

WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM  
**WEEK ONE: NO ROOM FOR MYSTERY**  
**NO VACANCY**



## No Room For Mystery

### OPENING PRAYER:

Dear God, please reveal yourself to us anew during this season of Advent, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen!

### ENCOUNTERING GOD:

How have you seen God at work in your life this week?  
What good have you done for someone this week?

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# WEEKLY SCRIPTURE READING:

## Read Isaiah 9:2-6

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

## REFLECTION:

### **What is Mystery?**

*Mystery is “any truth that is unknowable except by divine revelation.”*  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

### **What is Advent?**

*“The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning ‘coming’ or ‘visit,’ begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year for Christians. During Advent, we prepare for, and anticipate, the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for, and need of, forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.”* (United Methodist Church)

*The northern kingdom of Israel and the Syrians joined forces to stop the Assyrian expansion into their lands. They invited the southern kingdom of Judah to join the fight. When King Ahaz, the King of Judah refused, Israel and the Syrians attacked Judah. Isaiah advised the King to trust in God, but the King turned to Assyrians who defended Judah but in turn made Judah pay a heavy tribute, forcing them to become a vassal kingdom. Ahaz made no room in his life for mystery, he acted swiftly and desperately to resolve the problem. Ahaz did not know what God was doing during the dark situation. He did not trust the God he could not see, instead he trusted the man he could see. As a result, his people paid a heavy price.*

*In order to give hope to the people, who were beginning to experience the Assyrian encroachments on Judaeans lands in 738 BCE, Isaiah uttered an oracle to “the people who walked in darkness.” Isaiah trusted that Yahweh would bring about a kingdom of peace under a Davidic ruler. Verse 2 through 6 is a hymn of Thanksgiving. Isaiah gives thanks for three things:*

- 1. Release from the oppressor*
- 2. Destruction of battle gear of the opposing warriors*
- 3. Birth of the Prince of Peace*

*In their time of distress and darkness, Isaiah gave them a hymn of hope and thanksgiving. Reflection precedes thanksgiving. During times of reflection, we have time consider the clues or signs of God’s activity that leads to revelation. In darkness, don’t let your desperation make you trade one oppressor for another. Ahaz traded Syrian and Northern Kingdom oppression for Assyrian oppression. In times of stress or darkness, there is a temptation to turn to things to help us take the edge off, to help us cope with the world around us. For some of us, that may include abuse of prescription drugs, alcoholism, unhealthy relationships, retail therapy, or burying ourselves deep into our work all to avoid, numb or overcome the pain. Despair is hopelessness. People in darkness and desperation need hope. The good news is that there is hope. Jesus is the solution to heal our hurts and fill the empty spaces in our lives. Don’t place your trust in any one created thing; place your trust in the God who created us. Place your trust in the Savior who came from heaven to earth to show us the way that leads to life everlasting.*

# GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

## Encounter the Head:

What is Advent? Why is it important to celebrate Advent?

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What do the candles on the Advent Wreath Symbolize?

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What was the most impactful thing that you learned from the sermon, podcast, scripture, or sermon discussion guide?

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## Encounter the Heart:

Why do we need to make room for mystery in our lives?

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Share how Jesus has been light for you during dark times.

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# GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Why do we sometimes look to other things for help us rather than looking to God?

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## Encounter the Hands:

Write down some ways that you can share hope with those who are experiencing darkness. Share with the group the hope that Jesus has given you, personally.

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# PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

## Encounter The Hands:

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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# DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

We encourage everyone to do a daily reflection. This can be done alone, as a couple, or with your family. This spiritual practice will help answer the questions you have and it will improve your ability to see where God is at work in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Please answer the following questions during your personal devotional time at the end of the day.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, “what made you happy today?”

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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