

Isa. 11:1–10

Ps. 72:1–7, 18–19

Rom. 15:4–13

Matt. 3:1–12

Let There Be Peace

Goal for the Session *Tweens will identify signs of God’s peaceable kingdom around them and plan ways to live as peacemakers.*

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Isaiah 11:1–10

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Bruce C. Birch

The vision of harmony in verses 6–10 is often referred to as the vision of “the peaceable kingdom.” The image is of a return to Eden when God’s reign is finally consummated. When the anointed one described in earlier verses ushers it in, broken creation becomes the completely harmonious creation God intended. The earth will now be filled with the “knowledge of the LORD” (v. 9). This Hebrew term for knowledge is more than cognitive information; it is the full entering into and experiencing of what is known. So the earth will be infused with the reality of God, and it shall be as comprehensive as the waters of the sea (v. 9).

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Noel Leo Erskine

The church is not the kingdom of God, but its relationship to the kingdom signals its mission. The realm of God shines through the witness and mission of the church as the poor have good news preached to them and are judged with righteousness and equity. The Messiah awaits the church in a future of righteousness marked off by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of God, beckoning the church to a new future not of its own making but one made possible by YHWH. The challenge is not to be stuck in the traditions of the past but to be open to the new realm in which the proud will be punished, the humble will be exalted, and the practice of justice will be the order of a new day.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Stacey Simpson Duke

This is how hope gets its start—it emerges as a tiny tendril in an unexpected place. Where are the stumps in our own lives; where do we feel cut off? Can we imagine or believe that even now God might be nurturing the growth of something new and good from our old, dead dreams? Consider what areas of our lives most need the promise of new life, and how we might become open to such newness. Isaiah’s promise is not just a future one; even now there are tiny signs of hope and life in places that look dead and discarded.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Paul Simpson Duke

What of the “little child” who leads them? Shall Christians think of Jesus again? We should not make this move too quickly. Like the calf, lamb, kid, and ox, the child stands for the vulnerable, and is joined by others even younger and more vulnerable, happily playing in a safe world at last. Why is it the child who leads the whole bleating, mooing, yipping, snuffling, roaring, giggling company? The new creation wants a human presence—new, bright, undefended, and free—to love and care for it all.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 11:1–10

YOU WILL NEED

- purple or blue cloth
- 4 votive candles in holders
- artificial evergreen wreath (optional)
- matches or lighter
- Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023; CD player
- index cards
- pens
- masking tape
- animal-shaped cookies (optional)
- Color Pack 1, 2, 29
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- Bibles

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, magazines and newspapers, scissors, glue sticks, fine-tipped markers, paper punch, yarn
- option 2: Internet-connected device
- option 3: Color Pack 3, scissors

Some churches use the color blue in worship during Advent as a symbol of hope. Some churches use purple, a color of royalty, to honor the coming of our king, Jesus. Use the same color your church uses in worship.

Focus on Your Teaching

Most tweens are keenly aware of conflict. They might be experiencing conflict in their schools, as friends fight or bullies threaten. They might be coping with conflict in their neighborhoods or homes. They might be worried by news reports about violence or war, and wonder how faraway conflicts will shape the future. At times, the promise that God's peace will prevail may seem like wishful thinking or denial of reality to them. Still, in Advent the church highlights such hope. Acknowledge tweens' legitimate concerns and also appeal to their impulse to work for positive change.

Jesus, Prince of Peace, help me see myself as a peacemaker and guide me as I encourage these learners in your ways of peace. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, spread a purple or blue cloth in the center of your learning space. (See sidebar for color information.) Arrange four votive candles in a circle. Option: Arrange the votives inside an artificial evergreen wreath. Place Color Pack 1 near the cloth. Write one of the following animal names on an index card for each learner, so that each one has a different animal: wolf, lamb, leopard, lion, cow, bear, snake. (Add other animals if needed.) If you are using option 2 in Responding, plan to show a video about youth engaged in peacemaking activities, such as bit.ly/Kids4Peace. If you are using option 3, cut apart the stories on Color Pack 3.

