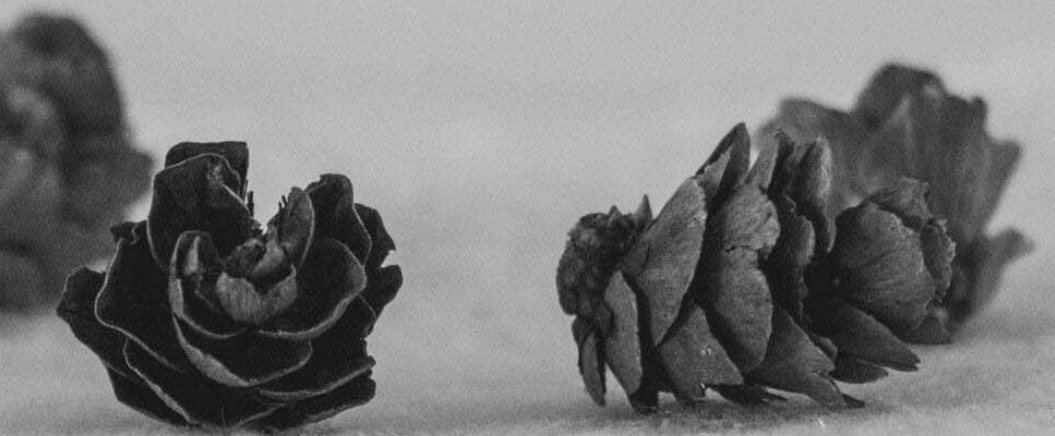


ECHOES OF A VOICE

ADVENT GUIDE





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WHAT IS ADVENT

Advent is the four weeks leading up to Christmas, defined by a longing for the coming of King Jesus. We take time to remember how hundreds of generations of people waited for Jesus' first coming as a baby, while also observing our own longing for the ultimate return of King Jesus. In both cases, we see that everything is not as it should be, and there is only one person who can set it right—Jesus. Here's what The Worship Sourcebook says about Advent:

The great proclamation "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14) assures us that God has entered into human history through the incarnation of the Son. The season of Advent, a season of waiting, is designed to cultivate our awareness of God's actions—past, present, and future... In Advent we heighten our anticipation for the ultimate fulfillment of all Old Testament promises, when the wolf will lie down with the lamb, death will be swallowed up, and every tear will be wiped away. In this way Advent highlights for us the larger story of God's redemptive plan.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR THE SEASON

While we hope this guide is a great resource for individual and family rhythms during Advent, here are a couple other ways to dig deeper in this season:

Simply Christian by N. T. Wright

The first section of this book is entitled Echoes of a Voice. The four chapters in this section are the inspiration for this year's Advent series at CrossPointe (including its title). We highly recommend the rest of the book as well!

ABCs of Christmas by Tiny Theologians

These conversation cards for families help kids truly understand the season by creating opportunities for dialogue. The content is simple, Gospel-centered, and concise.

The Christian Year: Advent

This resource is an "artistic accompaniment" to the church calendar, helping you worship in different ways each season. Visit **thechristianyear.com** for songs, visual artwork, and prayers for this and other liturgical seasons.

INTRODUCTION | ECHOES OF A VOICE

Have you ever heard your voice echo? Think of a time you were in the mountains, in a valley, or in a cavernous space and you spoke or yelled and heard your voice repeat back to you.

What about a time when you heard an echo, but didn't see or hear the person who made the original sound? Sound goes out from someone or something, bounces off hard surfaces, and returns to the listener as a repeat of the sound, though garbled, quieter, and less clear. Isn't it interesting how sound does that?

God's voice is mighty. He speaks with power and authority. He spoke the world into existence.

The world we live in is full of "audible" evidence for God. We hear the indirect echoes of God's voice as we walk through nature, experience the love of a friend, and play freely. When we hear these echoes, we are reminded of the way God intended things to be. We are also reminded that we want more of that goodness, but our world is broken and sinful. Things are not always good. We hear just the echo of what God has called us to be; the way He intends things to be.

