



## WEEKLY STUDY

### Week One

This is the first week in the season of Advent. Advent is a word which simply means “coming” or “arriving” These days lead up to Christmas Eve when God comes towards us in the arrival of Jesus. On the first Sunday in Advent we lifted up the hope that Mary, the mother of Jesus, saw when an angel visited her with good news. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit [prov.church/signup](http://prov.church/signup) and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer together:

*Prayer of Hope: God, we confess that we have not always put our hope in you. Sometimes we think that you are a distant God who does not hear our cries. But our only hope is in your compassion, grace and love for us that led you to enter into this world you created. Thank you for Jesus who has come and is coming again. Renew our hope in this season. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.*

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### DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ISAIAH 64.1

*O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.*

- These words were written somewhere around 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, yet they resonate today. The state of God’s people was so desperate that this call seemed like the only answer. When was the last time you were desperate enough to call upon God to just come and take over? Have you ever seen God move through your desperation?
- *Pray for the kind of desperation that has you daily crying out for Jesus. Come Lord Jesus!*

TUESDAY: LUKE 1.26-32

*...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."*

*Mary was greatly troubled at his words ...*

*But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... his kingdom will never end."*

- Mary had this encounter with an angel who was bringing her news of the hope of the world. But this hope of the world would change her life forever. She was troubled and fearful in the face of such good news. The truth is, this hope bringing promise is very disruptive to Mary's life. Has God ever disrupted your plans or your comfort to bring about something even better?
- *Pray for strength to stay in the discomfort of God's promises that are yet to be fulfilled.*

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 5.2-5

*And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

- Sometimes the Advent season can seem quite long. Especially if it is a time of anxiety and suffering. We might wonder when we will finally see the glory of God...will Christmas ever get here? Paul writes that persevering through seasons like this one will produce a greater hope in us. When was the longest Advent season for you? How has God increased your hope during long, hard seasons of life?
- *Pray for a spirit of perseverance through suffering that leads to hope in Christ Jesus.*

THURSDAY: ISAIAH 40.3-5

<sup>3</sup> *A voice of one calling:*

*"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.*

<sup>4</sup> *Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.*

<sup>5</sup> *And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

- Returning to the words recorded in Isaiah, we find again this longing for a future reality. Every valley *shall* be raised up...rough ground *shall* become level...glory *will* be revealed. The images are of a total reconfiguration of things. High will become low, low will become high. They are great metaphors for our hope in Jesus. When Jesus arrived (advent) on the scene, our hope was instantly visible. If you have ever found yourself daydreaming about what it looks like when the Kingdom of God fully reigns on earth, how do you picture that?
- *Pray for the glory of the Lord to be revealed in this season.*

FRIDAY: REVELATION 21.5, 22.20

*"Behold, I am making all things new."  
(Jesus) says, "Surely I am coming soon."  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

- Jesus came to us 2000 years ago, comes to us today, and will come again in the future. In the last book of the Bible, Jesus repeats this promise that he is making everything new. These are among the most hopeful words in all of Scripture. We are being rescued and restored by God! As you read these words, "Come, Lord Jesus!" how do they cause you to feel? Hopeful? Anxious? Relieved?
- *Pray the words, "Come, Lord Jesus!" throughout your day.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 119.114

*You are my refuge and my shield;  
I have put my hope in your word.*

- The Psalm writer declares that God is a refuge and shield--a place to find safety and protection. And from that place of refuge, he can rightfully place his hope in God's word. John 1 refers to Jesus as the Word. When we seek God we find that our hope is in Jesus. When and where do you find that you are able to rest in the refuge of God?
- *Pray for safety and protection in God that reveals the hope you have in Jesus.*

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- See reverse for Small Group Discussion -

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Pastor Mark shared that Mary's fear and concern at the angel's words to her were quickly wrapped in the hope of the Messiah coming into the world. What fears are present in your heart or in the world around you that could be wrapped in the hope you have in Christ?
- We also heard that hope extends beyond the reasonable. Have you ever found that expectations or previous experiences can limit your hope? How is Mary's response to this news in Luke 1 both comforting and challenging?