YOUTH GROUP CURRICULUM · AGES 11–18

WEEK 1 OF 4



Waiting ROOM

A 4-week Advent series for youth groups

Light in the Dark

The Hope Candle · Hope · Isaiah 9:2, 6

Inside: Advent candle lighting · 45 / 60 / 75-minute plans · Word-for-word scripts · Activity Menu with 4 games
Response activity · Discussion · Joys & Concerns · Pastoral prayer · Student pages + devotional

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WEEK 1 · LEADER GUIDE

Light in the Dark

Advent theme: Hope (first purple candle) · Main text: Isaiah 9:2, 6 · Memory verse: Romans 15:13

THE BIG IDEA

Hope isn't pretending everything's fine. It's knowing the Light is coming, and he's already on his way.

The question to carry all night

"Where do I need light right now?"

By the end, students will…

- Name something they're waiting on in the dark
- See that hope is a *person* who is coming
- Choose one person to carry light to this month

NIGHT AT A GLANCE · PICK YOUR LENGTH

SEGMENT	WHAT HAPPENS	45 MIN	60 MIN	75 MIN
Welcome	Greet new students by name and grade; your announcements	—	—	5
Game 1	Pick from the Activity Menu (next page)	7	10	10
Game 2	A second game from the menu (optional)	—	—	10
Advent Candle	Light the Hope candle · after the hook, or to open the night	3	3	3
Hook + Message	"The Waiting Room" · Isaiah 9:2, 6	10	12	12
Response Activity	Light a Candle + My One Step	10	12	12
Small Group Talk	Pick 3–4 questions	—	5	8
Joys & Concerns	"I lift up ___ to God." / "Lord, hear our prayer."	10	10	10
Pastoral Prayer	Leader prays over what was shared + send-off	5	5	5

Supplies

- Advent wreath or 4 candles (LED is fine), lighter
- 2 paper flames per student (yellow/orange), pens
- Poster "Hope Wall" candle, tape
- Game supplies: see the game you choose
- Student pages (last 3 pages) · a phone timer

Before students arrive

- Choose games; ask a reader for the candle
- Read Isaiah 9:1–7 once through
- Think of a time *you* waited in the dark
- **Christmas season:** expect visitors and pre-break energy. Start with a mover, keep the message tight.
- Pray for each student by name

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CHOOSE WHAT FITS YOUR GROUP

Activity Menu

December nights are unpredictable: some weeks a crowd of visitors buzzing about break, some weeks four students and a plate of cookies. Pick one or two games, then finish with the response activity. Every game ends with a debrief that points back to tonight's question.

ACTIVITY	ENERGY	PREP	BEST WHEN…	MIN
A. Flashlight Hunt Find stars in the dark, answer together	High	Paper stars, flashlights	You want a memorable night tied to the light theme	10–12
B. The 60-Second Wait Guess when a minute is up, then talk	Med–Low	A timer	You want the strongest link to the message	8–10
C. Candy Cane Questions Pick a color: fun, Christmas, deeper	Medium	Candy canes or slips	Lots of visitors; easy talk and a treat	10
D. Holiday Traditions Swap Trios share, then introduce a partner	Low	None	Small or quiet group; students who don't know each other	8–10
E. Light a Candle Response activity (after message)	Reflective	Paper flames, poster	Every night: this is the heart of the week	12

SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS

Big, high-energy group (10–15)

A. Flashlight Hunt → B. The 60-Second Wait → Candle + Message → E. Light a Candle

Small group (4–6)

D. Holiday Traditions Swap (whole group) → Candle + Message → E. Light a Candle in a circle

Lots of first-time visitors

C. Candy Cane Questions → B. The 60-Second Wait → Candle + Message → E. Light a Candle (low-pressure option)

Short on time (45 min)

B. The 60-Second Wait → Candle + Message → E. Light a Candle → Joys & Concerns

GROUND RULES FOR EVERY GAME *Nobody is forced to share. Nobody is the punchline. New students get paired with a regular. If a game ever starts to single someone out, change the round and keep moving.*

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A. Flashlight Hunt

10–12 min · High energy

Purpose: Lights down, flashlights on: pairs hunt for paper stars, and every star has a question they answer together. Fun, a little spooky, and it sets up the message: in the dark, even a small light changes everything.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Before group, write one question on each of 20+ paper stars (list below) and hide them at waist to eye level. Never behind furniture that could tip or near cords.
2. Pair students up, a new student with a regular. Each pair gets one flashlight (or one phone flashlight).
3. Dim the lights. Not pitch black: leave a hallway light or a lamp on so everyone can see the floor.
4. On "Go!", pairs **walk** (no running) and hunt. When they find a star, they both answer the question to each other **before** hunting for the next one.
5. After 6–7 minutes, lights up. Pairs count stars and share the best answer they heard. End with the gold Bridge Star (below).