Greet each learner by name. Tape one animal name to each learner's back without saying what it is. Invite learners to mingle, asking each other questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" until each one correctly guesses the animal on his or her back.

Gather around the candles. Announce that today is the Second Sunday of Advent. Ask a volunteer to light two candles. Invite tweens to follow your directions in the following Advent prayer:

Teacher: *During Advent we look back to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! *(Shield eyes with one hand as though looking into the distance, look backward over one shoulder.)*

Teacher: *During Advent we look ahead to Jesus' return to rule in glory.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! *(Shield eyes with one hand, point forward with the other.)*

Teacher: *During Advent we look within our hearts for Jesus' presence now.*

All: Come, Lord Jesus! *(Cross arms over chest and bow head.)*

Teacher: *Come, Lord Jesus: Teach us your word of peace.*

All: Amen. *(Raise both hands over head.)*

Four Candles

Light one candle, Messiah is coming; wait and watch for his Advent is near.

He will meet us on God's holy mountain; how shall we prepare for his coming?

One. One candle to light the darkness. One. One candle to light his way.

Light two candles, Messiah is coming; wait and watch for his Advent is near.

He will come from the family of Jesse; how shall we prepare for his coming?

Two. Two candles to light the darkness. Two. Two candles to light his way.

About Isaiah

- Was a prophet, called by God to speak to God's people.
- Started delivering God's messages about 740 years before Jesus' birth.
- Lived in a time when Judah (the Southern Kingdom of divided Israel) was facing invasion by the powerful Assyrian army.
- Urged the kings and people of Judah to trust in God and remain faithful.

Depending upon the Bible versions the learners use, you may need to explain that "fear of the LORD" (vv. 2, 3) doesn't mean being afraid of God, but rather honoring and respecting God's authority and power.

Sing the first two stanzas of "Four Candles" (Color Pack 29; track 8 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023).

Form pairs. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Multiple Choice Menagerie) and pens. Have pairs mark their choices. When all have finished, give the correct answers (1. C; 2. B; 3. A; 4. C; 5. A). Option: Keeping any allergies in mind, after each item, award animal-shaped cookies to pairs who had the correct answer.

Tell learners to listen for more information about these animals in the Bible reading today.

EXPLORING

To set the scene for today's Bible reading, show Color Pack 2. Tell learners the statue is one artist's idea of what the prophet Isaiah looked like. Invite tweens to look for clues in the art about what Isaiah did. Suggest that the artist could be showing Isaiah writing down a message he was receiving from God. Offer information about Isaiah from the sidebar.

Distribute Bibles and have learners turn to Isaiah 11. Form two groups to read aloud Isaiah 11:1–5 in unison, alternating verses. Discuss:

- ✧ The ruler Isaiah describes is a "shoot" or "branch" (v. 1) from the family tree of Jesse, father of the great King David. What about this description might have been a sign of hope for people in Judah?
- ✧ What qualities will "the spirit of the LORD" give this leader? (vv. 2–3a) How could these qualities help the leader bring about peace?
- ✧ How will this leader treat the most "at-risk" members of society? (vv. 3b–4a) How might these actions help bring about peace?
- ✧ What do you think Isaiah means when he says the leader will "kill the wicked" with his mouth? (v. 4b) How can a leader's words help bring about peace?
- ✧ The people of Judah were facing an invasion by another nation's army. How might have Isaiah's words given them hope?

Ask a volunteer read aloud Isaiah 11:6–9. Ask:

- ✧ What is your reaction to this vision of peace?
- ✧ In your opinion, how well does this vision describe a future filled with God's peace? What would you add or subtract?

