



# ADVENT GUIDE



HOPE  
PEACE  
JOY  
LOVE  
LIGHT



# Advent Guide

Advent season is upon us, so now's the time to make our immediate families and congregational plans for outreach, engagement, and spiritual formation. This mysterious, inspiring time of year is ideal for inviting new folks to experience worship (online or in person), and at the same time deepen your community's connection with the season. What's more, in an post-pandemic age, home-based devotional practices are more important than ever. This simple guide is formed to help you make the most of your Advent experience in the church as well as your home.



WORD OF LIFE  
— MINISTRY —

## 2024 Advent Guide:

Delayed gratification is certainly an art. Why wait for something we can have now? For that, our culture has invented microwaves, credit cards, and even Netflix adds entire seasons of a show at a time so we don't have to wait from week to week to follow a story. But we reap a greater reward when we give something the time it deserves—a good marinade or a vacation for which we've been saving for years. Advent is like the marinade of the Christmas season. It starts four weeks before Christmas to prepare our hearts for the true revelation of Christmas—a small child who came to bring hope, peace, love, joy, and light to the world. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word

Adventus and literally means “coming.” During these four weeks, Advent reminds us to anticipate the coming of our great King. This anticipation is twofold: It prepares us for the first coming of the Christ child—a baby born of a virgin, the promised Savior. And it keeps us ready for his second coming—the moment when Christ returns to restore perfection and righteousness to our broken world. So in eager anticipation, we sing with the chorus of God's people, the church, “Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel.” This season of Advent, we invite you to join with us and with the Church to prepare our hearts and anticipate his coming. Come, Lord Jesus, Emmanuel.

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## How to use this guide:

This booklet is meant to be a guide, not a prescription of do's and don't's. We encourage you to use it to help prepare your heart for the coming of Christ that we celebrate at Christmas. If the details of this journey seem tedious or overwhelming, start somewhere small—maybe just with one or two elements a week.

This Advent guide is intended to be experienced in community. Gather with your family, spouse, friends, neighbors, LIFE Groups, or community and work through the guide communally. It's not imperative, but we believe it's the best way to experience the material. We hope and pray that this will be a worshipful experience.

### **Advent Sundays:**

Each Sunday of Advent starts a new theme of the season. As such, traditionally Sundays are rather meaningful. In this guide, Sundays include a short thought or explanation of the theme, Scripture readings, a discussion question, a weekly challenge or application, and an opportunity to light the Advent candles.

### **Advent Candles:**

There are 5 candles associated with Advent. They traditionally serve as reminders of the season of waiting or longing we experience during Advent. Three of the five are purple in color—a color of mourning. Lighting the purple candles reminds us of how dire our situation really is without a Savior. There is one pink candle—this candle is lit towards the end of Advent during the week we are to contemplate and anticipate joy. Pink is a color of relief from the monotony and grief of the purple candles. And lastly, the white candle—this candle represents the light of Christ. Lit on Christmas Eve, the white candle signifies the destruction of darkness with the arrival of our Savior. Each week, we encourage you to read the scriptures on Sunday and light the candle for that week along with the candles of the previous weeks.

### **Other Elements:**

The Scripture readings, prayers, discussion questions, and weekly application are to serve as a reference point for you. They can be done any time of the day, and they can take as long or as short as you need them to. Feel free to look through the content and decide how to best approach each day or week as your family or community sees fit. We hope this guide helps prepare your hearts and minds for the celebration of the Christ child and reminds you of the true meaning of this wonderful season



# HOPE



WORD OF LIFE  
— MINISTRY —

ADVENT WEEK 1  
FIRST SUNDAY - SATURDAY

## The Thrill of Hope!

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appear'd and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, O night when Christ was born;  
O night divine, O night, O night Divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,  
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.

So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,  
Here come the wise men from the Orient land.

The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger;  
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, to our weaknesses no stranger,  
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!  
Behold your King, Before Him lowly bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and His gospel is peace.

Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;  
And in His name all oppression shall cease.

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,  
Let all within us praise His holy name.

Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,  
His power and glory evermore proclaim.  
His power and glory evermore proclaim.



## Hope Week:

The first week of Advent leads us into a time of hope as we look forward to the coming King.