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Find a partner, and if you're new tonight, you get a regular as your guide. Each pair gets one flashlight. I've hidden a bunch of paper stars around this room, and every star has a question on it. When you find one, you both have to answer it to each other before you go hunting again. No running in the dark, and nothing is hidden anywhere you have to climb. Ready? Lights down… go!"
>
> "Lights up! Count your stars. Now tell us the best answer you heard from your partner."

STAR QUESTIONS (WRITE ONE PER STAR)

- What's your favorite Christmas movie?
- Hot cocoa, cider, or eggnog?
- Best snow day activity?
- Were you ever scared of the dark?
- What's a song you'd put on a winter playlist?
- What do you want to do over break?
- Best cookie of the season?
- What's the coolest thing you've seen in the night sky?
- Real tree or fake tree?
- What's one thing that always cheers you up?
- Who's someone who makes your day brighter?
- If you could wake up anywhere on Christmas morning, where?

Bridge Star (gold): "What's something you're hoping for this Christmas that isn't a gift?" Read it to the whole group at the end.

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Hunt as one team with two flashlights. Each time someone finds a star, the whole group answers it.
- **No dark room:** Keep the lights on and hide the stars around the building. It still works as a scavenger hunt.

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LEADER NOTE *Clear the floor, keep one adult at the light switch, and never fully black out the room. For students who don't like the dark, offer the "light keeper" job (holding the flashlight) or the brighter part of the room.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
> "Did you notice how different this room felt with the lights down? You couldn't find anything until you had some light. And it didn't take much. One little flashlight changed everything. Tonight we're asking a question I want you to hang onto: **where do I need light right now?**"

B. The 60-Second Wait

8–10 min · Medium–Low energy

Purpose: A quick, funny game that makes everyone feel how weird waiting is. Nobody "loses" in front of the group, and the talk after each wait gets students sharing real stories. It connects directly to the message.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Everyone stands up and closes their eyes. No phones, no watches, no counting out loud.
2. The leader says "Start" and starts a timer. Students sit down when they think **exactly 60 seconds** have passed.
3. Quietly note the closest time and reveal only that: "The closest was 58 seconds!"
4. After each round, students turn to a partner and talk for 60 seconds using a talk prompt (list below).
5. Play 3 rounds, each with a twist (see Rounds). End with the Bridge prompt.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
> "Everybody stand up and close your eyes. When I say 'Start,' I want you to sit down when you think exactly one minute has passed. No counting out loud, no peeking at a clock. Just wait. Ready? Start."
>
> "Okay, open your eyes. Somebody sat down at 31 seconds. Somebody's still standing. Waiting is hard, right? Turn to someone next to you and answer this: *What's the longest you've ever waited for something?*"

ROUNDS

ROUND	THE TWIST	WHY IT WORKS
1. Silent wait	Eyes closed, total silence	Most people sit way too early.
2. Distracted wait	Leader hums a Christmas song or reads a grocery list	People sit too late. Laughs guaranteed.
3. Wait together	Pairs bump elbows, eyes closed, and sit when *both* think it's time	Waiting with someone feels different.

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TALK PROMPTS (ONE PER ROUND, PLUS EXTRAS)

- What's the longest you've ever waited for something?
- What's the worst place to wait: DMV, doctor's office, or airport?
- What do you do while you wait: phone, snack, pace, sleep?
- What's something you waited for that was totally worth it?
- What's something you waited for that was a letdown?
- Are you a patient person? Would your family agree?
- What's the hardest part of waiting on a text back?
- How many days until break? Do you know exactly?
- **Bridge:** What's something you're waiting on right now that you don't know how it'll turn out?

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Everyone plays, then go around the circle with the talk prompt instead of pairs.
- **Team version:** Split into two teams. Each team's average time closest to 60 wins.

