

St Mary's Small Group Study Notes
Week commencing Sunday 6th December 2009
Theme: "Advent – Longing for God"
Reading: Isaiah 26: 1-13

Opening conversation starter

Talk about times when you have longed for something/someone (even if it's only a cool drink on a hot day, or a holiday!)

Our longing for God

Read Psalm 42: 1 – 2

- 1) How is this picture of a deer panting for water helpful as we think about our need for God?
- 2) A sense of longing for God is a good indication that we are growing and yet it's not something that we can manufacture. But is there anything that we can do which results in us being more hungry for God?
- 3) Talk about times when you have experienced a longing for God.

God's longing for you

Read Hosea 11: 1 – 4

- 4) What does this passage tell us about God's longing for us?

Longing for a Saviour

- 5) What evidence do you see of people having a sense of longing for something more, and where do people look for fulfilment?
- 6) What do we need saving from?

Read Isaiah 9: 6, 7

- 7) How does Jesus fulfil this prophecy?

Longing for Jesus' Return

Read Isaiah 26: 1 – 13

- 8) What were the people of Judah looking forward to 'in that day'? (v. 1, 2, 5 – 7)
- 9) What can we do when it seems that God isn't answering our prayers or when a promise doesn't seem to be being fulfilled?
- 10) How can we make sense of the tension between the fact that Jesus has done all that is necessary for our salvation, that he has won the victory over evil, and yet we still face struggles and don't see a perfect world yet?
- 11) What are you looking forward to about Jesus' coming again?
- 12) Isaiah talks about peace in the waiting (v. 3, 4), peace that comes from trusting in God's faithfulness and his promise. Share any experiences that you have had of God's peace in difficult circumstances. Pray for each other for that perfect peace that is promised.

If you have the technology, you might like to look at this Tearfund video:

<http://www.tearfund.org/Resources/Alive+channel/How+long.htm>

which looks at some of the themes that we have been discussing. Allow this to lead you into prayer for Christians whose daily lives are affected by poverty, injustice, or sickness.

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal. (Isaiah 26:3- 4)

P.T.O