Read aloud Isaiah 11:10. Tell learners that this peaceful ruler did not come in Isaiah's time. When Christians read Isaiah's words, we think of Jesus. Ask:

- ✧ In what ways is Jesus like the leader described by Isaiah? (Learners may recall stories of Jesus as a wise teacher, a friend to those who were poor and outcast, or one who spoke against corruption and sin.)

Point out that Christians are still waiting for the future kingdom of God's perfect peace. During Advent, we express our hope in this and also pray that God will help us to be signs of peace. Discuss:

- ✿ Where do you see signs of God's peace at work in the world today?
- ✿ How can you be a sign of God's peace?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments** Tweens can create Christmas ornaments to tell others about Isaiah's vision of God's peaceable kingdom. Set out old newspapers and magazines. Have learners cut out small images and words that convey peace. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments) made on card stock, scissors, fine-tipped markers, and glue sticks. Have learners cut out the circles, glue a collage of images and words to the backs, and color the fronts. Demonstrate how to punch a hole at the top of each circle, thread about 6" of yarn through it, and tie the ends together to make a loop for hanging. Suggest that learners encourage their families to offer prayers for peace as they hang the ornaments.
- 2. Young Peacemakers** Inspire learners to think about ways to act as peacemakers by looking at examples of young peacemakers. Show a short video, such as bit.ly/Kids4Peace. Discuss: How are these young people acting as living signs of peace? Which of these activities have you done? Which would you like to do? What other peace-promoting activities can you think of doing? (You might want to review the list of suggested activities at www.greatkindnesschallenge.org.) How do you identify yourself as Jesus' follower when you are acting and speaking in ways that promote peace? Choose one specific activity that each learner will do in the coming week.
- 3. Peace-Filled Skits** Invite learners to act out peaceful responses to everyday situations of conflict. Form two groups. Give each group one of the stories cut from Color Pack 3. Tell groups to read the situation and then develop a brief skit to demonstrate their answer to the question. Have groups perform their skits for each other. Applaud their efforts and encourage them to try out some of the ideas from the skits in the week to come.

EASY
PREP

Save the votive candles and artificial evergreen wreath to use in upcoming sessions.

CLOSING

Gather the group around the Advent candles. Invite tweens to tell what they will remember about Isaiah's vision. Discuss:

- ✿ What will you do this week to help bring God's promise of peace to someone you know?

Invite learners to think of a joy and/or concern they would like the group to pray about, write it on a small sticky note, and attach it to Color Pack 1. Pray aloud:

Lord, we look forward to the time when everyone will know your peace. Hear the joys and concerns that fill our hearts today: (name the joys and concerns on the notes). Come quickly, Lord Jesus, to rule as Prince of Peace. Amen.

Exchange signs and words of God's peace with learners as they depart.

Multiple Choice Menagerie



How much do you know about these wild animals? Mark one answer for each question.

1. How much meat can a wild wolf eat in one meal?

- a. 10 pounds
- b. 15 pounds
- c. 20 pounds
- d. 25 pounds



2. What will a male lion usually do when joining a pride (group)?

- a. Roar to scare off other males.
- b. Kill the cubs so he can have his own offspring with the lionesses.
- c. Lead the pride in a hunt to establish his dominance.
- d. Scent-mark a new territory where the pride will live.



3. What will leopards do to protect the prey they kill from scavengers?

- a. Drag it into the branches of trees.
- b. Bury it in the ground.
- c. Mask its scent with their own urine.
- d. Eat it immediately.

4. How fast can a grizzly bear run?

- a. 10 m.p.h.
- b. 20 m.p.h.
- c. 30 m.p.h.
- d. 45 m.p.h.



5. Which of the following is *not* true about the puff adder (a venomous snake)?

- a. It lures its victims with its colorful tail.
- b. It uses camouflage and remains still if approached.
- c. One bite contains enough venom to kill a human being.
- d. It is responsible for the most human snakebite fatalities in Africa.

December 4, 2022
Let There Be Peace

Tweens
Resource Sheet 2

Peaceable Kingdom Ornaments

