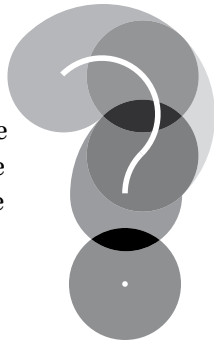
WHAT IS *HOPE* ABOUT?



Hope is the spiritual practice of waiting in faith for the promises we know God will keep through Jesus Christ. Hope is not a fleeting feeling or a flimsy wish. Hope is grounded in God's faithfulness to God's people. Hope is threefold: a personal spiritual practice, a practice we share in community, and an evangelistic effort that we proclaim into the world. As Christians, we live lives full of abundant hope. Through the Advent season, we are thrust into this practice of hope anew, as we anticipate and celebrate the hope we find in Jesus Christ. Through these activities, you have the opportunity to practice together hearing hope, seeing hope, sharing hope, and proclaiming hope.

FAMILY ADVENT WREATH

Four purple or blue candles (or three of one of those colors and one pink); one white candle; pie tin; greenery (real or artificial); green modeling clay, air-dry clay, or play dough

Advent is the season of hope—hope in the birth of Jesus Christ anew. As we wait for Christmas Eve and the birth of the Christ child, churches often light Advent wreaths as a liturgical practice of hope.

Make an Advent wreath. Place a ring of clay around the inside of the pie tin and around a small section in the center of the tin. Hollow out spaces for four candles in the outer ring and one candle in the center. Place the four colored candles in the spaces in the ring and the white candle (the Christ candle) in the center. Add greenery, filling in the wreath.

Use the following liturgy each Sunday as you light a candle. If you are using a pink candle, it is typically lit the third week. The Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve. After each lighting session, take time to wonder together about the meaning of each week's liturgy.

ADVENT 1

Where does our hope come from?
Our hope comes from God.
God gives us a life full of hope through Jesus Christ.
Our hope comes from God.
Today, we light a candle of hope.
Our hope comes from God.

ADVENT 2

Where do we see hope?
Our hope is like a light shining in the darkness.
We see hope through Jesus' birth.
Our hope is like a light shining in the darkness.
Today, we light a candle to see hope.
Our hope is like a light shining in the darkness.

ADVENT 3

How can we share hope?
I can share my hope with anyone
who needs more hope.
Sharing your hope is showing love to others.
I can share my hope with anyone
who needs more hope.
Today, we light a candle to share hope.
I can share my hope with anyone
who needs more hope.

ADVENT 4

Where should we proclaim hope?
To everyone, everywhere, everyone.
Who needs to hear hope? To see hope? To share hope?
Everyone, everywhere, everyone.
Today we light a candle to proclaim hope.
For everyone, everywhere, everyone.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Read the liturgies from the four previous weeks as you light each candle once again. Conclude with the following:
What hope do we celebrate tonight?
The hope we find in Jesus, God with us.

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HOPE JAR

Strips of paper, jar or basket

Each evening when you sit down to dinner or before you go to bed, take some time to reflect on your day as a family.

- What good things happened?
- What hard things happened?
- Where did you see God's love?
- Where did you share God's love?

At the end of your conversation, take some time to quietly and individually reflect on where you saw hope from God in your day. Give a strip of paper to each family member and ask them to write down their instance of hope, fold it up, and put it in your jar or basket.

Each week, empty out the hope jar and celebrate together all the different times you experienced hope from God. Notice if you received hope or if hope was shared. Notice who helped you notice hope. Enjoy the abundant presence of God's love in your family together.

GO CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Hymnal or internet-connected device (optional)

One of the ways we can proclaim God's hope into the world is by the simple act of Christmas caroling. These songs are full of the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ, and they are familiar to so many people, young and old.

Sing to neighbors, to church members who are homebound, or at a care facility.

Some carol suggestions include: "Joy to the World," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "The First Noel," "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Sing We Now of Christmas," "Good Christian Friends Rejoice," or others of your choosing.

CHALK MESSAGES OF HOPE

Sidewalk chalk, paper

Find a space of high-traffic concrete near your home or church and write messages of hope for the community. Discuss together the needs of your community. Tailor your messages of hope to the needs you can see all around you.

For an additional opportunity for conversation with your family, leave chalk for those in your community to use. Write a message that encourages people to write or draw what hope means to them. Discuss with your family the different responses. After you have taken note of the different responses, craft together your family's definition of *hope*. Write it down and place it somewhere prominent in your home to refer back to throughout the coming weeks.

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What does *hope* mean to you?
- What gives you hope?
- Where have you seen hope this week? Did someone help you see hope? Did *you* help someone see hope this week?
- What does your faith community do to share hope with people who don't go to church with you? How can your family help with one of these ministries?
- Who do you think needs some extra hope in your neighborhood? What can you do as a family to share some hope in your neighborhood?
- Proclaiming the hope of Jesus Christ doesn't require trumpets and loud cymbals. Sometimes, proclaiming hope can be a small action. What can you do to proclaim hope this week?

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of hope you give us when we see it in the actions of others, hear the good news of your love, have the opportunity to share it ourselves, and proclaim it with confidence in Jesus Christ. Amen.

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