:

What were some of your favorite Christmas traditions growing up? Have you continued any of those traditions as an adult, or started new ones of your own?

Big Idea:

Even when you don't feel hopeful, you can put your hope in the One who never fails.

Key Scriptures:

Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Matthew 1:21

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Galatians 4:4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law ...

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Discussion:

1. Read Proverbs 13:12. Have you ever felt like hope feels distant or delayed? What are some practical ways you can experience hope this season?
2. Hope has a name. What does it mean to you that hope isn't a feeling or an idea, but a person—Jesus? Share your thoughts with the group.
3. Hope has perfect timing. Can you share a time when you realized that God's timing is better than your own? What helps you stay patient in the waiting?
4. Hope is coming again. How does the promise of Jesus' return fill you with hope today?

Wrapping It Up:

Even when you don't feel

hopeful, you can put your hope in the One who never fails. This week, think of one area of your life where you need to let go of control and trust God's timing.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for others around you, that they experience a renewed hope in the waiting and live with eager expectation for Christ's return.

Memory Verse:

**HOPE
DEFERRED
MAKES
THE HEART
SICK, BUT
A LONGING
FULFILLED IS A
TREE OF LIFE.**

Proverbs 13:12

Peace for the Anxious Mind

Week 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking It Off:

When is the correct time to begin decorating for Christmas?

- As early as possible
- 12:01am on November 1
- The day after Thanksgiving
- Who has time to decorate?

Big Idea:

Peace isn't found in the absence of problems; peace is found in the presence of God.

Key Scriptures:

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Luke 2:14

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Discussion:

1. We see the word peace everywhere this time of year, but many of us don't actually feel it. Why do you think that is? What does peace mean to you? How would you define it personally?
2. Read John 14:27. What stands out to you about the kind of peace Jesus offers compared to the world's version of peace?
3. In Hebrew, Sar Shalom means Prince of Peace. What does that name reveal about who Jesus is and what He came to do?
4. In this week's message we talked about two different types of peace. Peace with God and Peace of God. Which one do you find yourself needing more of in this season?

5. Are there areas of your life where you might be trying to control something that isn't yours to control? If you are comfortable, share with your group.

Wrapping It Up:

When we stop trying to control and choose to surrender instead, we make room for the Prince of Peace to rule in our lives. Take some time to thank Jesus for being the Prince of Peace.

Prayer Focus:

Even when life feels uncertain, peace is possible because of Jesus. This week, when your heart feels anxious, pause and pray: "Lord, I surrender this to You. Be my peace."

Memory Verse:

"PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE YOU. I DO NOT GIVE TO YOU AS THE WORLD GIVES. DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED AND DO NOT BE AFRAID."

John 14:27

The Genealogy of Jesus (Christmas at the Orpheum)

Week 3



SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking It Off:

What is your favorite Christmas movie? Do you have a favorite quote or scene from the movie you can share?

Big Idea:

The genealogy of Jesus reminds us that God's story has always been one of redemption. He uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plan. No one is too far gone, too broken, or too unqualified for God to use.

Key Scriptures:

Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all

the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Key Scriptures (cont):

Matthew 1:1-2

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob ...

Matthew 1:5

Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab ...

Matthew 1:6

... and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife ...

Discussion:

1. When most people read the Christmas story, they tend to skip over the genealogy, but Matthew included it for a reason. Why do you think Matthew began the story of Jesus with a list of names?
2. How does knowing Jesus came from a messy family make the Christmas story more meaningful?
3. Abraham doubted God and struggled with faith, yet God still used him to begin His redemptive plan. Is it hard for you to believe that God can use you?
4. Rahab was a prostitute and an outsider, yet she is in the line of Jesus. What does that tell you about God's grace?
5. David's story reminds us that even in failure and family brokenness, God still works out His purposes. Are there ways you have seen something good come out of brokenness or pain?

Wrapping It Up:

As you close, read Luke 2:1-20 together as a group.

Prayer Focus:

God has already said yes to us! He is just waiting for us to say yes to Him. Whether it's trust, obedience, surrender, etc. Pray about what that can look like for you in this season.

Memory Verse:



Luke 2:10-11

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

NOTES:

NOTES:

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?

Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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community church

5601 Sunnybrook Drive
Sioux City, Iowa 51106
www.sunnybrookchurch.org