



Intro

2020 has been an overwhelming and exhausting year! For many of us, the joy and arrival of the Christmas season can not come quick enough. There is a Christmas tradition in the church that is called Advent. Advent is a season of longing, remembering and anticipation. Advent simply means coming. For thousands of year's God's people were longing for the arrival of the Messiah. We know and celebrate that Jesus Christ was God's fulfilled promise and savior! We, too, have a longing and anticipation of the Messiah, not His first arrival, but for the time when He is coming back to make all the wrongs right! 1 Peter 1:10-12 sums up the season of advent well:

“10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”

The first mention of Advent occurred in the 300's A.D at a meeting of church leaders called the Council of Sargossa. It gradually developed into a season that stretched across the month of December and is often celebrated around the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. For the weeks leading up to Christmas, we have created this guide to help you and your family rejoice and rest in the promises of Jesus! This celebration is often accompanied weekly by the lighting of candles. There are many different symbols for celebrating advent and no right or wrong way to do so.

*In this guide, we have created **a weekly candle lighting template** along with **a daily individual experience** to help you process through this Christmas season.*

May we, with joyful hope and anticipation, celebrate His first coming and look forward to His second!

Lighting of Advent Candles: Overview

Often when celebrating advent, candles are lit as symbols of reminders. It is a centuries-old tradition that provides a chance to reflect and look ahead. The four Advent candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Often these candles are lit the preceding four Sundays before Christmas. The fifth candle, called the Christ candle is often lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas day.

- **The first candle** symbolizes hope and is called the “Prophet’s Candle.” The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah’s arrival.
- **The second candle** represents peace and is called “Bethlehem’s Candle.” Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David.
- **The third candle** symbolizes joy and is called the “Shepherd’s Candle.” To the shepherd’s great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the color rose signifies joy.
- **The fourth candle** represents love and is called the “Angel’s Candle.” The angels announced that Jesus came to bring people close to God and to each other. Love is the greatest of all the virtues and encompasses Jesus life and ministry.
- **The (optional) fifth candle** represents light and purity and is called “Christ’s candle.” It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day.

Hope

Weekly candle lighting template for week 1.

People that followed God in the Bible were hoping for the Messiah. A king that would make everything better in the bad world they lived in. In fact, there was a guy that God told way ahead of time about this coming Messiah. His name was Isaiah, and he wrote down all that God told him to write. He explained how wonderful, and mighty this Messiah (King) would be. It is pretty amazing to know now that that king’s name is “Jesus” and Isaiah is correct in his description. Light the candle of Hope and put it on the snowflake sheet. Spend a moment praying and thanking God for the Hope we have in this King Jesus!

Read: [Isaiah 9:6-7](#)

Prayer focus: Heavenly father, help me to correctly understand the scriptures as I study about your plan to redeem the world. The story of the birth, life, and death of your son, the long-promised Messiah, truly is the greatest story ever told. This Christmas season give me a fresh appreciation for the hope that the gospel has brought to my life. Give me compassion for friends and family who even today do not realize they need a savior. Help them see that the infinite God, put on skin and came as an infinite infant because he loved them and wanted to redeem them to himself.

Day 1 - The Coming Messiah

As a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, a death sentence fell upon all of creation. Mankind was cursed and could no longer share the close, joyous relationship with God that they had enjoyed before the rebellion. But God in His infinite love for His creation decided He would send a savior with a plan to redeem mankind and restore them to relationship with Himself. The Old Testament (O.T.) referred to this savior as the Messiah and His name would be Jesus Christ. The birth of the Christ child should not have been a surprise due to all the prophecies that God had given in the centuries leading up to the actual birth of the Messiah. Unfortunately, most of the people alive at the time of the birth of the Christ child were not aware of His birth. They missed the party! The Innkeeper missed it. King Herod wasn't aware it was coming. The Pharisees, rabbis, and most other Jewish leaders missed it in spite of all their time spent studying the ancient scriptures. Caesar Augustus, the Roman ruler of the region, missed it. The only folks in Bethlehem who were present for the most important birth in all of history were Mary and Joseph and a few shepherds who received a special birth announcement from a host of angels.

God was faithful to His promise and sent the Messiah just as He said He would. Bible scholars tell us that there are over 300 O.T. prophecies, or foretelling, of the birth, life, and death of the Messiah that God would send to redeem his people. Many of these prophecies are very specific and could only have been fulfilled by one person – Jesus Christ. The statistical odds of even just a few of these prophecies being fulfilled by the birth of one person are astronomically high.

Read: [Isaiah 9:6](#), [Luke 2:1 – 20](#)

Q: Why do you think God gave specific prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah? What does Isaiah 9:6 tell us about the Messiah?

Q: Given that God had revealed so many specific details concerning the birth of the Messiah, why do you think everyone alive at that time were not anticipating his birth?

Q: When specific prophecies given centuries before actual events come true, what does that mean for your faith as you reflect on these events?

Q: Scripture also reveals many prophecies about the next coming of this same Messiah. Many folks alive today are not looking forward to this second coming of the Messiah. Given that the prophecies concerning the first coming of the Messiah all came true, why do you think more folks aren't looking forward to the second coming of the Messiah?

Q: Do you stop and think about this second coming of the Messiah? Does it frighten you or are you excited to see Him come again?

