



WEEK 4: Readjusting to the Dark

SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:15-20

REFLECTION

If you live in the northern hemisphere, Christmas means winter, cooler temperatures, shorter days, and longer nights. The shortest day and longest night of the year—the winter solstice—falls just a few days before we celebrate Jesus' birth. We are eager and ready to connect Jesus' birth to the return of light and warmth!

But in the southern hemisphere, Christmas falls during summer, just a few days after the longest day and shortest night of the year. In Australia, some people have pool parties on Christmas day! Though Christmas is full of light, it also starts a season of shorter days and longer nights. Jesus' coming is still good news, no matter where you are! The Gospel is about inclusive, unconditional love.

After the shepherds encountered the angels in bright light, they were suddenly left in darkness again. To find the newborn baby, Jesus, they readjusted from the sudden bright light to begin their journey in the dark. Of course, they're not the same shepherds as they were before the angels came to them. Now they know about Jesus, and they are on a journey toward him. That doesn't change the fact that it's dark, but it does change what they do in that darkness and how they travel through it: with hope and wonder.

Our world doesn't always feel hopeful or love-filled. On Christmas, we celebrate the hope and love Jesus continues to bring to our hurt and pain. Still, even as we adjust to the world again after the celebrations of Christmas, following Jesus changes how we live and the way we move through the world. Because of Jesus, we try to show love and have hope in a world needing both.

DISCUSSION

As you color and cut out the shadow box character page of the shrubs and stars, ponder these questions:

- If Christmas falls during winter where you live, how would you celebrate it if it was during summer instead? If it falls during summer where you live, how would you celebrate during winter?
- What happens when you first go from a well lit place into darkness? What happens to your eyes so you can see even without a light?
- What are some hard things about the world today? How does Jesus teach us to respond to those hard things?

ACTIVITY

All over the world, people are participating in the season of Advent, looking forward to Christmas Day. As we learned in the reflection today, some places celebrate Christmas with sunshine and hot weather. Some places celebrate Christmas with snow and cooler temperatures.

For example, Costa Rica is in a tropical region where Christmas occurs during the rainy season. It is warm and wet! Costa Ricans love to eat apples at Christmas time—they are a special treat!

In cold subarctic Finland, people often light up cemeteries with Christmas lights and decorations. The Finnish spend Christmas remembering their loved ones who have died.

Look at a map and identify a place that celebrates a warm, sunny Christmas. Then find a place that celebrates a cold, snowy Christmas. Find out how people in those places celebrate Christmas. Look at some images of Christmas in those places.

Now, take a moment and pray for the people in those regions that they might be safe, well-nourished, and joyful this Christmas season.

PRAUER

God, thank you for the people of _____. You love them very much, and you care about their needs. Today we pray they might be safe, have the food and supplies they need, and find joy during this Advent season. And if there is a way for us to bless the people of _____, please help us find it and we will get to work. Thank you for our siblings in all the countries of the world.

Amen.