

## Words of Promise | Hope (Isaiah 6; 9:2-7)

Maybe you've been living without hope or struggling to find it in the midst of the relentless pain and brokenness of life. Biblical Hope isn't a subjective, feelings driven expression or desire. It isn't wishful thinking or speculation. It describes the assurance of rest in the midst of chaos, rescue out of darkness and restoration no matter the brokenness. Hope is a word of promise, rooted in the unwavering character of God. It's what the season of advent is all about.

### 1. Unwavering character (Isaiah 6; 7:14)

The prophet Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and spoke (on God's behalf) to Israel's political and spiritual leaders between 740BC and 687BC (700 years before Jesus was born).

The central issue was a lack of trust in Yahweh, a moving away from what is true about him.

Isaiah 6 = breathtaking vision of God's majesty; his holiness (sinless perfection; set apartness).

Isaiah's message will *not* be received by many. Hearts will be hardened; eyes will be shut. Israel will be cut down (led into exile / captivity) and burned up (scorched) – only a stump will remain; a holy seed.

Faith is always in God keeping his promises –  
doing what he said he would do.

It involves looking back at what is true of God  
in order to look forward with hope.

*"You look forward by looking backward."*

Isaiah 7:10-14. God gives King Ahaz of Judah a "sign." First a stump. Now a sign, a child. *This* child will be called "*Immanuel*" which means "*God with us.*" Matthew 1:23

### 2. Immeasurable hope (Isaiah 9:2-7)

Isaiah 9:2-7 It's right there in the deep darkness of life, in the shadows of despair and isolation, God's promises break through. Like the dawn of a new day.

The poem takes a turn. V6 "*for to us a child is born*"

Luke 1:26-33 (Mary), 67-79 (Zechariah), 2:10-14 (the angels), 29-32 (Simeon)

Matthew 4:12-17 quotes Isaiah 9 and ties a direct line to Jesus. "*...a light has dawned.*"

The one enthroned in majesty and holiness, the Holy One of Isaiah 6, stepped into our darkness and chaos, stepped into our pain and brokenness. Like the burning coal, he removed our guilt and made atonement for our sin.

**QUESTIONS** (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Isaiah 6:1-7. What do we learn about God from Isaiah's vision? How does Isaiah respond to God? How does God respond to Isaiah?
2. Isaiah's message was one of judgment and hope. At the end of Isaiah 6 all that's left of Israel is a "stump," a "holy seed." It's a whisper of hope in this midst of rebellion, corruption and righteous judgment. What does this "whisper of hope" tell you about God's character?
3. Faith is always in God keeping his promises – doing what he said he would do. In order to look forward with hope we look back at what is true about God (his character and his past faithfulness). Describe a time when you did this. What specific attributes or stories of past faithfulness do you find yourself leaning on the most?
4. Read Isaiah 9:2-7. Israel's "deep darkness" was not the end of their story. God's voice broke through the darkness with a message of hope. How would the announcement of a divine king have encouraged Israel living under corrupt leadership and facing judgment for their rebellion?
5. Isaiah 9:7 says "*the zeal of the LORD will do this...*" How did the LORD "do this"? Read Luke 1:31-33 (Mary), 67-79 (Zechariah), 2:10-14 (the angels), 29-32 (Simeon) to find some clues.

Hope is found in Jesus, who overcame the grave, defeated sin and death, was raised to life and who reigns forever more. His life, death and resurrection is the fulfillment of ancient promises and it's the guarantee of new ones - "*That things won't always be this way.*" Spend a few minutes celebrating God's character, his faithfulness in and through Jesus.