Hope is a curious thing because it's something we all have. However, there is a difference between a temporary and an eternal hope, that difference being the object, idea, or person in which we place our hope.

When we were younger, we hoped for simpler things: "I hope the tooth fairy comes. I hope Santa knows what I want. I hope I make the team." As we get older, we still cling to nearly meaningless wishes, but gradually the deepest desires of our heart bleed into hope: "I hope I have a lasting marriage. I hope my children follow Jesus. I hope I am able to provide for my family. I hope my life has meaning. I hope I am not alone."

These are all very noble desires, but they also have the ability to disappoint. The hope of Christ, however, is not just wishful thinking.

Scriptural hope is a confident expectation of good. The hope of Christ is an eternal truth and it will never disappoint nor be disappointed. In times of failure, sadness, unmet expectations, and even in the depths of despair, it is the hope of Christ that gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. It brings the promise of salvation and restoration. It sets our sights on the reality of the power of resurrection of things that were dead brought back to life. And it focuses our hearts on the experience of eternal life in and through our lives now. Even when the world around us is falling apart, and we recognize that nothing in this life can bring us lasting hope, we cling desperately to the hope of Christ, our perspective turns face-to-face with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As our hearts turn toward him and his goodness our present situation dissipates at the thought of Christ's appearing in our moment.

Come, Lord Jesus, the hope of humanity

## Sunday:

Sundays are special days of Advent. Traditionally, every Sunday of Advent we light a candle. Three of the five candles are purple—the traditional color associated with mourning or longing. Without a Savior, we are left with our consciousness of sin and separation in desperate need of rescue. During Advent, we wait, we long, and we mourn. This Sunday, we encourage you to light the first candle—representing our longing for the hope of Christ. With your family or community, read through some or all of the Scriptures for this Sunday and light the candle for Hope.

Also included on this day is an application for you to reflect on and participate in by the end of this week.

## Prayer:

Pray this prayer throughout the day. Every time you sit down at a meal or sit at a red light, breathe this prayer and allow God to use you as an instrument of his hope on earth. This week, pray this anytime you find yourself longing for a break from work or thinking about Christmas gifts. Let Christ bring you lasting hope.

*“Father, teach me to remember the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.”*

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## Readings:

- Jeremiah 33:14-16
- Psalm 25:1-10
- 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
- Luke 21:25-36

## Discussion Questions:

Take a few minutes to reflect on or journal through this question.

- What is the last thing you hoped for? Did it happen or become as you hoped?



## Weekly Application:

1 Timothy warns us to command those who are rich to not put their hope in wealth, but to put their hope in God. With the measure God has blessed you, let Christ be your hope, and use the increase of your means to bless others.

This week, go to the store and buy a couple toys to add to a local toy drive. Share the hope of Christ with those in need.

Hope is something that keeps our perspective from crumbling when we are faced with difficulties. Think of someone in your life that is going through a rough time. Consider a way you can lighten this time for them—bring their family a meal, offer to take the kids for an evening, send them an encouraging note, or perhaps find a way to be generous with your resources. Spread the hope of Christ by offering someone a bit of relief.

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## Prayer for the Poor and Needy:

*Lord God, You came to give honour to the least, those forgotten, overlooked and misjudged. You came to give first place to the last, those left behind, misunderstood and undervalued. You came to give a warm welcome to the lost, those who are orphaned, abandoned and destitute. Help us to be your ears to*

*listen to their cries. Help us to be your voice speaking out love and acceptance. Help us to be your feet walking beside those in need. Help us to be your hands to clothe, feed and shelter them. You came for the least, the lost and last of this world. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.*

# HOP

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## Monday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 1-4, 7
- Amos 2:6-16
- Matthew 21:1-11
- 2 Peter 1:1-11

### Discussion Question:

What are some things you worry about?

How can true hope change your disposition?

## Tuesday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 5, 6, 10, 11
- Amos 3:1-11
- Matthew 21:12-22
- 2 Peter 1:12-21

### Discussion Question:

How can you regularly bring the hope of Christ to your family?

Your neighborhood?

Your community?

