



Waiting for Christmas 1: Waiting for Hope

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For this series leading up to Christmas, we're doing the studies a bit differently. Each weekend we'll be looking at a passage that prepares us for the "coming" of Jesus into the world. We want to take you a bit deeper into each week's passage. Enjoy!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hope can be a really generic word—it can mean different things to different people. Talk about the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "hope."
2. Read Isaiah 64:1-9 out loud. If it makes sense, read it twice. Read slowly, letting the words sink in. Talk about any words or phrases that stand out to you.
3. The background of this passage is that Israel—specifically the southern kingdom of Judah, with its capital in Jerusalem—has been taken into captivity in Babylon. This is the worst punishment that they could imagine; losing the land God had promised them. Talk about how what you read in Isaiah 64:1-9 would be received by people struggling with their situation.
4. 64:6 is an extremely vivid verse. The word for "filthy rags" is the same term used for a cloth used for feminine hygiene. Talk about how "righteous acts" could become "filthy rags." Remember to put it in the perspective of the people listening—they have a specific situation they're facing.
5. The people of Judah say that God is their "potter" and they are the "clay." Talk about what that image creates in your mind. Talk about how in your life you've seen yourself "molded" and changed by God.
6. Remember that the passage begins with the plea for God to "...rend the heavens and come down..." (64:1) Talk about how Jesus' coming at Christmas fits in the language of Isaiah in this passage. Talk about the way Jesus took a different direction than the language of Isaiah, from time to time.
7. Talk about how the coming of Jesus at Christmas opened the opportunity for us to live with God and for God in a new way. Talk about how you might let God—through Jesus—mold your life (your relationships, your thoughts, your habits) like clay in the coming year.