



Week 1: God Gives Promises

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

There are four crucial components for a group to maintain its health: Word, prayer, relationships, and reaching out. In this guide, you will study the biblical passage in three steps: observation, interpretation, and application. As the group leader, you are free to use any part of this guide that can assist you in achieving this goal.

CONNECT

- Does Christmastime bring up good or bad memories for you?
- When you think of darkness and light at Christmastime, what images come to mind?
- What darkness in the world grieves you?

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' arrival in the world wasn't out of the blue. It was prophesied long before. We've just looked at the details of Jesus' life and ministry through the Gospel of Matthew, but by looking at the prophecies regarding his arrival, we get a broader understanding of what it all means. In Isaiah 9 and elsewhere, the arrival of the Son is depicted as light arriving in a dark place. The prophets tell us that this light won't be snuffed out. It will grow and spread until the darkness is driven out for good. In our dark world, this is good news indeed.

OBSERVATIONS & INTERPRETATION

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7 & Micah 5:2-4

- In Isaiah's prophecy, darkness represents the judgment of God on Israel and Judah at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. In other words, the darkness described here is invasion, war, and exile. Why do you think it's important that God is both the source of judgment and the source of the hope?
- What will spread along with the increase of the Son's government? (Isaiah 9:7) How do the government of the Son and the increase of those realities go hand in hand?
- Micah depicts the Son to be born as a strong shepherd. Roll out the implications of this metaphor.

APPLICATION

- Much of Israel's darkness was of its own making. Is there darkness in your life right now that stems from ungodly actions, attitudes, or choices? What should repentance look like?
- God's light spreads through the reign of Jesus. This is true in the world and it's true in our lives. What aspect of his light is Jesus training you to walk in right now in your life?
- How do these passages increase your faith? What does it look like to hold fast to hope?

PRAYER

- Spend time giving thanks to the Father for the gift of the Son.
- Pray for the light of God's kingdom to spread throughout the whole world.
- Pray for the help of the Spirit to walk in the light every day.