In the season of Advent, we learn to see how God is starting to make things right. At the first advent, when Jesus came as a baby, Jesus set in motion the establishment of God's Kingdom here on earth. And yet, we still await the second advent: when Jesus will return. On that day, we will no longer hear only the echoes of God's design, but see Him face to face as His design becomes reality.

IN ADVENT, WE PAY ATTENTION TO OUR
LONGINGS AS WE LOOK TO JESUS.

Jesus brings us hope.

Jesus established the kingdom of God here on earth and will completely establish it when He returns. All that we hope for and all we desire is satisfied in Jesus and His Kingdom.

So today when we hear the echoes, we realize that what we really want is to hear directly from God—not just the reflection of His voice in His world. Only He can fulfill the longings we experience because He was the one who first spoke them.

We long for **justice** and we find that Christ brings us hope.

We hunger for **relationships** and we find that relationship with Christ brings us peace.

We are on a quest for **spirituality** and we find that Christ gives us faith.

We delight in **beauty** and we find that Christ brings us true joy, as He is truly beautiful.

ADVENT PRACTICES

So how can we pay attention to our longings as we look to Jesus?

This Advent season, we're inviting you into three rhythms, each of which involves creating space through hitting "pause" in one way or another. These simple practices can be done by individuals, households, and families with children of any age. Start with the overviews below, and look for more explanation and guidance from week-to-week in the rest of this guide.

1. MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

In the Gospels we see that Jesus spent much of His ministry around a table. This Advent, we want to encourage you to spend time around the table with your household. If you're the only one in your household, consider joining up with another household for the season to observe these meals.

A weekly meal will serve as an anchoring time to work through the weekly devotional, light your advent wreath, and worship together. Choose any meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner—and plan out the four weeks of meals in advance so that you'll be sure to make time for them.

You may also consider planning a meal you wouldn't ordinarily make and setting your table ahead of time, helping either you or your household look forward to an intentional time around your table. Or, if that feels like too much, keep it simple: buy a prepared meal, use paper plates, and keep your focus on Jesus. The way you engage is not what is important, Jesus is.

If you have younger kids, you may want to split the reading up into different parts of your meal to keep them actively engaged or even space out the devotional reading over a few meals or days.

2. DAILY PRAYER

Our second invitation to you in this season is simply to set aside time to pray daily. Though we've engaged in various forms of prayer over the years, our hope this Advent is to grow our "prayer muscles" by choosing to engage in daily prayer as we grow toward being people who "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Parents, we encourage you to tell your children about what you are doing and why you're engaging in this practice.

We hope this time is rich for you, bringing new habits into your life that cause you to dwell with Jesus more and more often.

3. MID-WEEK FASTING

Lastly, we hold an open invitation to all who would like to join us in weekly corporate fasting. Fasting has been described as a way to "pray with your body." In our modern American experience, we often think of praying as something we only do with our mouths and our brains.

This year, so many parts of our lives have been forced onto a screen (Zoom meetings, webinars, online classes etc.) and out of our bodies. Choosing to skip one or two meals a week is one way to allow our bodies to feel hunger and call us to turn that hunger toward a longing for God.

As we journey through the four weeks of Advent, you're invited to spend time on Wednesdays with us praying in longer stretches (over the lunch hour, for instance), asking God to fulfill our longings

for justice, relationships, spirituality, and beauty, respectively.

For those for whom fasting from food may not be an option (because of pregnancy, health reasons, eating disorders, etc.), you may choose to abstain from something else on a weekly basis (like coffee, social media, TV, video games, etc.). Children who want to participate could perhaps choose a favorite toy to not play with on Wednesdays, or skip dessert that night. Think creatively as you invite your children and teens to participate alongside you.

For more info on the how and why of fast, consider John Piper's "Hunger for God."



WEEK ONE | LONGING FOR JUSTICE

MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

This reading and liturgy are designed to be used around a meal time but can be used at any point throughout the week. This can be as short as five minutes or as long as you'd like.

