

Advent – Hope

Getting to Know You:

- What's something you hoped for as a child that came to fruition? What about something you hoped for that disappointed you in the end?

Going Deeper:

- Read Psalm 33:18-22. Where does the psalmist place his hope? Why is the location of our hope so crucial?

- o Part of hoping is waiting. What gives the psalmist the ability to wait on God in these verses?

- o What makes waiting so hard?

- o What have you found helps you wait on the Lord?

- Read Col.1:27. What does it mean that Christ is our hope of glory?

- o Eph.1:13-14 indicates the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance. How is Christ and the Spirit simultaneously in us? Use Rom.8:9 to help your answer

- Look up Titus 2:11-14. What is the blessed hope that we are waiting for?

- o How are we to wait for his appearing according to vs.12, 14? What can help us live this way?

- Read 1 Peter 1:3-4. Discuss what our coming inheritance is all about.

- o Vs.4 describes it as being kept in heaven for you. How can this give us assurance of our salvation? What other verses might you suggest to someone struggling with assurance of their salvation?

- Read Romans 15:13 together as a group. What does practically mean to abound in hope?

Taking it Home:

- Encourage someone this week with the hope that is in you.

Call, text, write, hug them.

- Look for an opportunity to be a beacon of hope in your community, then shine bright!
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Approach The Throne

Getting to Know You:

On a scale of 1 to 10 – with 1 being “I’m totally at ease” and 10 being “I should be in a straitjacket” – how would you rate your level of stress from this past week, and why?

Going Deeper:

Read Psalm 95 together.

- What actions and attributes of God are declared in this psalm?
- What exhortations and commands does the psalmist give to his readers (us)? In other words, in light of who God is, what is true about us and how do we need to respond?
- Consider the warning in verse 8 and how God responded in the past with the people of Israel (verse 11) – What is God’s rest, and how does belief in him lead to it?

Read Hebrews 4:9-13

- How do “[our] own works” keep us from entering God’s rest for our souls? And why does the author of Hebrews in verse 11 say that is “disobedience”? Read John 6:26-29.
- Consider the negative language used in verses 12-13. It seems like a contradiction that God’s Word convicting us of sin would lead to hope and rest for our souls. How does this work? Share personal examples from your life where this has been true.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

- As our ‘Great High Priest’, Jesus intercedes on our behalf before God. According to this passage, what is true about us if we have put our faith in Jesus?
- How should this determine how we should approach God?
- Consider what keeps you from running to Jesus when struggling – what are some practical steps you might take to put what is true (about Jesus, about you) into action?

Taking it Home:

Take time this week to praise God for who he is, and memorize Hebrews 4:16.

What Does The Bible Say About Money?

Getting to Know You:

When it comes to money, what is your biggest concern?

Going Deeper:

Pastor Aaron made the point that his sermon was not really about money as much as it was about our relationship with Jesus.

– How does our relationship with God impact our relationship with money?

– Read Mark 10:23-25 – money is a huge struggle for unbelievers, so it makes sense that it would also affect followers of Jesus. What are some of the specific reasons we struggle to trust God and fully surrender our finances to him?

o Take time as a group to look at what the Scriptures has to say for each area of struggle that is shared in the group. Ask: how do we live out this truth in our lives starting now?

Read Mark 10:28-31

– What are the blessings that Jesus promises for those who surrender their finances to God? And specifically, how are persecutions a blessing for us as Christians?

Read Philippians 3:7-16

– Why do you think we tend to try and control our finances?
– According to Paul, knowing Jesus our Lord is worth far more than anything else in our lives. How does the power of knowing him lead us to the freedom we crave?

Taking it Home:

Commit this week to memorizing a verse that speaks to a specific struggle you are facing with money. Surrender this struggle to God, ask him to lead you to the freedom found in Jesus as you give him your finances.

What does the Bible Say about Euthanasia?

Getting to Know you:

- Take a few moments to list some specific blessings that you're thankful to God for.

Going Deeper:

- Look up Phil.3:10-11. Discuss what Paul wants to know in these verses.

- o What do sufferings allow us to know and experience according to Paul.

- o What is the connection to suffering and our resurrection?

- In Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:3-4 there's a clear sequence of events that start with suffering. Map out the sequence and

discuss each of the steps that suffering brings.