## Wednesday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 12-14, 119:1-24
- Amos 3:12-4:5
- Matthew 21:23-32
- 2 Peter 3:1-10

### Discussion Question:

Do you have temporary hopes for this next year?

How can the hope you have for those things be more centered around Christ?

# HOPE

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## Thursday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalm 18
- Amos 4:6-13
- Matthew 21:33-46
- 2 Peter 3:11-18

### Discussion Question:

What hope does the appearing of Christ in and through your life today offer?

## Friday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 16, 17, 22
- Amos 5:1-17
- Matthew 22:1-14
- Jude 1-16

### Discussion Question:

What is an area of your life or a particular time of the year where it seems like you need more of Christ's hope?

## Saturday:

### Prayer:

Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 20, 21, 110, 116, 117
- Amos 5:18-27
- Matthew 22:15-22
- Jude 17-25

### Discussion Question: Do

Why is hope important for us to have?

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## Children's Corner:

*Hope* = Believing that something good will happen!

With mom or dad (*or by yourself*) come up with a list of some things you hope will happen.

Even with all the stuff you hope for, how can Jesus give us all that we really need? What good things does Jesus promise will happen?



# PEACE



ADVENT WEEK 2  
SECOND SUNDAY - SATURDAY

## Peace

In a world gone hysterical with phobia,  
Foaming at the mouth about rights and retaliation,

Spewing propaganda and violence  
towards flesh-and-blood humans

In a world where God is twisted into a  
Thirsting need for power,

Dominating others who tremble  
at their version of a kingdom

In a world that blames the victims,  
Accusing the innocent of crimes,

Blocking entrance to the outcasts  
who cry for shelter from bitter cold.

Into this world came a baby  
Struggling in his mangy crib,

Reminding us that the divine  
was housed in the humble, the helpless.

So in this world we pray:  
Blessed are those who hunger for right,

Righteous are those who strive for peace,  
and peaceful are those who learn to Love.

Teryn O'Brien

## Peace Week:

We live in a world that only seems to grow more chaotic, criminal, and dysfunctional. While we may be tempted to mourn the hurting condition of our society, on this second week of Advent, we remember a Savior-King who is the Prince of Peace. God longs to bring the entire world back to a place of rightness; with the coming of Jesus, the world welcomes the peace that reigns in the truth of the universe.

The angels appeared to the shepherds and announced, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth." And everywhere Jesus went he brought peace: He calmed the storm; he brought peace to sick bodies; he spoke truth; and his sacrifice of love brought peace to our relationship with God where there once was distance and separation. This week of Advent we anticipate Jesus who came in and to bring peace.

But in this world, peace seems elusive, intangible... impossible. Presently all of creation is groaning in expectation for our world to be made right in its experience of the peaceable kingdom of Christ. Our own souls long for perfect relationships with our fellow man, with God, with the earth, and even with ourselves. As we expectantly anticipate for Jesus to appear in and through our lives, we crave and yearn for peace. So this week of Advent we also look forward to a time when peace will reign eternally—a peace we may not see currently on the earth, but feel in our souls and expect for the future of the world, a peace that makes relationships right, makes wars to cease, makes calm the waters of this life and the next.

Come, Lord Jesus, our Prince of Peace.

## Sunday:

Sundays are special days of Advent. On this Sunday, we encourage you to light two candles – the first reminding us of the hope of Christ, and the second to remind us of the peace of Christ we look forward to during Advent. With your family or community, read through some or all of the Scriptures for this Sunday and light the candles for Hope and Peace.

Also included on this day is an application for you to reflect on and participate in by the end of this week

## Prayer:

Pray this prayer throughout the day. Every time you sit down at a meal or sit at a red light, breathe this prayer and allow God to use you as an instrument of his peace on earth. For this week, pray this before you read the Scripture for the day. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart as you focus your attention toward the Coming One.

*“Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace.”*

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## Readings:

- Malachi 3:1-4
- Luke 1:68-79
- Philippians 1:3-11
- Luke 3:1-6

## Discussion Questions:

Take a few minutes to reflect on or journal through this question.

- What is something you're looking forward to in experiencing the peaceable kingdom of Christ?