Have you ever wished you could fix something that was broken? Maybe it was a physical thing or a relationship; maybe it was a system or an expectation.

The reality is that our world is broken - filled with sin. The world isn't fair. It feels hopeless at times—we long for things to be made right. We long for justice. We can try to make things right, but in the end we can't make anything perfect.

God knows this. God knows that we want things to be right.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Kids:

- Have your parents ever fixed something special that was broken? How did it make you feel?
- What do you do when something is unfair? (Parents, wait for the answer!) Does that help?

For Teens and Adults:

- Where have you experienced a glimpse or echo of God's justice?
- Where do you long for God to bring Justice?

He has put the longing for justice within us. This longing is an echo of his voice, his design. We desire justice because God is just. He is the only One who can make things right.

The prophets in the Old Testament spoke of the day when justice would be brought forth on the earth:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”
(Jeremiah 23:5 ESV)

When Jesus came, He came to invite us into His Kingdom of justice and mercy. He came to bring us secure hope.

THOUGH NOT ALWAYS "AUDIBLE", THE ECHOES OF JUSTICE WE DO HEAR AND OUR LINGERING DESIRE FOR JUSTICE REMIND US OF JESUS' JUST CHARACTER.

For example, though we wait for Him to return and fully restore all things, we participate in His mission now by helping bring about justice. Likewise, as Jesus progressively fixes what's broken inside of each of us, He also gives us a future hope that He will bring complete justice and "rightness" to the world.

Today, through the cross, Jesus makes us whole and clean before the Father. When He returns, He will finish establishing His kingdom and will make all things right. There will no longer be anything that is unfair. Sin and death will be no more.

There is great hope; Jesus is the hope of the world.

| Light the first outer candle, the hope candle.

Read this passage aloud:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
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 9:2, 6-7 ESV)

We are a people who have hope, and our hope is a confident hope. It isn't a wishful thinking, but a hope we can count on. Countless people that came before us found God to really be faithful and true.

We put our hope in our God who does not change; our God who keeps His word. So when the Lord says He will bring justice, we can put our full hope in that promise.

PRAYER

Jesus, we long for justice.
We long for things to be made right.

We are broken people who can't perfectly fix things, but You can. You are a perfect God who became a perfect man. You have paid the just price for our sins so that we can be in relationship with You and Your Father today.

When You return, You will bring full justice to this earth.

We put our hope and trust in You.

We pray that Your Kingdom would come and that Your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help us by Your Spirit to put our hope in You above all else.

Amen.

**| Close your time or meal with an
Advent hymn (see next page).**



SING OR READ

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

by Charles Wesley, addl. verse JD Raab

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.

Come with justice e'r increasing
Just as we have heard from old
Lift the needy from the ashes
Bring the orphan safely home
Though we hear the whisper faintly,
"Lo, I'm making all things new"
Every tribe and tongue and race
Will shout "His word has all been true!"

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.
Blow out the candle in silence.

| Blow out the candle in silence



WEEKLY PRAYER & FASTING

This week, if you choose to fast with us, we invite you to spend time in prayer over this week's topic: longing for justice.

One way to participate while fasting is to pray during the times you would've spent preparing and eating food. For children, this might mean encouraging them to pray when they're missing the toy they're "fasting" from. Another option is to take small moments throughout the day to pray—by setting reminders on your phone, praying when your stomach growls, etc. Refer back to page seven for a few more thoughts on fasting.

However you choose to do it, our goal this week is to fast and pray for God to meet our longings for justice.

OTHER IDEAS FOR PRAYER THIS WEEK

- Pray through Isaiah 9.
- Pray for justice to be done in our city, state, nation, and world.
- Pray for our church leaders, political leaders, structures and systems.
- Pray for the outcasts, the marginalized, the underdogs, and the overlooked.
- Ask God if there are any ways He's prompting you to be an agent of justice now, ushering in His Kingdom through meeting another's needs in a practical way. If so, make a plan as a household to act upon that prompting.
- Pray for CrossPointe: that God would equip us by His Holy Spirit to have hope in the face of injustice, and to represent Jesus as we work in His power to address injustices around us.
- Pray for your community: that the longing for justice would lead men, women, children, and teens to seek God, and that they would be given hope in the gospel.



