

WORDS OF WAITING

Advent Reflections for 11 to 14 year olds

Based on The Bible Project Advent Word Studies

Week 1- 'Hope'

Watch or listen to 'Hope' word study from The Bible Project.

<https://bit.ly/Hope-Advent>

Reflection.

Advent has been a time of waiting in the Church calendar for centuries and is the time that covers the 4 Sundays in the leadup to Christmas day and the start of the great celebration of Christmas which lasts for two more Sundays. The time of waiting is much longer than the time of the celebration, which reflects the time we might spend waiting in anticipation of things getting better. The waiting for a future that is better than the present is a description of the Biblical idea of hope in the word study. There is also the idea of choosing to have hope based only on the character of God in the time of waiting. It is the character of God that helps us to choose hope above anything else.



Questions.

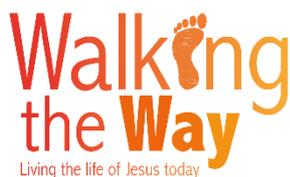
I wonder...

On a scale of 1-10, how "giddy and excited" are you for Christmas this year? Why?

How do you feel about having to wait ("YAKHAL") for things?

What is it you are anticipating or expecting as being better than your present situation or circumstances in the future?

How might you learn to have more trust in God's Character as the motivation for a bold hope, how might looking back to Jesus help you look forward?



Walking the Way Challenge/Activity.

Are there other people in your household or community that might be struggling in this time of 'waiting'. Could you send a card to encourage someone you know? Perhaps you make a financial donation to a local food bank or international charity that seeks to bring hope to those in vulnerable situations. Or try a reverse advent calendar, you can find an example here.

<https://bit.ly/3I6DNh8>

Week 2- 'Joy'

Watch or listen to 'Joy' word study from The Bible Project.

<https://bit.ly/Joy-Advent>



Reflection

Joy ("CHARA") is something we hear a lot about in the Bible but it's good to know that it's different from happiness. You can still have joy even when you are unhappy. The video says that "Christian Joy is a profound decision of faith and hope in the power of Jesus, his own life and love". Joy is a choice. Advent reminds us that God is with us (Immanuel) and we can choose joy each day knowing this truth.

Questions

I wonder..

What joy means to you?

Where you find joy? Why do you find joy there?

How do you find joy when things are hard?

How you can share the joy of God with others this week?

Walking the Way Challenge/Activity.

At the end of each day this week, write down one thing that brought you joy and thank God for it.

Week 3- 'Peace'

Watch or listen to 'Peace' word study from The Bible Project.

<https://bit.ly/Peace-Advent>



Reflection.

The word peace can have many meanings, freedom from disturbance, calmness, tranquillity. It is often associated with the absence of conflict and war. However, in the video we are reminded that Biblical peace means something more than just the absence of war, it includes the presence of something better. In the Christmas story the Angels proclaim "PEACE ON EARTH" as they share the good news of Jesus' birth with a group of Shepherds. The video explains that the Hebrew word for peace is "Shalom" meaning a state of completeness and wholeness, referring to the wellbeing of both ourselves and others. Christians are called to create peace, to be actively working for peace for ourselves, for others and for the world. May we seek to follow the examples of Jesus, the "Prince of Peace", so that our lives may be an expression of peace making.

Questions.

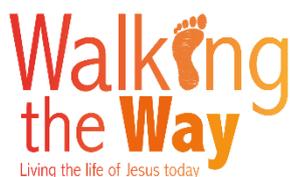
I wonder...

What words or images come to mind when you think of the word PEACE?

Where do you find peace ("Shalom") in your day to day life?

How can you help bring "Shalom" to others?

What might you learn about peace from the stories of Jesus in the Bible?



Walking the Way Challenge/Activity.

Take some time over the next week to focus on your own peace and wellbeing. Try to set aside some time each day to do something that you enjoy and that brings you peace. You could visit "Be Headstrong" for wellbeing tips - <https://www.beheadstrong.uk/>

Week 4- 'Love'

Watch or listen to 'Hope' word study from The Bible Project.

<https://bit.ly/Love-Advent>



Reflection.

"Do to others what you would want them to do to you" is the golden rule, did you notice that it is a choice about the actions rather than the feelings towards others? Not only is it a golden rule but is described as the meaning of life! For the early church the redefinition of the concept of love (Agape) was based on both the teachings and the actions of Jesus. Jesus was himself the embodiment of God's Love for the world, God's love for you, given, so that you could have life (1 John 4:9). This love that the life of Jesus demonstrates is a generous love that reflects the heartbeat of God, particularly for those other's labelled as sinners or outsiders or even enemies. Jesus was generous in his love without any expectation of a repayment or return on that generosity. Jesus invites us to make the same choice and create an "ecosystem of others-focused, self-giving love".

Questions.

I wonder...

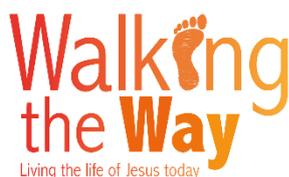
I wonder..

How would you define the concept of love ("AGAPE")?

Which story from Jesus' life best demonstrates this love to you?

On a scale of 1-10, how easy do you find it to love someone you dislike? Why?

The Christmas story illustrates the love of God in action. How do you put that love into action with those you care for?



Walking the Way Challenge/Activity.

("AGAPE") love can mean to give generously to others without the expectation of reward. This week choose three people to secretly give generously to without expecting anything in return. If you want to really challenge yourself, make sure one of those people is someone you dislike. Keep it a secret so that there is no expectation of them repaying your generosity.