## Weekly Application:

WOL Ministry is committed to connecting people to Christ and one another. During the Christmas season, you can give directly to *Marked For Life Ministries* by volunteering, by giving financially or by donating gently needed food and clothing items. MFLM is directly involved in the lives of needy and vulnerable families in our local community. Decide as a family or an individual how you can participate in what God is doing to bring little pieces of heavenly peace. Some ideas:

- *Go on a global/local outreach trip.*
- *Volunteer at a local organization.*
- *Give financially to an organization.*
- *Pray for the global ministries that we support here at WOL Ministry.*

In Matthew 5, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." While Advent is a time to anticipate the appearing of Christ and the embodiment of peace in the nations through his image and likeness, he is also calling us to embody and bring his peace to the world now.

This week, think of a relationship in your life that needs mending. As an agent of God's peace, carefully consider what you can do to repair the relationship. Then this week, take one step toward peace.

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## Prayer of Saint Francis:

*Lord, make me an instrument of  
your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow  
love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may  
not so much seek to be consoled as  
to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are  
pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life.  
Amen.*

# PEAC

## Monday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 9, 15, 95
- Amos 7:1-9
- Matthew 22:23-33
- Revelation 1:1-8

### Discussion Question:

What are some idols that pretend to offer peace on earth?

## Tuesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 26, 28, 36, & 39
- Amos 7:10-17
- Matthew 22:34-46
- Revelation 1:9-16

### Discussion Question:

How can you live at peace with everyone?

## Wednesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 38, 119:25-48
- Amos 8:1-14
- Matthew 23:1-12
- Revelation 1:17-2:7

### Discussion Question:

Who is someone or a group of people in your life who you can advocate for?

How can you bring peace to your community, neighborhood, or family?

# PE

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## Thursday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalm 37
- Amos 9:1-10
- Matthew 23:13-26
- Revelation 2:18-29

### Discussion Question:

What's an area of your life where you need more peace?

## Friday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 31, 35
- Haggai 1:1-15
- Matthew 23:27-39
- Revelation 2:18-29

### Discussion Question:

How have you found God's peace in your life?  
Where has he been your refuge?

## Saturday:

### Prayer:

"Father, bring me peace and help me to be an instrument of peace."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 30, 32, 42, 43
- Haggai 2:1-9
- Matthew 24:1-14
- Revelation 3:1-6

### Discussion Question:

What do you think the world would be like, or will be like, if there was peace everywhere?

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## Children's Corner:

*Peace* = when all things get along!

Draw a picture of the peace that will be on earth when Jesus comes back.

How can you help bring more peace to your school or your family or your neighbors?



# JOY

ADVENT WEEK 3  
THIRD SUNDAY - SATURDAY

## Joy to the World!

Joy to the world! The Lord is come  
Let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare Him room  
And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns  
Let men their songs employ.

While fields and floods,  
Rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!

Joy to the world then we sing  
Let the earth receive her King!

Joy to the world then we sing  
Let the angel voices ring!

Joy to the world then we sing  
Let the men their songs employ!

Joy to the world then we sing  
And repeat the sounding joy!

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove (And makes the nations prove)

And glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders of His love!

Joy to the world then we sing  
Let the earth receive her King!

Joy to the world then we sing  
Let the angel voices ring!

## Joy Week:

Have you ever seen those ads where parents surprise their children with a trip to Disney World? Those moments are filled with pure, unadulterated happiness. But happiness is different from joy. Happiness is fleeting. A wonderful feeling, but fleeting nonetheless. With joy, a child whose birthday trip to Disney was ruined could still remain joyful knowing Mom and Dad still love, care, and value them. Happiness may make our hearts beat faster, but joy is the underlying heartbeat of stable emotions.

The fact that Christ's coming means joy for the world, then, doesn't allude to our happiness. It speaks of our salvation. The joy of Christ is something we can rest our identity in because it will never fade, betray, or disappoint. The only thing that can truly satisfy us, truly sustain our joy, is Jesus. People, jobs, riches, power—all will mess with our stability on some level, but Jesus never will. To be whole, healthy, and truly satisfied, we need Jesus.