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WEEK TWO | HUNGER FOR RELATIONSHIPS

MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

This reading and liturgy are designed to be used around a meal time but can be used at any point throughout the week. This can be as short as five minutes or as long as you'd like.

In Advent, we pause to remember that so many things in our world remind us of God's voice. We hear the echo and we long to hear the original voice and see more clearly. Last week, we lit the Candle of Hope as we remembered that Jesus brings us hope as we long for justice in our world.

Re-light the first candle, the candle of hope.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Kids:

- What is a relationship and what relationships are really important?

For Teens and Adults:

- What does it mean to have a relationship with God? How does that relationship with God create a craving for relationships with others?
- When have you hungered for relationship with others?

This week, we stop to remember we can find true peace in relationship with God as we hunger for relationships.

We were made in the image of God—the triune God. God created us in community.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
(Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)

Did you notice in the text above where it says “let us” and “after our likeness”? God exists in relationship with Himself (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and has patterned us after Himself. God is a relational God and therefore we are also created for relationship.

We search for relationships and connections with others. We want to be seen and valued; known and loved.

WE SEEK OUT RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS BECAUSE GOD CREATED US FOR RELATIONSHIPS. THIS DESIRE IS AN ECHO OF GOD’S VOICE CALLING US INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

God created us to know Him. When we see relationships with others as more important than our relationship with God, we are chasing the echo instead of the one who first made the call. We look to other people to fulfill us with relationships, but only find true peace in relationship with God himself.

| Light the second outer candle, the peace candle.

Jesus offers us peace through a relationship with Him. The peace Jesus gives us is a lasting, never-ending peace. Today we can experience that peace as we live our lives in relationship with Jesus and we can anticipate the day when Jesus returns and that peace is our experience forever.

We were created to be at peace in relationship with God. Jesus came to make a way for us to have a relationship with Him. Jesus went through great lengths to be born as a human man, to take on flesh, to live a perfect and sinless life, to die in our place, and to conquer death and come back to life so that—because of His life—we could be at peace with God through relationship with our Creator.

PRAYER

God, we thank You that You give us peace through a relationship with You. We know that you created us to be like You.

You created us for relationships. This is part of Your good design. Help us first seek our relationship with You above all other relationships.

We thank You for the cross and that You made a way for us to have a friendship with You today. We look forward to the day when You return and we see You face to face and fully experience Your everlasting peace. Amen.

SING OR READ

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

by Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, addl. verse JD Raab

Hark! The Herald Angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise.
Join the triumph of the skies.
With th'Angelic Hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."

Hail the triune God of love
Holy Friendship, far above!
Now on earth, our Savior sows
Friendships from His furrows grow
In His death our spirits rise
In His life our lives entwine:
Man to God is reconciled
Men for men walk second miles
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting lord
Late in time behold Him come,
Off-spring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the incarnate deity
Pleased as Man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!"



Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (cont.)

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Now He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the New-born king!

O Holy Night

by Adolphe Charles Adam, Placide Cappeau, and John Sullivan Dwight

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;
O night divine, O night, O night divine.

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,
His power and glory evermore proclaim.
His power and glory evermore proclaim.

| Blow out the candles in silence.



WEEKLY PRAYER & FASTING

We invite you again this week to join us in fasting and prayer focused on this topic of our hunger for relationships.

For those who are able, consider joining us in fasting from breakfast and/or lunch on Wednesday. As we consider relationships this week, a great way to spend your would-be Wednesday mealtime is by praying through the words of Jesus in John 15:1-17. You can do this alone, with a friend, or with your household. If you cannot fast from food, refer back to page 6 for other ideas.