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
>
> "One minute. That's all it was, and some of us couldn't make it thirty seconds. Now imagine waiting years. Imagine waiting and not knowing how it's going to turn out. Tonight we're going to meet people who waited about 700 years. And we're asking: **where do I need light right now?**"

C. Candy Cane Questions

10 min · Medium energy

Purpose: Low-pressure talk with a treat in hand. Students choose how deep to go by the color they pick, so nobody gets surprised by a heavy question.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Before group, tape a question slip to each candy cane (or use colored paper slips): **red** = **fun**, **green** = **Christmas memories**, **white** = **a little deeper**.
2. Students form groups of 3–4 and sit together. Put a mix of all three colors in the middle of each group.
3. Take turns: pick any candy cane, read the question, and answer it. Then everyone else in the group answers too.
4. Anyone can pass or trade for a different color. No explanation needed.
5. After 6–7 minutes, groups share the best answer they heard (with permission).

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Grab a group of three or four. Every candy cane has a question on it. Red ones are just for fun. Green ones are about Christmas memories. White ones go a little deeper. You pick the color, so you decide how deep you want to go. Read it, answer it, then everyone in your group answers it too. You can always pass or swap. And yes, you get to keep the candy cane."

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QUESTIONS

Red · Fun

- Worst Christmas song ever?
- Would you rather build a snowman or have a snowball fight?
- What's your go-to holiday snack?
- If you were an elf, what would your job be?
- Ugly sweater: yes or no?

Green · Memories

- Best gift you ever got?
- Funniest thing that happened on a holiday?
- Earliest Christmas memory?
- Did you ever try to catch Santa?
- Favorite place to be during break?

White · Deeper

- What's something you're looking forward to in the new year?
- Who's someone you'd like to thank this Christmas?
- What's hard about this time of year for some people?
- When was a time you felt hopeful?
- Where do you need some light right now?

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** One circle, one bowl. Go around until everyone has answered at least one of each color.
- **No candy canes:** Use red, green, and white paper slips in a bowl or a Christmas stocking.
- **Visitor-heavy night:** Use only red and green. Save white for the small group talk.

LEADER NOTE *Check for food allergies, and have a non-candy option (like a sticker) for anyone who can't have candy canes.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
> "Some of you went straight for the red ones, and that's great. A few of you tried a white one. Here's the thing about this season: it's bright and loud and full of candy, but for a lot of people it also comes with some dark spots. So tonight's question is a white candy cane question: **where do I need light right now?**"

D. Holiday Traditions Swap

8–10 min · Low energy

Purpose: A calm, story-based game for small or quiet groups. Students introduce someone *else's* tradition, so nobody has to talk about themselves in front of everyone.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Split into trios. Mix it up: "Find two people you know the *least*."
2. Give trios 4–5 minutes to talk through 3–4 prompts from the list below.
3. Each person picks one thing they heard from someone else in their trio that they thought was cool, funny, or surprising.

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4. Go around the room: introduce your partner's tradition. "This is Ava. Her family eats tamales every Christmas Eve."

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
> "Get into groups of three with people you don't know super well yet. I'm going to put some questions up about the holidays. Talk through a few. Then you're going to introduce somebody *else's* answer to the whole group, so listen well. And if your holidays don't look like a movie, that's normal. Share whatever you want to share."

PROMPTS

- What's one tradition your family always does?
- Weirdest holiday food you've ever eaten?
- Best gift you ever got?
- Worst gift you ever got?
- Presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning?
- Where do you usually spend the holidays?
- What's a tradition you'd start if you could?
- Do you go all out decorating or keep it simple?
- What's a holiday movie your family always watches?
- What's one thing that makes it feel like Christmas to you?
- What's something you celebrate that others might not know about?

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Play as one group. Each person answers one prompt, then the person on their left introduces it back to the group.
- **Map it:** Put up a map and let students mark where their family spends the holidays or where their traditions come from.
- **Tradition we'll start:** End by picking one small tradition your youth group will do together this December.