The angels sang, "Do not be afraid. I bring you great news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

This week of Advent we look forward to an appearing Christ who brings true and lasting joy. His joy permeates the foundations of our souls and offers us all of the acceptance, satisfaction, identity, purpose, and wealth that we need. Nothing before or since has delivered this lasting joy. So we anticipate the promise of a soul stabilized by the joy of Christ.

And when the appearing of Christ manifests in our lives, the line between joy and happiness blurs. We begin to experience the realities of Christ's eternal kingdom in a restored relationship between heaven and earth, and we enjoy peace, hope, love, and the presence of our Savior-King in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus, the joy of the world.

## Sunday:

Sundays are special, set apart days of Advent. On this Sunday, we encourage you to light three candles – the first reminding us of the hope of Christ, the second reminding us of his peace and the pink candle reminds us to anticipate the joy Christ brings to the world. With your family or community, read through some or all of the Scriptures for this Sunday and light the candles for Hope, Peace and Joy.

Also included on this day is an application for you to reflect on and participate in by the end of this week.

## Prayer:

Pray this prayer throughout the day. Every time you sit down at a meal or sit at a red light, breathe this prayer and let God remind you of the joy he brings to the earth. For this week, also pray this in moments of monotony— reminding us that the joy of Christ isn't only in moments that bring us happiness, but in every moment of our lives.

*"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."*

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## Readings:

- Micah 5:2-5a
- Luke 1:46b-55
- Hebrews 10:5-10
- Luke 1:39-45

## Discussion Questions:

What are some things of this world that make you happy?

To what lengths do you go to chase after them?



## Weekly Application:

In John 17, Jesus prayed that his disciples would have the full measure of his joy. Part of the way we experience the joy of Christ is through relationships and community. This week, do something out of the ordinary with your family, LIFE group, or community. Take a break from everyday tasks and reflect on how the Coming King wants to bring joy and satisfaction to your souls.

As the church, we are also called to spread joy to this earth. Sometime this week, bring hot chocolate or coffee to a few Salvation Army bell ringers. Let them know that even in the mundane, this season is about spreading the joy of Christ.

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## Prayer for Joy in God's Creation:

*Heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty:*

*Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

# JO

## Monday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 61, 62, 112, & 115
- Zephaniah 3:14-20
- Luke 1:1-25
- Titus 1:1-16

### Discussion Question:

Can you tell the difference between joy and happiness in your life?

In what areas?

## Tuesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 66, 67, 116, 117
- 1 Samuel 2:1b-10
- Luke 1:26-38
- Titus 2:1-10

### Discussion Question:

What is an area of your life where you need more joy?

## Wednesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 72, 111, 113
- 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- Luke 1:39-56
- Titus 2:11-3:8a

### Discussion Question:

How do you respond in difficult or painful situations?

What is your automatic reaction?

# JOY

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## Thursday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 80, 146, 147
- 2 Samuel 7:18-29
- Luke 1:57-66
- Galatians 3:1-14

### Discussion Question:

How can you add the joy of Christ to moments of disappointment, weakness, or despair?

## Friday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 93, 96, 148, 150
- Luke 1:67-80
- Galatians 3:15-22

### Discussion Question:

How can you let joy be a part of your everyday existence?

## Saturday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill my soul with joy, and help me to be an instrument of joy."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 43, 67, 126
- Zephaniah 3:17
- John 16:19-28
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

### Discussion Question:

Can you imagine a world where we realize joy has come?

What would that look like?

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## Children's Corner:

Joy = trusting God no matter what happens!

Make the funniest face you can think of!

What is a face you make when you are really sad or scared?

What is a face you make when you are really happy?

What is the face you make when you think about Jesus?

How is that like joy?



# LOVE



ADVENT WEEK 4  
FORTH SUNDAY - SATURDAY

## Noel, Noel!

Love incarnate, love divine  
Star and angels gave the sign  
Bow to babe on bended knee  
The Savior of humanity  
Unto us a Child is born  
He shall reign forevermore

Noel,  
Come and see what God has done  
Noel,  
The story of amazing love!  
The light of the world, given for us  
Noel.

Son of God and Son of man  
There before the world began  
Born to suffer, born to save  
Born to raise us from the grave  
Christ the everlasting Lord  
He shall reign forevermore

Noel,  
Come and see what God has done  
Noel,  
The story of amazing love!  
The light of the world, given for us  
Noel.