As you read through His words slowly, pay attention to the relational words Jesus uses. Notice the give and take. Look specifically at what He's offering to those who are in relationship with Him. Ask Jesus for more joy and peace in your relationship with Him and others. Allow time for sitting quietly to just "be with" Him, remembering that He promised His presence forever to each of His followers.

OTHER IDEAS FOR PRAYER THIS WEEK

- Confess ways that you've contributed to brokenness in relationships, asking God for forgiveness.
- Ask God for reconciliation, for peace, and for fruit in your earthly relationships.
- Ask God for satisfaction in your relationship with Him.
- Pray for the Church: for your friends, your Gospel Community, and the staff and elders to be more and more satisfied in their relationships with God.
- Pray for your community: that your community would see the peace that surrounds followers of Jesus, and that more would come to know this love.
- Ask Jesus if there is anyone who may need encouragement today



WEEK THREE | QUEST FOR SPIRITUALITY

MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

This reading and liturgy are designed to be used around a meal time but can be used at any point throughout the week. This can be as short as five minutes or as long as you'd like.

In Advent, we pause to remember that our world is filled with echoes of God's voice. On the first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope as we remembered that Jesus brings us hope as we long for justice in our world.

Re-light the first candle, the candle of hope.

Last week, we lit the candle of peace as we remembered that relationship with Jesus gives us peace as we hunger for relationships.

Re-light the second candle, the candle of peace.

This week, we stop to remember that Christ gives us faith in our quest for spirituality

It is normal for us to search for meaning and purpose through some sort of spirituality. This desire is an echo of God's voice as we long to know Him, to have faith in Him, and to be in union with Him.

We see in Acts 17:22-23 that the people of Athens were looking for God but couldn't find Him:

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.
(Acts 17:22-23 ESV)

We too are like the people of Athens. We try to find meaning and purpose in our lives. We may try to make sure we're "good people" by doing the right things. Sometimes we try to be religious or spiritual just to be religious or spiritual. Sometimes we do it because we want to be the best.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Kids:

- How do you try to make God happy? Do these actions change God's attitude or feelings towards you?

For Teens and Adults:

- What do you seek after in order to be "spiritual" or to earn your salvation?
- Where have you felt the brokenness of seeking approval, spirituality, or salvation?

This kind of spirituality is not what God has called us to. This quest for spirituality is another echo that points us to God's promise of faith in Jesus.

What is faith? Different people have different answers to this question, but the Bible shows us that faith is simply believing what God says. This is easier than it sounds, since God has always been right and He has made it easy to understand this when we look. This kind of "faith" where God has already done all the work is much easier and better than us trying hard to feel like we believe something. Jesus is the ultimate example of this. In Jesus, God has showed us clearly that He loves us and has rescued us—without us doing anything! All we do is trust. Isn't that better than trying on your own?

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)

| Light the third outer candle, the faith candle.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

For Everyone:

Why is it important to remember that salvation and faith is a gift?

Today we hear the echo of God's voice calling us to Him. Sometimes we try to ignore what His voice is really saying by trying to do it on our own, but Jesus shows us that faith is all we need (and the only thing that works!) to be saved.

PRAYER

Jesus, we thank You that You are gracious to us; that You came as a baby, lived a perfect life, and laid it down for us to give us the gift of salvation and faith.

We don't want to be people who seek after other things to help us feel spiritual. Instead Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

We look forward to the day when You come back and our faith becomes sight, but until then, give us immeasurable faith in You. Amen.

SING OR READ

O Come All Ye Faithful

by Various Authors

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels

O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

Oh come all ye weary, come ye heavy-laden
Come ye who long to see you've labored enough
Jesus is lowly, Jesus is sufficient!



O Come All Ye Faithful (cont.)

Come all ye hungry, longing for transcendence
Come ye who call to things that cannot respond
"Come!" says the Godhead, "Christ will make you brethren"

Sing choirs of angels, sing in exultation
O sing, all ye bright hosts of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

| Blow out the candles in silence.



WEEKLY PRAYER & FASTING

This week we'll focus our fasting and prayer on the quest for spirituality.

