Study guide: Advent #1 Hope in the Darkness, Psalm 33

1. What are we hoping for?

- What are some things people in our world are hoping for? How does Christian hope differ from worldly optimism?
- Have you ever had to keep trusting God when you couldn't see how things were going to work out?

2. Hope because God is sovereign (Psalm 33:1–11)

- How does knowing that God is in control help us when the world feels uncertain?
- Verse 11 says that God's purposes stand firm for ever. What difference should this make when our own plans change or fail?
- Jesus' birth came at just the right time, despite centuries of waiting. What does this teach us about God's timing?

3. Hope because God sees and cares for us (Psalm 33:12–19)

- Verses 13–15 tell us that God sees everyone and knows every heart. How does this truth help when we face difficulties?
- Jesus came as Immanuel – God with us (Matthew 1:23). How does Christmas demonstrate God's love and care for us?
- What difference does it make to know that God understands our struggles, fears and weaknesses?

4. Hope because God keeps his promises (Psalm 33:20–22)

- Why can waiting be so difficult? How can we learn to wait in hope for the Lord?
- How can we rejoice in God even when our circumstances are difficult?
- We look back to Jesus' first coming and forward to his return. How should this shape the way we live today?

5. Putting it into practice

- The talk described hope as an anchor, holding us securely to God through life's storms. What do you find helpful about this picture?
- Where are you tempted to put your hope instead of God – possessions, health, security, relationships or something else?
- How can we share the light of hope in Jesus with people around us who are experiencing darkness or despair?

Closing reflection

Read **Psalm 33:20–22** together.

- God is sovereign – He is in control.
- God sees and cares for us – He is with us.
- God keeps his promises – He is faithful.
- God sent Jesus – He loves us.

Before you pray together **-** Where do you particularly need to put your hope in God today?