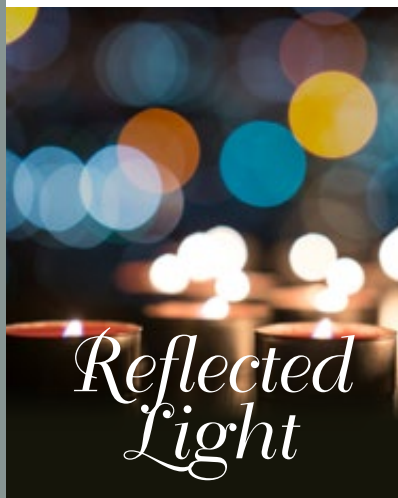


ARISE AND SHINE

WEEK 1



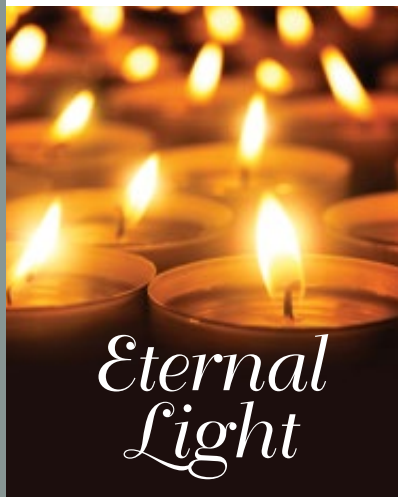
WEEK 2



WEEK 3



WEEK 4



A 4 SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**
FOR ADVENT

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By Carol Geisler. Images: iStock.com.

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Introduction

Christmas is a season of light. Lights are everywhere—outlining the rooflines and windows of homes, shining softly on Advent wreath candles and sparkling in bright colors on Christmas trees. We enjoy the lights, but those same colorful decorations remind us that we need the light. Our world is often a very dark place, and not just after sunset. The darkness—of sin and guilt, of violence and fear—often threatens to overwhelm us. But God sent his Son into the world to be its Light, to be our Light. During Advent we celebrate the fact that the Light has come and we look forward to the day when Jesus our Light will come again and “night will be no more” (Revelation 22:5).

SESSION 1

Rising Light

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

ISAIAH 60:1



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, guide us as we study your Word during this Advent season so that we might grow stronger in faith and in our witness to our Lord and Savior. Fill our hearts with joy as we look forward to our celebration of Jesus' birth. Throughout this busy season, help us to keep our hearts and minds turned to the gift of your Son. Hear our prayer in his name. Amen.

DISCUSSION

How do you use lights (electric or candles) to decorate your home for Christmas?

INTRODUCTION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” ... “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The book of Genesis and the gospel of John start with the same words, “In the beginning.” At creation God called light into existence and separated the light from the darkness. It was the beginning of life for the world. At the first Christmas, God himself came among us, the Word made flesh. It was the beginning of new life and hope for the world. John says of the life-giving Word, “In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” In our lives and in our world, Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the light that still shines in the darkness.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

1. Describe a situation in which you were literally “in the dark,” perhaps from a power outage, or being lost at night. What did the darkness “feel like”? Was it a frightening or dangerous situation? How did you find your way to light? How and when was light restored?
2. **Read Genesis 1:1-5.** To what might you compare the darkness at creation’s beginning? It is the Word of God that shatters the darkness. God created day and night, but in what way is our world still a dark place? How have you experienced that darkness? Describe a time in which God’s Word brought light to you in circumstances of personal darkness.

3. **Read Genesis 3:15.** Adam and Even disobeyed the Word of God and found themselves in a dark place as they tried in vain to hide from their Creator. What changes came to their world and their relationships once they had invited the darkness into their lives? In what ways do we invite darkness into our lives today? How do we try to hide “in the dark”? What light does God promise to free Adam and Eve, and us, from our self-imposed darkness?

4. When the time was right God would send the woman’s offspring, his own Son, to crush the tempting serpent. By the power of the Word, Light would once again overcome the darkness as it had in the beginning. **Read Isaiah 60:1-6.** Through the words of the prophets, God reminded his people of the promised Light to come. Israel, dedicated to God and obedient to his Word, was to be a light for the nations. But the people of Israel were unfaithful, and did not always shine as they should have among the unbelieving nations. But according to God’s promise, the true and faithful Light would be born among them. According to Isaiah, where is the darkness and who will see the light? Who is the Light? What will happen among the nations when that Light shines out in Israel?

SUNRISE

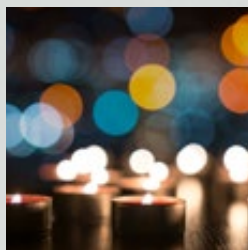
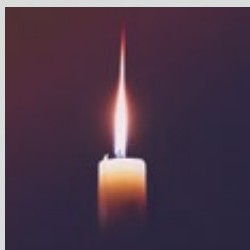
1. God would soon visit his people. The light that Isaiah prophesied was going to rise among them. To prepare a path through the darkness, God sent the prophet John “to bear witness about the light” (John 1:7). When John was born, his father Zechariah offered up words of praise to God for his mercy and salvation. **Read Luke 1:68-79.** What is the God of Israel going to do for his people? What does Zechariah say that is similar to Isaiah’s prophecy about the rising light?
2. Which of the many promised acts of God mentioned in Zechariah’s song of praise bring the most comfort to you? Advent is a season of celebration and anticipation, but it is also a time for repentance. Why would repentance be a necessary preparation for this particular sunrise? Discuss ways in which you can, as you go about your daily tasks, share God’s light with those who may still “sit in darkness.”
3. **Read John 3:14-21.** When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, the Israelites dying from the venom of poisonous serpents could look to the bronze image and live (Numbers 21:4-9). Jesus, the Light of the world, the woman’s promised offspring, was lifted up on the cross, and those who look to him in faith will live forever. What happens to those who refuse to look to the light and believe in the Son who was lifted up? What might have caused some of the ancient Israelites to turn away from the bronze serpent image and refuse to look up to it (if any did refuse!)? Why do people prefer the darkness?

ARMOR OF LIGHT

1. The light dawned in Israel in the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. From the manger in Bethlehem the light spilled out to scatter the darkness that covered the nations. Now we live by faith in Jesus our Light as we wait for the sun to rise on the Last Day, that great day of our Lord's return, his Second Advent. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.** Having just written of Jesus' return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), the apostle Paul now speaks of the way we are to live as we wait for our Lord. Why will that day be such a (terrifying) surprise to the people of the world? Think of your life as a child of the light. Is there a sharp distinction between your lifestyle and the darkness around you? Why or why not? Why might there be some shaded areas in which the darkness tries to overtake the light? How might the light try to blend in with the darkness? How does the armor of light described here by the apostle stop the assault of the darkness?
2. **Read Romans 13:8-14.** Here again Paul speaks of our "armor of light." What "works of darkness" are mentioned here? In what way might love serve as a substantial piece of armor? "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." We may still feel surrounded by darkness, but what does Paul say about the night and the dawning day? Do you think of the Lord's return as "nearer to us now"? Do you think about Jesus' return often or only during Advent or not at all? Why or why not? What does it mean to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"? What does it mean to "make provision for the flesh"?

ARISE AND SHINE

A 4 SESSION **BIBLE STUDY** FOR ADVENT



In this Advent Bible study, participants explore the biblical backgrounds of the rising, reflected, healing and eternal light of Christ. Study and discussion questions, prayers and reflections help students see that the Light of the World enlightens our lives in many ways this season and always. The large-format Leader's Guide includes all answers, helpful study notes and session directions.