LEADER NOTE *Not every family celebrates Christmas the same way, and not every student has an easy holiday. Some have divorced parents, a recent loss, or money stress at home. Keep prompts optional, avoid "What did you get?" as a group question, and never make a student explain why they don't have a tradition.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
> "So many different traditions in this room. Lights, food, movies, getting up way too early. Almost every tradition this time of year has one thing in common: *light*. Candles, tree lights, lights on houses. People have always lit things up in the darkest part of the year. Tonight we're going to find out why, and ask: **where do I need light right now?**"

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Hook: "The Waiting Room"

2 min

SAY

"Quick poll. Raise your hand if you like waiting. Nobody? Okay. Think about the worst waiting rooms: the doctor's office with the old magazines, the DMV, the airport gate when your flight keeps getting delayed."

"But the worst kind of waiting isn't in a room. It's waiting for a text back after you sent something important. Waiting for a test grade to post. Waiting to hear if you made the team. Waiting for things at home to get better. The worst part isn't the waiting. It's being in the dark about what's next."

"This month's series is called *Waiting Room*, because Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, is all about waiting. Tonight's question: **where do I need light right now?**"

Advent Candle Lighting

3 min

Light the first purple candle, the **Hope** candle, right after the hook or to open the whole night.

LEADER

"For the next four weeks, we're going to light one more candle every week. Each one stands for something we're waiting for. Purple is the color of waiting and getting ready. Tonight we light the first purple candle. It's called the Hope candle."

STUDENT READER

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined.

ISAIAH 9:2 · WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

LEADER (LIGHTING THE CANDLE)

"We light this candle for hope, because the Light is coming. Let's pray together."

EVERYONE

God of hope, shine your light into every dark place in our lives, and help us wait for Jesus with open hearts. Amen.

LEADER NOTE *Battery or LED candles are completely fine. Any volunteer can read; ask someone ahead of time, and never put a new student on the spot. No wreath? One candle on a table works.*

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Message: Hope Is Coming

10 min

1. Nobody likes waiting in the dark

SAY

"When you don't know how something ends, your brain fills in the blanks, usually with the worst version. 'They're not texting back because they're mad.' 'I definitely failed.' 'It's never getting better at home.'"

"Some people deal with it by pretending. 'I'm fine. Everything's fine.' But that's not hope. That's just covering the dark with a smile."

LEADER NOTE *If you have a short, honest story about a time you waited in the dark as a teenager, tell it here. Thirty seconds is plenty. Students trust leaders who go first.*

2. God's people waited a long time

SAY

"About 700 years before Jesus was born, God's people were in a dark place. Enemy armies, bad kings, lots of fear. God sent a prophet named Isaiah with a promise: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." You heard that when we lit the candle. Then Isaiah says who that light is."

> [6] *For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
>
> ISAIAH 9:6 · WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

"Here's the crazy part. After Isaiah said that, they waited. And waited. Grandparents told their grandkids, 'The light is coming,' and died still waiting. About 700 years. We couldn't make it sixty seconds."

3. Hope is a person, not a feeling

SAY

"Notice what God promised. Not 'things will feel better.' Not 'the problem will go away.' God promised a *child*. A person. And look at his names: Wonderful. Counselor, someone who knows what to do when you don't. Mighty God, strong enough for what you're facing. Everlasting Father, someone who doesn't leave. Prince of Peace."

"Feelings come and go. But hope isn't a feeling. Hope is knowing *who* is coming. Right before Jesus was born, an old priest named Zechariah sang about it. The baby wasn't even here yet, but he knew he was on his way:"

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[78] *because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dawn from on high will visit us,* [79] *to shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

LUKE 1:78–79 · WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

4. While we wait, we carry light

SAY

"Here's where it gets real. Jesus came. The light showed up. But we still wait: for friendships, for families to heal, for prayers to be answered, for Jesus to come back and make everything right. Hope doesn't mean pretending the dark isn't there. It means knowing the Light is coming, and he's already on his way."

"And while we wait, we don't just sit there. We get to carry little pieces of that light to other people. A text. An invite. Sitting with someone at lunch."

"So let me ask it again, and I want you to actually think about it: **where do I need light right now?** And who might need some light from you?"

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E. Response Activity: Light a Candle

12 min

Purpose: Help students name, honestly and safely, one place they need hope, and one person they can carry light to. Together the flames build a "Hope Wall" that stays up all through Advent, and every student leaves with one small step.