- How would you talk with a fellow believer who's considering MAID? What about a family member or friend who doesn't know Jesus?
- Look up the following verses that describe people struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts. What did they experience and how did God help them through it? Ecc.2:17, 1 Kings 19:1-8, Jonah 4:8-11, Ps.43, 2 Cor.1:8-9
- How would you answer someone who thinks suicide is an unforgiveable sin? The Catholic church teaches it's a mortal sin deserving of hell. See Matt.12:31-32 and John 10:28-29, Heb.13:5, Eph.1:13-14.
- Discuss this quote from John Piper "you are immortal until God's purpose for you is complete." See Acts 13:36.

Taking it Home:

- Think about how you might encourage someone this week. Write a note, send an email, make a phone call. Encourage one another, even more as we see the day approaching. Heb. 10:25

What Does The Bible Say About Abortion?

Getting to Know you:

- What's most amazing about God's grace in your life?

Going Deeper:

- Discuss the value of a child in the womb according to Ex.21:22-25. Why should we have fetal homicide laws according to these verses?
- Read Psalm 139:1-6...what does God know about us? How should we respond to this?

- Read Psalm 139:7-12. Where is God? How should that impact us?
- Read Psalm 139:13-16. Discuss what God tells us about the importance/viability of a child in the womb in these verses.
 - What involvement does God have in the developmental process?
- Read Psalm 139:17-24. What type of response should we have to God's creative power?
- Look up Lev.18:21 and Lev.20:1-5. What does the worship of Molech have to do with modern day abortion industry? What does God have to say about this child sacrifice?
- How might we as a church family help those considering abortion and come alongside of women who have experienced the trauma of abortion?
- Watch "Debunking every major pro-choice argument" by Allen Parr.

Taking it Home:

- Spend time this week thanking God for his forgiveness, grace and mercy in your life.
- Meditate on Ex.34:6 this week

What does the Bible say about gender identity?

Getting to Know You:

- What is your dream vacation and why?

Going Deeper:

- What right does God have to give us our identity? Look up Genesis 1:24-27, Psalm 24:1, Psalm 100:3

- o What does it look like for us to live out our identity as image bearers of God?
- o How do we live that out in our maleness and femaleness?
- Discuss how God has made us body, soul and spirit. What does it look like for us to relate to God with body, soul and spirit? See 1 Cor.6:18-20, Lk.1:46-56
- Discuss some of the physical, emotional and spiritual differences between male and female. Why is it good that God made us so different?
- Read Romans 8:19-24. Discuss what sin has done to creation and what God will do for the creation, including our bodies. What is this such good news and hope for everyone, especially someone who is gender dysphoric?
- Our culture suggests there are 72 different genders. As believers why can we not accept the belief that gender is a spectrum and that we can define our own gender? How might you answer someone who does believe this?
- Look up Matt.16:22-24 and discuss what it means to deny ourselves in relation to gender theory.
- How do you feel a Christian should respond to someone who insists you use their preferred pronouns, at work, in a social setting, at school, at church? Use scripture to back up your answer
- How might we stand for truth in a culture that increasingly is hostile to a biblical worldview. Use Matt.5:10-12

Taking it Home:

- Memorize Matt.5:10-12 or Matt.11:28

Prayer

Getting to Know You:

Share your most recent answer to prayer with your group.

Going Deeper:

Lindsay Taylor made the point that making a “kingdom impact” through prayer starts with abiding in Christ.

- Read John 15:1-18 together.
- What does it mean to “abide in Christ”? And how does abiding in Christ lead to prayer that makes a kingdom impact?
- Read Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. In our lives today, what stops us from praying in this way? How can we practically change this?

Read Ephesians 6:18 again, and also James 5:13-16 and Mark 11:20-26.

- These verses are clear that God can, and does, answer prayer with miracles. What are some guidelines in these verses for praying? How do we navigate the tension between praying in faith and the reality of how God might (or might not) answer our prayers?

Lindsay said that God’s Word, not our feelings, needs to guide our prayers so that our prayers make a kingdom impact. In what ways do we tend to let our feelings guide our prayers? What does it look like, practically, for our prayers to be anchored in God’s Word?

Lindsay said that as followers of Jesus we are not 'planted' in this world to be ornaments, but rather to serve Him by bearing His fruit.

