

How to Use the Guide:

We designed this guide to be used as a “script” during your GC time. As such, it can simply be read through during your time together or you can adapt it and use it as a frame work to structure your time. You can have one person lead or assign people different parts of the outline. However you decided to use it, **there will be some things you to prepare beforehand.**

1. You will need to have the ability to watch the first [Advent Video](http://www.christciity.life/advent2018/) together, and if you choose, to play the suggested songs in the script.
2. You will also need the Advent Wreath and candles provided.
3. You will need a copy of the [*Jesus Story Book Bible*](https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Storybook-Bible-Every-Whispers/dp/0310708257/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1511836264&sr=1-1&keywords=jesus+storybook+bible). If you need a copy, Jeremy has an extra one, maybe two!

Week One Theme: HOPE

The outline for your time together, which should take about 40-45 mins, is:

I. Intro & prayer

II. Story with the kids

III. Video

IV. Advent wreath

V. Discussion

VI. Psalm, song & closing prayer with communion

I. Begin by reading this section aloud, including the prayer.

As much as we think of hope being a feeling or passion that compels us into the future, a longing for something not yet realize; hope, true hope, real hope, begins in the past. Hope is carried to us in a sense of history, on the air of mystery, even as it awakens in us the imagination of what could be.

What took place that crisp Christmas morning in the peasant village of Bethlehem began ages before in the family of Abraham. A family whose future was to bring blessing to the entire world, yet whose experience was being overcome by the world around them and the love of the world within them.

This family, with such high aspirations and unrealized expectations, grew into a nation who met their first shepherd king in this same village generations before. A king who they hoped would lead them to fulfill their promised potential, but whose lineage fell into the similar traps as those who came before. Yet, hope did not dissipate in the face of national collapse and cultural compromise. These people of promise began to imagine a day in which the One and final king would restore their history and fulfill their future, for their sake and the world’s.

The prophet Isaiah sings of this anticipated hope in his prophetic poem saying,

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor and afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor…to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may display his beauty. They shall build up ancient ruins; they shall raise up former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations…*

*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

*For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, 10-11)*

PRAYER: Lord, bless this time of remembrance of your promises and faithfulness. Help us to recognize the story Jesus enters & the one that he is continuing to unfold among us, through us, and around the world. Let your Spirit fill us with hope!

II. Gather the children in your GC around and have someone read the following story. If you don’t have kids in your GC still read the story and ask the questions before watching the video…

Read the story “Get Ready!” from the *Jesus Story Book Bible* found on pages 170-175. And then ask the children, the following questions:

* What are you favorite things about Christmas morning and day?
* What do you feel when you first start seeing Christmas trees and lights and wreaths and other decorations going up? Do you get excited? Do you get nervous? Did you wake up each day morning asking your parent’s “How many more days to Christmas?!”
* How do you think you would feel if you knew the day was coming, but you did not know how long it would take for it to arrive? Would you be any less excited? Would you do anything differently?
* How would you make sure you did not forget that the special day was going to actually get here?
* Do you know that one thing God’s family has done to not forget and loose hope for the special day of Jesus’ return is to light the candles of an Advent Wreath?

III. Play the first [Advent video](http://www.christciity.life/advent2018/), then follow the instruction in the next section.

IV. With the wreath and candles laid out like the picture below, have someone explain the following and light the first purple candle.



Just like Mr. Wichern and the boys from the video, and along with our faith family all across the globe today, we begin a season of reminding ourselves of all that Jesus brought with him into the world that first Christmas morning!

Each Sunday that we gather and worship as Christ City Church, we will light a candle in recognition that the light of the world, which is Jesus, though starting out so small as a baby in a manger so long ago, would one day, when all the candles are lit, fill the whole earth with light, overcoming all darkness and brining heaven on earth.

So, today, we light the first candle, receiving the **HOPE** that what God has done already in Jesus’ birth he will do again when Jesus returns.

Light the candle and play *O Little Town of Bethlehem* by JJ Heller found on the [Advent Playlist](https://open.spotify.com/user/christcitychurchdallas/playlist/0hVVOPg0gSns45h1Ijgdfj?si=F7IUVndASCi-iaIip5gB_Q).

V. After the song, read the following and discuss.

Hope is this interesting thing. It is an emotion, something we feel. Yet, it is something more than that. It is a sureness that gives us courage to stand firm in the face of opposition, the strength to keep going when the goal is out of our sight, and the energy that sustains us between now and then. At Christmas, we get to encourage this kind of hope!

In Jesus, the hope of a nation is realized, no matter that he was not what they expected. In Jesus, the world, you and I, were given hope: the sureness that keeps us courageous, enduring, and full of excited energy for life!

* How is Jesus the one the people of Israel were to “Get Ready” for?
* In what ways does Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection give you **hope** (courage, endurance, & energy) today?
* What are the things in your life that distract you from hope, or are squashing hope?
* What are some ways you can encourage and build up the excitement of hope in Jesus in yourself, your family, your friends, etc., this Advent season?

VI. After 10-20 minutes of discussion, close out your time by having someone read Psalm 42.

*As a dear pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’* ***These things I remember*** *as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?* ***Hope in God****; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*

*My soul is cast down within me, there* ***I remember you*** *from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.*

*I say to God, my rock: ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’ As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?* ***Hope in God****; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*

Then play or sing the song *Emmanuel (God with us forever)* by Bryan & Katie Torwalt on the [Advent Playlist](https://open.spotify.com/user/christcitychurchdallas/playlist/0hVVOPg0gSns45h1Ijgdfj?si=F7IUVndASCi-iaIip5gB_Q). Words printed below.

Before You set the edge of time

Foundations of the earth and sky

You saw it all and said that it was good

The joy was set before Your eyes

You knew that You would give Your life

You saw it all and said that it was good

Behold, behold the One our Love has come

Behold, behold the One our King has come

The heavens warred, the earth stood still

His final breath, He tore the veil

The angels sang, "Holy is His name"

Defeated death, He broke the grave

Our hope returned, the lost are saved

We lift our voice in never ending praise

Behold, behold the One our Love has come

Behold, behold the One our King has come

Chorus

Emmanuel, God with us forever

Emmanuel, Savior of the world

Emmanuel, Emmanuel

End your organized time by passing out the communion elements. Once everyone has received them, read the prayer[[1]](#footnote-1) and receive them together.

Renew in us this day, O Lord, the **hope** of the new heaven and earth in which you will reign in light, in full view for all to see, and we will live in peace; meanwhile, may your kingdom come and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; through Jesus Christ our now and coming King. Amen.

1. Adapted from a prayer written by Bobby Gross in *Living the Christian Year: time to inhabit the story of God*, pg. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)