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Before group, tape a large paper candle (or four candles) on a wall or poster board: the **Hope Wall**. Cut two paper flames per student.
2. **Flame 1: "Where I need light."** Students write one place they need hope right now. They choose: keep it private (fold it and keep it) or add it to the wall with no name.
3. **Flame 2: "Who I'll carry light to."** Students write the first name or initials of one person they want to bring some light to this month.
4. Students tape Flame 2 (and Flame 1, if they want) around the paper candle. Watch the wall fill up with light.
5. Pairs pray a one-sentence prayer for each other: "God, bring light to what my partner is waiting on." No details needed.
6. **My One Step:** Students fill in "My One Step This Week" on their student page: pray one hope prayer each day, and do one "light" action for their person.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY (FLAME 1)**
>
> "Everyone gets two paper flames. On the first one, write one place in your life where you need light right now. Something you're waiting on, worried about, or stuck in. You decide what happens to it. You can fold it up and keep it, just between you and God. Or you can put it on the Hope Wall with no name. Both are completely okay."
>
> **SAY (FLAME 2)**
>
> "On the second flame, write the first name or initials of one person who could use some light this month. Maybe someone who's lonely, going through a hard time, or new at school. Put this one on the wall."
>
> **SAY (PAIRS)**
>
> "Find a partner. You don't have to share what's on your flame. Just pray one sentence for them: 'God, bring light to what they're waiting on.' Then switch."
>
> **SAY (ONE STEP)**
>
> "Last thing. Open your student page to My One Step. Every day this week, pray one short hope prayer. And do one small 'light' thing for the person on your second flame. Keep it small enough to actually do."

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"Where I need light" ideas (read if stuck)

- A class I'm failing
- A friendship
- My parents
- Feeling left out
- Someone who's sick
- My future
- Stress
- Missing someone
- My faith
- Being lonely

"Light" actions for my person

- Send an "I'm thinking about you" text
- Sit with them at lunch
- Invite them to youth group or a Christmas event
- Write them a Christmas card
- Ask "How are you really doing?" and listen
- Pray for them by name every day

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Sit in a circle around one lit candle. Each person places Flame 2 by the candle and says only the first name or "someone I know."
- **Low-pressure option:** Skip the partner prayer. Students hold Flame 1 during a minute of quiet while you pray for everyone out loud.
- **Grow the wall:** Leave the Hope Wall up all through Advent. Each week, add flames in the color of that week's candle.

LEADER NOTE *Never read private flames, and don't read wall flames out loud. Some students may write something heavy, especially this time of year. If someone looks upset, check in quietly later. See the Care Note at the end of the leader guide.*

DEBRIEF

> **SAY**
> "Look at that wall. When we walked in tonight, it was just paper. Now it's full of light, and every flame is somebody's real life. That's what hope looks like. It doesn't pretend the dark isn't there. It just knows the Light is coming. **So where do you need light right now?** And who's getting some light from you this week?"

Small Group Talk

5–8 min · Optional

Groups of 3–5, with one adult or student leader per group if possible. Pick 3–4 questions that fit your group.

WARM UP

1. What's the worst waiting room you've ever been stuck in?
   Follow-up: What did you do to pass the time?
2. What's something you're counting down to this month?
   Keep it light. It's a warm-up.

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GO DEEPER

3. What's the difference between pretending everything's fine and actually having hope?
   Which one do people usually do?
4. God's people waited about 700 years. Why do you think God took so long?
   What would you have told your grandkids while you waited?
5. Which of Isaiah's names for Jesus do you need most right now: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, or Prince of Peace?
   Why that one?
6. Why might Christmas be a hard time of year for some people?
   How could we notice them?

TAKE IT HOME

7. What's one small "light" thing you could do for someone this week?
8. If Jesus really is already on his way, what changes about the thing you're waiting on?

LEADER NOTE *Silence is okay. Count to seven in your head before rephrasing. If no one answers, answer it yourself briefly and honestly, then ask again.*

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Joys & Concerns

10 min

Purpose: Students practice praying *for each other*, not just hearing about prayer. It's often the moment new students realize this group actually cares about them. Tonight it fits the theme: hope doesn't pretend. We bring the bright things and the dark things to God, honestly, and trust that his light is coming.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Sit in a circle if you can. Explain the response: when someone shares, they end with **"I lift up ___ to God."** Everyone responds together: **"Lord, hear our prayer."**
2. Start with **joys** (things to thank God for), then move to **concerns** (things we're worried about or carrying).
3. The leader goes first to model it, with one joy and one concern.
4. Anyone can share, or pass. "Unspoken" requests are welcome, too.
5. Jot down what's shared (first names only) so you can pray for each one in the Pastoral Prayer.

