

ANTICIPATING THE BIRTH OF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Lighting of the Candle of Hope

Reader One: The first candle we light is the candle of hope. Hope promotes the belief in an outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life, or is the state in which a person cherishes a desire with anticipation. We enter this Christmas season with hope in the One who came to fulfill all prophecies of the long awaited Messiah. We often get wrapped up in our own lives and circumstances and find ourselves asking the question, "What kind of hope does Christ offer me this Christmas?" The answer is, Christ wants to fulfill every desire and void in our hearts. He wants to be the fulfillment in our lives. We need not put our hope in the things of this world. We just have to put our hope in the One who came to save the world. (Light the purple candle of hope.)

Focused Meditation: At this time, reflect inwardly on the deepest needs and desires of your heart. Are you trying to fulfill those desires with the things the world offers? Allow the hope and light of Jesus to fill your heart. Turn over those needs and desires to the Lord right now in this moment of personal prayer. (After a few moments continue on with the second reading.)

Lighting of the Candle of Preparation

Reader Two: The second candle we light is the candle of preparation. Often in preparation for the Christmas season we do many things to ready our homes and churches for the holiday. What fun it can be to put up the decorations, bake cookies and send Christmas cards. But often we forget to take the time to prepare our hearts to receive the Christ child. We get busy with festive engagements. Our schedules fill up and we neglect time in the Word of God. We must be sure to prepare our hearts, our spiritual homes, with just as much care as we prepare our physical homes and church homes in preparation for the Lord. We read in Romans 12:11, 12, "*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in affliction, faithful in prayer.*" Be sure to be faithful even during these busy days. Prepare for the arrival of Christmas in every sense and be careful not to become distracted. Allow God to bless you through your communion with Him even during what can sometimes be the busiest times of the year. (Light the purple candle of preparation.)

Focused Meditation: During this time of mediation take a moment and reflect on how you can keep yourself from getting so caught up in the festivities of the season that you forget to commune with God. Do you have a time set aside in your schedule to rest and receive from the Lord? (After a few moments, ask a few women to share how they keep the emphasis on the Christ child throughout the rush of the Christmas season.)

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Reader Three: The angels proclaimed Christ's birth with joy.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:14

The birth of the long-awaited Savior compelled the song of praise from the lips of the angels. This joyous occasion should continue to stir joy in our hearts today. Without Jesus we would have no hope, no joy, nothing to celebrate. But praise God for the gift of His Son. We should be proclaiming His name throughout the world. Unfortunately, we are often timid and keep the news of our Savior Jesus as a secret. Our challenge this Christmas should be to spread the Word of our Savior's birth and the joy we have found in Him. (Light the pink candle of joy.)

Focused Meditation: Ask the Lord to reveal to you how you can be a witness throughout this Christmas season. Maybe you feel led to share Christ with a co-worker, or to reach out to a neighbor. Open your heart to the leading of the Holy Spirit. God may use you to bring someone into a relationship with Him this Christmas. Pray for Him to show you who that could be and how He wants you to witness.

Reader Four:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3: 16

God's love was fulfilled in giving us Jesus. God knew that His creation was in desperate need of a Savior from sin. Ever since the first sin in the Garden of Eden when His relationship with Adam and Eve had been blemished, God had a plan for redemption. He loves us. Even though we became a sinful, wretched creation, He loved us enough to send his only Son to redeem us all. Not just those who were alive to experience His life, but all who would need that redemption in the future. The blood of Jesus covers even sinful generations to come. Only a God who loves unconditionally could have planned for His only

Son to endure such humiliation, pain, and death in order to show His love for His creation. We could never thank Him enough for this gift, but we can give testimony to His saving grace in our own lives. Jesus our Messiah, we celebrate You this Christmas; we adore You tonight. (Light the purple candle of love.)

Focused Meditation: We each have come into relationship with Christ from different walks of life. Still His blood covers us each in the same way. His grace is extended to us. He saved us from the sin that entangled us. (During this time, share the love of God and His grace in your own life with the women. Then invite the women to share.)

Closing Prayer

Close in prayer by thanking God for His amazing grace. Thank Him for Jesus and His blood that has covered our sins.