Once again, our corporate fast will generally involve skipping one or two meals on Wednesday if you're able. If feelings of hunger, weakness, irritability, or anger creep in while fasting, remind yourself that these are normal feelings; your body might not be used to being denied food for this amount of time. Even if you're abstaining from a substance other than food, you may notice some of these feelings. Each time these "aches" occur, take time to thank God for the ways that He has revealed Himself to you. Remember that God alone can satisfy our desire for meaning in this life, and take a moment to pray for those in this city and world who ache for God but haven't yet known Him.

If you'd like to use your mealtime to pray through Scripture, Ephesians 3:14-21 would be a great passage to pray this week.

OTHER IDEAS FOR PRAYER THIS WEEK

- Confess ways that you've sought to be self-sustained or sought to earn a right standing with God this year. Ask Him for forgiveness.
- Think of someone you know who is searching for God but hasn't yet chosen to follow Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to them, and ask for opportunities to share with them about the hope that you have.
- Pray for CrossPointe: that we would be people of ever-deepening faith, holding fast to solid doctrine, full of the Holy Spirit, dependent on the God of miracles, and quick to share the hope that we have.
- Pray for your community: for the idols of vague and faulty spirituality to be destroyed, and for more people to find Jesus in their quest for spirituality.
- Ask Jesus if there is anything He'd like to speak to you today, and wait in silence.



WEEK FOUR | DELIGHT IN BEAUTY

MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

In Advent, we slow down to remember that our world is filled with echoes of God's voice.

In the first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope as we remembered that Jesus brings us hope as we long for justice in our world.

| Re-light the hope candle.

On the second week, we lit the candle of peace as we remembered that a relationship with Jesus gives us peace as we hunger for relationships.

| Re-light the peace candle

Last week, we lit the candle of faith to remember that Christ gives us faith in our quest for spirituality.

| Re-light the faith candle

This week, we pause to recall that as we delight in beauty, we find that Christ brings us true joy as He is truly beautiful.

Creation is filled with beauty. The beauty all around us sings the echoes of God's design.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Everyone: Name at least one thing you find beautiful. Why do you think it is beautiful?

GOD IS BEAUTIFUL. JESUS IS BEAUTIFUL.
OF COURSE WE SHOULD SEEK AFTER BEAUTY!

Light the third outer candle, the faith candle.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

For Everyone:

Why is it important to remember that salvation and faith is a gift?

Read the following passage aloud:

One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in His temple.
(Psalm 27:4 ESV)

Our souls long to see beauty. The echoes of God's beauty are all around us and we long to see it fully; we long to find it at the source.

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted His people;
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
(Isaiah 52:7-9 ESV)

When we look upon the Lord, in all His splendor and beauty, it brings us joy.

| Light the fourth outer candle, the joy candle.

There is great joy that came with the news of Jesus' birth and there will be great joy and rejoicing at the second Advent when Jesus comes back and fully establishes His Kingdom.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

The joy that Jesus brings us is an unending joy. It cannot be taken away. It is not dependent on our circumstances or the beauty that we can see. It is not dependent on our emotions, our mood, or the beauty that we can feel. God's joy is not dependent on anyone besides Him. This type of joy is contagious. Others will see this joy and stop to wonder how they too can experience that kind of joy.

PRAYER

Jesus, You are beautiful.

You created us to delight in beauty. What joy we find in Your beauty!

We thank You that You bring us unending joy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to live out the joy You give us, causing others to want it as well.

Embolden us to share Your joy with others. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

For Everyone: How can you display the joy that Jesus gives you to others this season?



SING OR READ

Joy To The World

by Isaac Watts, addl. verse JD Raab

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

Joy to the eye and heart of man
His planet to enjoy!
Its heights and depths, are unknown yet
How beautiful its God
How beautiful its God,
How beautiful, beautiful is its God

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love

| Blow out the candles in silence.