LEADER SCRIPT

> **SAY**
>
> "Tonight we said hope isn't pretending everything's fine. So this is the place where we don't have to pretend. Let's bring God the good stuff and the hard stuff. What's something good that happened this week you're thankful for? Or something you're waiting on or worried about, for yourself, your family, or a friend?"
>
> "When you share, end with 'I lift up ___ to God.' And all of us will say together, 'Lord, hear our prayer.' Let's practice. I lift up this group to God..." (*All: "Lord, hear our prayer."*)
>
> "I'll go first. My joy is ___. I lift up ___ to God. My concern is ___. I lift up ___ to God."

Joy starters (if students are stuck)

- A good grade or finishing a big project
- Family coming home for the holidays
- My team won / a great practice
- Someone I love got good news
- Break is almost here

Concern starters

- Finals or a test coming up
- A grandparent or relative who is sick
- A friend who's going through something
- Someone who's missing a loved one this Christmas
- "I have an unspoken request."

VARIATIONS

- **Small group (4–6):** Go around the circle so everyone gets a turn, and everyone is allowed to pass.
- **Big group (12+):** "Popcorn" style: anyone shares when ready. Cap it at about 8 minutes.
- **Written version:** Students write joys and concerns on slips of paper. The leader reads them (no names) and the group responds.

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LEADER NOTE *Say once at the start: "What's shared here stays here, unless someone's safety is at risk." If a student shares something serious, thank them, pray, and follow up privately afterward (see the Care Note).*

Pastoral Prayer

3–5 min

Pray this over the group. The **[bracketed]** lines are where you name the joys and concerns students just shared.

God of hope,

Thank you for every person in this room tonight. Thank you that you never leave anyone waiting alone.

Thank you for the good things you've given us this week. *[Name the joys shared: "Thank you for Mia's cousins coming home for Christmas, for Noah finishing his project..."]* Every bright spot comes from you.

And we bring you the things we're waiting on in the dark. *[Name the concerns: "Be with Caleb's grandpa in the hospital. Give Emma peace about finals..."]* And for the flames we folded up and kept, and the things we didn't say out loud, you already know them. Hold them too.

Long ago you promised a great light to people sitting in darkness, and you kept your promise. You sent Jesus. So we don't have to pretend everything's fine. Be our Wonderful Counselor when we don't know what to do. Be our Mighty God when we feel weak. Be our Everlasting Father when people let us down. Be our Prince of Peace when our minds won't slow down.

Shine into every dark place in our lives. And make us small lights for the people on our flames this week. Help everyone who is new tonight feel at home here.

In Jesus' name, amen.

SEND-OFF

"Take your student pages home. There's a five-day Advent devotional in there, just a few minutes a day, and a tracker for your one step. Bring it back next week. This whole series comes back to one question: **What are you waiting for, and who is coming?** Next week we light the second candle, and we're talking about something the angels said to some terrified shepherds: **'Don't Be Afraid.'**"

"Let me send you out with our memory verse: 'Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.' See you next week."

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Next Week Follow-Up: Open Week 2 in front of the Hope Wall. Ask students to look at their One Step tracker. "How many days did you pray a hope prayer? Did anyone get to do a 'light' thing for their person? What happened?" Celebrate any progress, even one day. Then relight the Hope candle before you light the Peace candle.

Care Note for Leaders

The holidays can be the hardest time of year. Behind the lights, some students are carrying grief (the first Christmas without someone), family conflict or divorce, money stress, or real loneliness once school friends scatter for break. A flame or prayer request might hint at hopelessness, self-harm, abuse, or not wanting to be here.

- **Stay calm and thank them** for telling you. "I'm really glad you told me."
- **Don't promise to keep secrets** if someone's safety is at risk.
- **Follow your church's safety policy** and tell your lead pastor the same day.
- **Connect them to trained help:** parents or guardians, a school counselor, or a licensed counselor. In the U.S., anyone can call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time, including over break.

You're not expected to be a counselor. Your job is to listen well, take it seriously, and make sure they're connected to the right people. Before break, send a check-in text to anyone who seemed to be struggling.

