



Week One Hope

READ

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2 NIV)

UNDERSTAND

I don't know about you, but I've never been good at waiting. I've never been good at not knowing what's ahead. Looking forward to an unknown future with hope and excitement just doesn't come naturally to me. I doubt it does to most.

That's exactly what the people were facing before the birth of Christ. They'd been through so much—the good, the bad, and the unimaginably terrible—over the years. Floods and famine, war and wandering, slavery and suffering—these people endured it all, but always with the ever present hope of a Savior promised to come. They'd long been shrouded in darkness, waiting for a light to come.

But the darker the cloud, the brighter the sun that eventually shines through. And for them, that light to come was King Jesus. Though they waited in darkness, they did not wait without the hope of a Savior who was promised to come and shine an eternal light on their lives.

Waiting on God doesn't exactly look the same for us as it did for them. We have the privilege of knowing how their story ends. The Savior they hoped for did come, and not just for them but for the whole entire world as well. For us. The waiting is still daunting, but we can wait with a fresh hope because we know the King has come.

I don't know what kind of darkness you might be waiting under this Christmas season. I don't know how heavy the cloud feels over your heart. But I do know this: for those living in deep darkness, a light has dawned. As we begin this Christmas journey and look forward to celebrating the birth of the Savior who changes lives, do so with a fresh hope that the darkness will not win.

A light will break through.

RESPOND

Questions for Discussion:

What does waiting look like in your life? How does the wait make you feel?

Do you struggle to look forward to the future with hope? Why or why not?

How can you remember the hope of Christ and the promise of the light to come this Christmas season?

PRAYER

God, thank you that we don't have to wait without hope in this life. We know that just as it was true for your people back then, the promise of a Savior is true for us today, too. Take the weight of darkness sitting heavy on our lives and replace it with the light of your hope this Christmas season.

FAMILY TIME

At dinner one day this week, ask each member of your family to share one thing they're hoping for and waiting on this Christmas. Depending on the ages of your children and family members, answers could include anything from gifts they hope to see under the tree, prayers they hope to see answered, or an experience they hope to have.

After everyone has shared, read Luke 2:1-20 (what we know as the Christmas story in the Bible) and talk as a family about how those people were waiting for something bigger than anything we could imagine that first Christmas. They were waiting for Jesus! Just as we have hopes for what we want to happen this Christmas season, the people then did, too.

Then, pray together as a family, asking God to help you remember to have hope this Christmas season.