WEEKLY PRAYER & FASTING

It's our final week of corporate fasting and prayer through Advent, and this week we'll center our prayers on delight in beauty. A great way to spend this week's time fasting could be to sit with one verse: Psalm 27:4. Read it slowly, meditating on each phrase. Pray through it. Maybe even take time trying to memorize it. It's a great verse to bring your mind back to throughout the day and week.

You're welcome to continue to make some form of regular personal rhythm out of fasting after Advent ends. It can be a really healthy pattern of discipline that calls our souls to hunger and seek after God above the things of this life. As with any discipline, beware of the pride that lurks beneath any "success"—all spiritual disciplines are designed to draw us nearer to God. He is the end goal, not the discipline itself! For now, however, our weekly corporate fast will conclude after Christmas.

One way to conclude this season of fasting is to enter into a sort of "feasting:" notice the flavor, goodness, and beauty of food on Christmas Eve and Christmas, thanking God for His kindness!

OTHER IDEAS FOR PRAYER THIS WEEK

- Confess ways that you've forgotten God when considering or consuming beautiful things in this world. Ask Him for forgiveness.
- Think back through the last couple days and notice the beauty that you experienced. Thank God for His creativity and kindness in allowing you to experience it.
- Pray for CrossPointe: that we would have a high view of beauty (not a low one!), that we'd create good and beautiful things, and find more joy in the God who originated all beauty.
- Pray for your community: that our city beautiful would ultimately see the beauty of the gospel in the person and work of Jesus.
- Ask God to reveal His beauty to you. Sit in stillness and silence with Him.



CHRISTMAS EVE | CHRISTMAS DAY

MEAL & ADVENT WREATH

All of Advent we have taken time to notice that our world is filled with echoes of God's voice.

On the first week of Advent, we lit the candle of hope as we remembered that Jesus brings us hope as we long for justice in our world.

| Re-light the hope candle.

On the second week, we lit the candle of peace as we remembered that a relationship with Jesus gives us peace as we hunger for relationships.

| Re-light the peace candle

On the third week, we lit the candle of faith to remember that Christ gives us faith in our quest for spirituality.

| Re-light the faith candle

Last week, we paused to recall that as we delight in beauty, we find that Christ brings us true joy as He is truly beautiful.

| Re-light the joy candle

Today is the day we have been anticipating for four weeks. Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus!

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 ESV)

| Light the middle candle, the Christ Candle

Jesus came quietly into the world. Though He came humbly, He came as the fulfillment of everything we've longed for. He came to show us the source of all the echoes we've been exploring these past weeks! Jesus didn't make a boom with his entrance, but the angels couldn't let him go unnoticed.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
(Luke 2:8-20 ESV)

Jesus comes quietly into our lives, but we, like the angels, proclaim the good news of His birth. We can't keep quiet. We can't help but share with others that we know the God who is the source of the echoes all around us. We want to share that good news!

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

For Everyone: Who do you want to share the good news of Jesus' birth with?

Jesus' birth is also known as the "first Advent." While we joyfully celebrate this day, we also remember that we are still waiting for the second Advent—when Jesus returns! The Bible promises us that Jesus is coming back and that He will make everything right—all the things that are broken in our world. All of the echoes we hear now will no longer be far away sounds, but instead we will see Jesus face to face. We will clearly hear the fullness of the voice of the King of Kings. We will experience the full glory of our Lord and Savior. What an exciting day to look forward to!

PRAYER

Jesus, You quietly entered our world so that You could die in our place on the cross. You made us right before God through Your sacrifice, and that is something we cannot keep quiet about.

Lord, help us to live lives that scream of Your goodness and glory. We look forward to the day when You return and we get to see you face to face and hear Your voice clearly. Until then, may we live as salt and light in this world, proclaiming Your glory to a world that needs to hear it.

Amen.

SING OR READ

Silent Night

by Joseph Mohr

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace!
Sleep in heavenly peace!

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Saviour is born!
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Jesus Lord, at thy birth!

Blow out the candles in silence.



CROSSPOINTE CHURCH