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THE FULL SERIES

WAITING ROOM · 4 Weeks

Each week stands alone, so visitors can jump in any Wednesday in December. Taught in order, the weeks follow the Advent candles, Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, and keep asking one question: *What are you waiting for, and who is coming?*

#	WEEK	CANDLE · TEXT
1	**Hope** Light in the Dark	Hope candle · Isaiah 9:2, 6
2	**Peace** Don't Be Afraid	Peace candle · Luke 2:8–14
3	**Joy** Leaping for Joy	Joy candle (pink) · Luke 1:39–45
4	**Love** God Moved In	Love candle · John 1:14

Every week includes

- 45 / 60 / 75-minute schedules
- Activity Menu with 4+ game options
- Advent candle lighting liturgy
- Word-for-word leader scripts
- Scripture (World English Bible) and one big idea
- Response activity + "One Step" challenge
- Tiered discussion questions
- Joys & Concerns prayer time
- Pastoral prayer with space for your group
- Student pages and 5-day Advent devotional
- Next-week follow-up

Built for real youth groups

These weeks were written for a real Wednesday night group: 5 to 15 students, often with a new face or two (and more at Christmas), led by a pastor or volunteer with limited prep time. Games never single anyone out. Every activity has a small-group version. And every leader script can be read word for word when you're short on time.

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Purchasers may photocopy and share the student pages and leader guide for use within their own church or ministry.
Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (public domain).

Name: _____ Date: _____

TONIGHT'S BIG IDEA

Hope isn't pretending everything's fine. It's knowing the Light is coming, and he's already on his way.

THE PROMISE · ISAIAH 9:2, 6

About 700 years before Jesus was born, God promised:

"The people who walked in _____ have seen a great _____."

His name will be called: Wonderful, _____, Mighty _____, Everlasting _____, Prince of _____.

The name I need most right now: _____

WAITING ROOM CHECK

How much am I waiting on each of these right now? Check one box per row. Nobody else has to see this.

I'M WAITING ON…	NONE	SOME	A LOT
Grades or school stuff	☐	☐	☐
A friendship to change	☐	☐	☐
A family situation	☐	☐	☐
An answer to prayer	☐	☐	☐
Break (a rest!)	☐	☐	☐
Other: _____	☐	☐	☐

WHERE I NEED LIGHT

Right now, I need light in:

What I'm tempted to pretend:

What I'll ask Jesus for instead:

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My One Step

MY ONE STEP THIS WEEK

Keep it small enough to actually do.

Every _____ (morning / bus ride / bedtime)

I will pray one hope prayer for _____

My light person: _____ One "light" thing I'll do for them:

_____

Example: "Every night before bed, I will pray, 'Jesus, bring light to my grandpa.' On Friday I'll text Sam and ask how she's really doing."

MY WEEK TRACKER

Check each day you prayed your hope prayer. Circle the day you did your "light" thing.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

MY PRAYER LIST

Write down the joys and concerns people shared tonight (first names only) and keep praying this week.

JOYS: THANK YOU, GOD, FOR…	CONCERNS: PLEASE BE WITH…

✂ CUT OUT AND KEEP IN YOUR PHONE CASE, WALLET, OR BIBLE

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit."

ROMANS 15:13

I need light in: _____

My step: M ☐ T ☐ W ☐ T ☐ F ☐ S ☐ S ☐

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5-Day Advent Devotional

Each day: read the verse, think about the question, write one honest sentence. That's it.

DAY 1 Isaiah 9:2 · A great light

God's people saw a great light in the dark. Where does your life feel a little dark right now?

DAY 2 Isaiah 9:6 · His names

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Which name do you need today, and why?

DAY 3 Lamentations 3:25–26 · Good to wait

"Yahweh is good to those who wait for him." What's one thing you can hand to God and wait on instead of worrying about?

DAY 4 Romans 15:13 · The God of hope

This verse says God can *fill* you with hope. What would a hope-filled day look like for you tomorrow?

DAY 5 John 8:12 · The light of the world

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." Who is one person you can carry a little of his light to this week?

A prayer you can pray this week

Jesus, some parts of my life feel dark right now, and I don't want to pretend they don't. Thank you that you're the Light, and that you're already on your way. Fill me with hope while I wait, and help me carry your light to someone else. Amen.

Next week · Week 2: **Don't Be Afraid**

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