Noel,  
Come and see what God has done  
Noel,  
The story of amazing love!  
The light of the world, given for us  
Noel, Noel!

Chris Tomlin

## Love Week:

This week of Advent we look forward to the appearing Christ and the love he brings with the reality of the kingdom of God.

This time of year, people often go the extra mile to extend love to the people around them, even strangers. Unless that stranger happens to want the last Star Wars Lego set on Christmas Eve...or they take too long ordering their peppermint mocha. But generally people smile more, hold doors open, snap less. The anticipation of Christmas puts love in the air.

Love is even expressed in the popular stories we tell around Christmas. The story "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry tells of a young couple who only had two possessions between them: Della's long, beautiful hair and Jim's heirloom watch. Too poor to buy each other gifts, Della, unknown to Jim, sold her beautiful hair to buy her husband a chain for his watch, and Jim sold his watch to buy ornate combs for his wife's hair. Upon their realization, the reader discovers a picturesque model of true, sacrificial love.

And true, sacrificial love did come at Christmas. Christ loved everyone perfectly, unconditionally, impartially, and constantly. He came to establish God's kingdom on earth and he gave his life for our justification. Jesus himself tells us in Scripture that this is the greatest love. He says, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

And someday when Jesus comes again, love will fill in the cracks where evil used to reign, and relationships will be unhindered by selfishness. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians that faith, hope and love remain, but the greatest of these is love. When Christ returns, faith and hope will be realized, but love will continue for the remainder of eternity.

Come, Lord Jesus, embodiment of love.

## Sunday:

Sundays are special, set apart days of Advent. On this Sunday, we encourage you to light all four candles—representing the hope of Christ, the peace of Christ, the joy of Christ, and, for this week, the pink candle representing the love of Christ. With your family or community, read through some or all of the Scriptures for this Sunday and light the candle for Love.

Also included on this day is an application for you to reflect on and participate in by the end of this week.

## Prayer:

Pray this prayer throughout the day. Every time you sit down at a meal or sit at a red light, breathe this prayer and allow God to use you as an instrument of his love on earth. This week, pray this before you go to bed and when you wake up. Let love be the way you live your life.

*"Father, fill me with your love, and use me to bring your love to others."*

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## Readings:

- Zephaniah 3:14-20
- Isaiah 12:2-6
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Luke 3:7-18

## Discussion Questions:

Take a few minutes to reflect on or journal through this question.

- Describe love in your own words. How does Christ love in the way you described?



## Weekly Application:

Jesus once said to his disciples, "By this they will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Love is certainly an important part of the Advent season, but it is an imperative part of the life of a Christ-follower. Sometime this week, make Christmas cookies and take them to your neighbors. Let them know you're thinking about them and that you care for them!

If you have a relationship with any of your neighbors and you know they don't have a church home, invite them to come with you to a Christmas weekend service.

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## Prayer to the Crucified Christ:

*Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.*

# LOVE

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## Monday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill me with your love, and use me to bring your love to others."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 41, 44, 52
- Zechariah 1:7-17
- Matthew 24:15-31
- Revelation 3:7-13

### Discussion Question:

How would the world be different if Christ hadn't come to bring love?

## Tuesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill me with your love, and use me to bring your love to others."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 45, 47, 48
- Zechariah 2:1-13
- Matthew 24:32-44
- Revelation 3:14-22

### Discussion Question:

What is the way you feel the most loved?

How does God love you that way?

## Wednesday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill me with your love, and use me to bring your love to others."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 49, 53, 119:49-72
- Zechariah 3:1-10
- Matthew 24:45-51
- Revelation 4:1-8

### Discussion Question:

How do you show love?

# VE

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## Thursday:

### Prayer:

"Father, fill me with your love, and use me to bring your love to others."

### Scripture Readings:

- Psalms 50, 59, 60
- Zechariah 4:1-14
- Matthew 25:1-13
- Revelation 4:9-5:5

### Discussion Question:

Who is a person or group of people that is difficult for you to love?

How can you work on loving them better?

