



WEEKLY STUDY

Week One

Pastor Regina introduced us to the season of Advent—the four weeks that lead up to Christmas. It is a season of anticipation for people who are looking for God to show up. During Advent we are looking to the light of Christ, and responding by reflecting the light into a dark world. She emphasized that we can see the light because there had been darkness. And the light that we anticipate, we also celebrate. The light that we long for and remember twinkled centuries before Jesus was born and lives on through us.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional question at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

God, you give us your love and light. Every detail matters. Your light is often unexpected, but it can be trusted and we believe that there is more for us to see. May we know that love and light so deeply that we have no choice, but to share it with others. Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.78-79

*...because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

- Zecchariah's song of praise and blessing are meant to set the stage for God's big rescue. The rising sun will come from heaven—the light that we long for in the darkest night was set in motion to arrive right on time. God's mercy compels the light to come and guide us into the path of peace. How is the light of Christ guiding you toward peace?
- *Pray for a well-lit path towards the peace that Jesus came to offer us.*

TUESDAY: JOHN 8.12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

- It makes sense that following closely after the light would allow you to stay in the light. If you believe that Jesus is the light of the world, then you want to stay as close to him as possible especially when the world seems to be dwelling in new shades of darkness. Jesus reminds us that in his light is our life.
- *Pray for increasing proximity to Jesus, not for fear of the world, but for love of the light.*

WEDNESDAY: GENESIS 1.1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

- From the first word of creation, God established a pattern of creating light from darkness. It would repeat over and over again to this very day. Without the void and darkness, there would have been nothing to contrast the light of day with. Like Zechariah when he was unable to speak during Elizabeth's pregnancy, we can be formed out of seasons of darkness in ways that have us running joyfully to the light.
- *Pray for an openness to God's way of creating and recreating in you.*

THURSDAY: JOHN 3.19-21

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

- When walking city streets at night, we tend to have a heightened sense of awareness. No one had to teach us that, it seems like we were born with an awareness that evil hates the light. Our imaginations fill in the unseen places in the dark and we tell ourselves stories of lurking danger. John gives us the verdict on that: light is now in the world and those who live by truth will come into the light that is now here. Are there parts of your life that remain hidden in the darkness? What prevents you from bringing them into the light of day?
- *Pray to receive the grace that God offers when we risk living by the truth.*

FRIDAY: ECCLESIASTES 2.13

*I saw that wisdom is better than folly,
just as light is better than darkness.*

- In this Old Testament verse, light is compared to wisdom and darkness compared to folly. We are better equipped to see clearly and think through our responses when we walk in the light.

Sometimes the choice between wisdom and folly may seem more obvious than others, how do you discern the difference?

- *Pray for discernment that leads to a life of wisdom.*

SATURDAY: 1 JOHN 1.5-7

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

- As followers of Jesus, we believe that he is living in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we are in Christ and he (who is light) desires to live through us, we can't walk in both light and darkness. Doing our best to walk in the light brings us into deeper community with one another.
- *Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the fellowship we can have with God and one another in Christ.*

- See reverse for Small Group Discussion -

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In response to Zechariah's song after his son John's birth (John 1.67-79), Regina shared these thoughts,

"Gosh, what if your dad sang that over you when you were born? I told y'all Zechariah learned a lot when God took away his voice. Let that be a lesson to us talkers, that sometimes we need to listen for awhile."

Have you ever had a period of forced silence? What was it like to only be able to listen to others? Was it easy to listen at first? How has God muted the world around you in order to speak to you?