

Living the Advent Hope



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

Eccles. 12:13, 14; Matt. 25:31–46; Titus 2:12,13; Rev. 21:1–5

Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Focus on “the blessed hope” echoed throughout Scripture.

► See why serving others can usher them into the kingdom of God.

► Look towards the world made new as the ultimate reward.

Preparing to Lead

So many things can distract us from the end goal of the Christian life, which is dwelling for eternity with God. Believers are looking towards the finish line of a world made new—“the blessed hope” of Jesus’ appearing.

Along the way, however, there are needs to be met in individuals who cross our path because God wants us to serve them. We must “Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”

As we read in Galatians 6:9, we should “not grow weary while doing good”—the “due season” of reaping is on its way. Part of our mission is to support each other as we journey through this life.

Finally, we need to let our lives shine as a witness even more than our words. By acting with Christ-like selflessness and sharing both the message and our acts of service with those we know and those we meet, we are accomplishing this vital step.

Materials

Reproducible Activity, Bibles, paper, pens, crayons or markers

Getting Started

A. Ask: “What are you looking forward to in heaven? Do you see this as a ‘hope’ or as a ‘promise’ from God that He will fulfill? How can you live so that other people see this promise in you?”

B. Ask: “Are you aware that God’s power is available to help you overcome temptation? How does that impact your daily life? Do you look forward to the time when God will ‘make all things new’ and restore the earth?”

Say: “The hope we have is not merely for what some have derided as ‘pie-in-the-sky by and by when we die.’ Rather, it is a living promise that we can cling to and share with others in the here and now.

When we help those in need, when we encourage fellow believers, and when we witness of the ‘blessed hope,’ we are demonstrating the reality of God’s promises. They are not mere wishes, but rather the concrete assurance that a loving heavenly Father cares for each of us and has ‘a future and a hope’ (Jer. 29:11) planned for everyone who trusts in Him.”

Discuss how service and witness to others—in the spirit of Christ and following His example—can bring us closer in empathy to those in need, in turn engaging their minds and hearts in the message of salvation. **Ask:** “Why are actions even more important than words?”

Delving Into the Word

A. Engage in a discussion as a class using the following questions.

Ask: “What is the great theme in this week’s Scripture readings? Why is it so important to live out the message of Jesus, and to serve those in need? Why is your motivation in outreach so important? Perhaps most important, who do you believe will fulfill the Great Commission to witness to those in your spheres of influence if you don’t respond to the call?”

B. *Ask:* “Do you, or someone you know, get stressed about when God’s promises are going to be fulfilled? Do you wonder if Jesus will ever return? How would you counsel someone who expresses such concerns, what would you say to them? What would you want someone to say to you at a time such as this? What is the best way to keep the certainty of God’s promise at the forefront of your consciousness? Is there a particular verse, either from this week’s lesson or the Bible in general, that you hold to during seasons of doubt?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. What do you believe is the difference between a “hope” and a “promise”? How does that apply to sharing the good news with others?

2. Why do you trust God’s promises? How important is the fact that Jesus is alive today in confirming your belief—and how do you respond to that fact?

3. Are believers only supposed to witness to others with words, or are there

things we can do to demonstrate God’s love to those who have yet to know Him?

4. How can you encourage others to “keep on keeping on” as we journey towards heaven? What encourages you the most when others share with you?

5. Is our journey supposed to be lacking in joy, one of simple perseverance, or can we find—and demonstrate—happiness along the way?

Closing the Activity

Ask: “What is the ‘bottom line’ here? Why should we serve others, especially those in need? Is it to gain converts, or is there another reason?”

The phrase “rice Christians” is one that’s sometimes used in discussing missionary efforts in poor countries, the notion being that some will profess faith after being offered food or other assistance by missionaries. These conversions, critics say, aren’t the result of a spiritual experience, but rather a secular, material one.

Ask: “What is the proper motivation for witnessing and service? What does ‘the

least of these’ mean to you? Are only the ‘down and out’ in need of ministry, or are there perhaps those we see as affluent or comfortable who also need to know Jesus and His message? How do we identify needs in our community—and how do we meet those needs?”

Ask one or two class members to share about the service ministries they’ve participated in. *Ask:* “Did the outreach change others, or also those who performed the service? What lessons have you carried forward from these experiences?”

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Portraits Of Service

In groups of two or three, work together to draw “portraits” of serving others in the space below. Pictured activities could include feeding the homeless, delivering supplies to a family in need, tutoring young people, hospital visitation, etc.

How do these acts of service reflect the command of Christ to share His message with a world in need?