### Discussion Question:

Where do you see the love of God in your life? How can you abundantly spread the love of Christ this next year?

### Discussion Question:

How can you abundantly spread the love of Christ this next year?

## Children's Corner:

Love = Choosing to serve others and value them above myself!

Make an ornament in the shape of a heart! It can be made out of anything you can think of—construction paper, newspaper, spaghetti noodles, your favorite pair of red socks (just kidding, please don't cut up your socks!). Then put it close to the top of the tree to remind you of the love of Jesus.

How does Jesus love you?

How can you love other people?



# LIGHT

CHRISTMAS EVE  
DECEMBER 24



## The White Candle:

On Christmas Eve, at long last, we light the white candle. On this day, we celebrate relief from the mourning and longing for a Savior. White, like light, pierces the darkness and brightens the future with hope, peace, joy, and love. The arrival of a Savior is a celebration!

Our anticipation of the Coming Savior-King ends with the birth of a baby to a virgin in a lowly feeding trough for the hungry herds of sheltered sheep in the mountain caves outside of Bethlehem.

Jesus is the light of the world that shines in the darkness and that now shines in and through us.

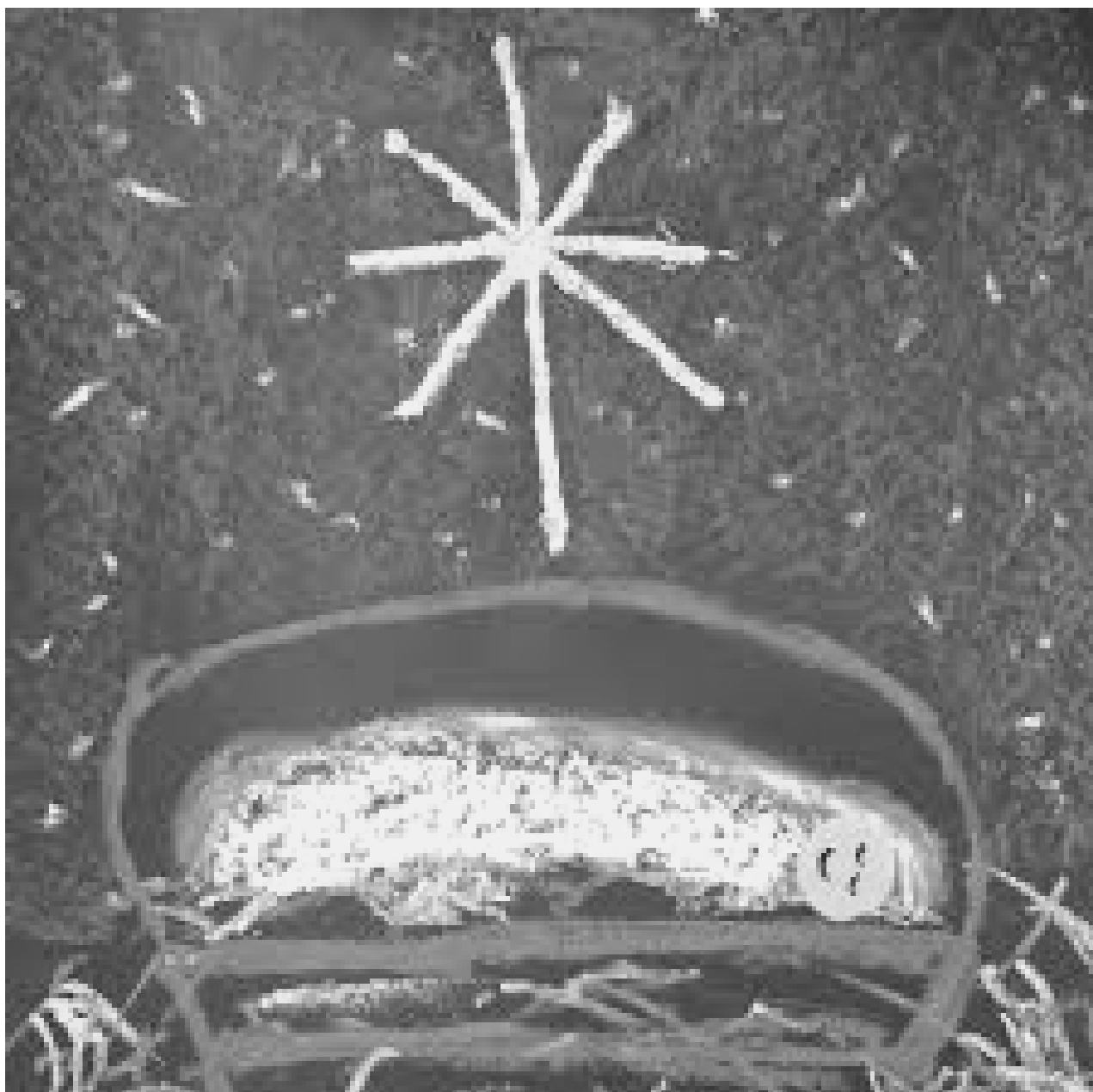
Come, Lord Jesus, the Light of the World.