- In what ways do you struggle with 'ornamentalism'?
- How can prayer help us live our lives not as Christian ornaments, but rather as Christians who are centered on Christ?

Taking it Home: "Knock on Heaven's door" together as a group for specific requests, seeking God's glory and kingdom to come.

What does the Bible say about Homosexuality?

Getting to know you:

- Discuss a time you felt/were super awkward or out of place. How did that make you feel?

Going Deeper:

- Read Genesis 18:20-33, 19:4-11. What's the reason God sent angels to the twin cities?
 - o Talk about the mercy God was willing to show in 18:22-32
 - o Which person of the trinity is present in this story and caused the destruction of Sodom? Support your answer with Gen.18. Why is this finding so crucial?

- Read Lev.18 and list the unholy sexual relations in these verses.
 - o According to vs.27 what does God call all of these unholy actions? What is the reason they are unholy?
 - o What's the result for God's people if we participate in these actions? See vs.24-30.
- According to 1 Cor.6:9-11 those who are unrighteous don't enter the kingdom. Why can we not "agree to disagree" on homosexual activity with others according to these verses.
 - o Discuss the difference between a lifestyle sin and one we may trip into occasionally and how that affects our eternity.
- Read Revelation 2:20-22. What does John say should be done to those who teach the opposite of what scripture teaches in the realm of sexuality?
- Which one of the 4 objections to scriptures teaching on homosexual activity that PK mentioned Sunday have you had interactions with and how might we answer it biblically?
- How should we respond to the gay community and fellow believers struggling with SSA? Use scripture to back up your answer.

Taking it Home:

- Read through 1 Cor.6:9-11 and thank God this week for washing, for sanctifying, for justifying you!
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What does the Bible say about Human Sexuality?

Getting to Know You:

- Why do you think its easier to believe our culture and our own feelings instead of what God says?
- Where did you receive your sex ed? Friends, home, school, church, entertainment. How did that affect your world view on sex?

Going Deeper:

- Look up Genesis 2:18-24.
 - o Why did God create Eve and how did Adam respond to God's gift?
 - o Note vs.24 and list the vows of this 1st wedding ceremony.
 - o What does it mean to be one flesh and how can we wreck that?
 - o Can one flesh be restored and how is that possible?
- Why is it so crucial that Jesus endorsed the Genesis account of marriage and human sexuality in Matt.19:4-7?
- Look up Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127:3-5 and discuss one purpose for sex in marriage.
 - o Why does our culture downplay this purpose so much?
- Look up Prov.5:18-19 and 1 Cor.7:2-5 and discuss two other purposes for sex in marriage.
- Look up the following verses and discuss the consequences of a lifestyle of sexual immorality.
 - o 1 Cor.6:9-11,18-20, Gal.5:19-21, Revelation 22:15, Heb.13:4
 - o What's the difference between

practicing these things and falling into sexual sin?

- As a single person, what might you do to follow God's design for sex? What about a married couple?

Taking it Home:

- Memorize a fight verse that deals with an area of sexual sin that you struggle with and learn to fight with it when tempted.
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Called to Lead

Getting to Know You:

Share with the group a memorable time (good or bad) when you stepped out of your comfort zone and took leadership of a situation.

Going Deeper:

Tim Strickland opened his message with this statement: "God's pattern in the Bible is to call and empower leaders to lead His people in His work". Share together examples of such people from the Bible. Then, share an example of a time this happened to you, or to someone close to you.

Read Romans 12:3-8. What does this passage teach us about God's people, the Church?

Is leadership limited just to "leading with diligence [zeal]", or is it expressed in the other gifts that Paul lists in this passage?

What fears do we have that limit us from leading (however that

may look)? Read each of the following passages and discuss what each says about God (who He is) and what that means for taking leadership in our lives:

-Galatians 1:10

-Joshua 1:7-9

-Acts 4:13

-1 Timothy 3:1

-Galatians 6:9

-Judges 5:9

Read Mark 9:33-37. What does it mean to be a “servant of all”? And why is it essential for leadership?

As followers of Jesus, how do we grow in servanthood? Note: there is no easy/fast way to do this, so consider: How does this process begin and then continue?

Taking it Home:

Discuss practical ways you might take initiative as a servant leader this week. Consider what this would look like in marriage, with family, at work, at church, etc.