## Readings:

- Isaiah 9:2-7; 62:6-12
- Psalm 96
- Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
- Luke 2:1-20

## Prayer:

*God in heaven, we stand in the light of your Son, the arrival of our Savior. Thank you for destroying the darkness of separation—for defeating sin and death, evil and shame. You provided a way for us to realize our relationship with you forever, not by sending a warrior or an earthly king, but by sending a Son to redeem humanity from our alienation from our Father. We are eternally grateful for the gift of a Savior-King. You turn mourning into dancing, grief into joy, sorrow into hope. Shine in us to increase your fame, and let your light ignite the earth to bow before you. To you, Father, be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*



# JESUS



CHRISTMAS DAY  
DECEMBER 25

## The First Day of Twelve Days:

It might seem unbelievable given that the “Christmas creep” now begins before Halloween, but the true Christmas season actually starts on Christmas Day itself. That’s right: December 25 marks the official start of the 12 days of Christmas, the Christian tradition that shares its name with a relentlessly stick-in-your-head Christmas carol.

## What are the 12 days of Christmas?

The 12 days of Christmas is the period in Christian theology that marks the span between the date set aside on Christian calendar to celebrate the birth of Christ and the coming of the Magi, who are the wise men. It begins on December 25 (*Christmas*) and runs through January 6 (*the Epiphany, sometimes also called Three Kings’ Day*). The four weeks preceding Christmas are collectively known as Advent, which begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on December 24. Remember, we just finished participating in Advent to prepare our hearts for this joyous time of celebration!

Jesus is the light of the world that shines in the darkness and that now shines in and through us.

Come, Lord Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

## Readings:

- Isaiah 52:7-10
- Psalms 97 and 98
- Hebrews 1:1-12
- John 1:1-18

## Prayer:

*Oh God, on this day we rejoice! As we celebrate with family and friends, remind us to turn our hearts toward you and thoughts of your Son. May our moments remember the hope of Christ, our mess await the peace of Christ, our hearts reflect the love of Christ, and our souls dance in the joy of Christ. Thank you for the newness Christ brings to this earth. Use us, your sons and daughters, your church, to be his hands and feet. Amen.*



## Why is Christmas celebrated on December 25th?:

December 25th is not the literal day that Jesus was born. However, this date was set aside to commemorate and celebrate the incarnation of God as human in the birth of Jesus.

This day was widely recognized in the ancient world as the longest and darkest day of the year. Even today we recognize the winter solstice. The early church set aside December 25th to celebrate the light of Christ coming into the world. John tells us that "the light shines in the darkness,". The celebration of Christ's birth on what was considered the darkest day of calendar year is a near-perfect picture of exactly what God does in Jesus Christ. Jesus comes to us when things are dark, and the light of Christ shines in the darkness.

We have lived through a dark year, and Christ has continually showed up to share light in the midst of the darkness. The light is overcoming the darkness, as John mentions, and the light has been shining all through it.

In the midst of today's darkness, remember that Christ is born. The light is shining in today's darkness, and the darkness cannot and will not overcome the light. No matter how great the darkness, the light of Christ is far greater. The ugliness of darkness is being absorbed by the beauty of his light!

Merry Christmas, the thing for which we have been waiting is already come.

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## The Nativity of Our Lord:

*O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.*



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