Day 2 - The Virgin Birth

The birth of the Messiah (Jesus Christ) is unique in the history of mankind. He was like no one before him or since. Through the prophet Isaiah, God predicted that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. No other founder of a major religion claims a virgin birth – not Muhammad, not Joseph Smith, not Buddha, no one. The birth of Jesus is part of God's plan to restore sinful mankind to a relationship with a holy God. The birth of the Christ child brought hope to a sick and dying world.

Our Messiah willingly chose to give up His place in heaven and come to live among those he loved. He knew that He was our only hope. If He had not come to be born as a man, live a perfect life, and die on a cross for our sins, we had no hope. But Praise God, He stepped up! He was faithful to the task and because of His sacrifice; we have the hope of eternal life with Him.

Read [Isaiah 7:14](#), [Matthew 1:22-23](#), [Luke 1:26-38](#)

Q: Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin rather than the normal union of a man and woman?

Q: What would you say to a friend who challenged your belief in the virgin birth? How would you refute their claim that a virgin birth is impossible?

Q: What issues do you think Joseph had to process when the angel told him that his fiancée was already pregnant?

Q: Why is it important that Joseph not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born?

*It is important to note here how Mary came to be with child, miraculously through the Holy Spirit. This is a sign of God's love providing a way of salvation for His people through His Son Jesus. Yes, God's Son, not Joseph's. Joseph did not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born.

Day 3: The Birthplace of our Savior

Bethlehem was a small, sleepy, insignificant village located approximately five miles south of Jerusalem. Not necessarily where we would have expected a king to be born. Bethlehem had no palace or temple. Wealthy or important people didn't live there and most likely never visited either. No one had a lake house or island retreat in Bethlehem. God picked an obscure town for the birthplace of his son and foretold that it would be the place of His birth in Micah. Jerusalem was the center of influence and wealth in Jewish life. The palace was there. The temple was there. Yet the Christ child wasn't born there. Those desperately looking for a Messiah to come and deliver them from a difficult existence under a harsh Roman rule never expected a baby born in a manger in the out of the way village of Bethlehem. This story was just too incredible – it must be fake news!

Read [Micah 5:2-3](#), [Matthew 1:18-25](#) & [Luke 2:1-7](#)

Q: What did Micah predict about the future birth of a ruler over Israel?

Q. The Messiah's earthly parents were from the city of Nazareth. In a time when people rarely travelled more than a few miles from their homes, how did his parents happen to find themselves in Bethlehem?

Q. King Herod lived in Jerusalem. The center of Jewish religious life, the temple, was located in Jerusalem. Why wouldn't God pick Jerusalem as a more fitting place for the birth of his son?

Q: How did Mary come to be with child?

Q: What does these passages say that Jesus will do?

Day 4: Announcing the birth with a star

We know that our fantastic creator God spoke the universe into existence. Stars and all other celestial bodies were created by God for his and our enjoyment. It seems only fitting that He would announce the birth of His son with a special star which was a fulfilled prophecy from the book of Numbers. The magi, traditionally thought to be three wise men from the east, studied the stars and movements of the planets. They were the first to recognize this new star as the promised “birth announcement” described in the scriptures. They made their way west using the star as their own dedicated GPS. After a quick stop over to see King Herod, the star reappeared and led them right to the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Read [Numbers 24:17](#), [Matthew 2:1-2](#)

Q. The magi, astronomers from the east, appear to be the only folks who saw the star. Why do you think all the Jewish wise men and scripture scholars appear to have missed the appearance and significance of the star?

Q. Using a special star in the night sky seems like a fantastic way for God to communicate with his people.

Q: Do you ever look into the nighttime sky and feel God is communicating with you through his glorious creation?

Q: What other methods does God use today to communicate with us?

Day 5: And He shall be called...

Jewish parents chose names with meaning for their children. They didn't just look in a baby name book or pick a popular name. The Christ child was to receive a special name. We see in Isaiah 7 that it was predicted that Immanuel would be His name because the name means 'God with us.' God knew the people He loved needed drastic help. They were dying and without hope unless He intervened. God didn't send a representative. He didn't dispatch an angel to go down and work something out. God's son stepped up and said I will go. I'll leave heaven and go live among the people I love. I'll lay down my life as a sacrifice. I'll take on their sin and the death penalty that rightfully belongs on them.

Most other religions see God as a distant figure. Certainly not one who you approach. Not a God that permits a personal relationship. The name promised to Isaiah in the prophecy and repeated to Mary by the angel signifies a personal God. A God who would come and live with us, experience life as we know it, and who would voluntarily do for us what we could never have done for ourselves.

Read [Isaiah 7:14](#), [Matthew 1:23](#)

Q. God wanted His son to be named Immanuel. At a time when names were chosen because of what they meant; what message was God trying to give to His people through the name of His son?

Q. Do you think Jesus still wants to be known as Immanuel today? When you pray do you think it would be appropriate to call him Immanuel?

Q: Do you feel like God is with you? Why or why not? What can help you experience intimacy with God?

Q: Do you recognize the presence of Immanuel this Christmas season? What is one step that you can take to be more fully aware that God is with you this Christmas?

Peace

Weekly candle lighting template for week 2.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would be Jesus' mother. This must have come as quite a surprise. After all, Mary was not married yet, and she had a different plan for her life. Gabriel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. She could have been overwhelmed by this news, but she chose to respond with Peace. We can trust that God has an ultimate plan for our lives. Discover the Peace that comes from believing in Jesus and God's plan for us. Light the candle of Peace and Hope and put it on the snowflake sheet. Spend a moment praying and thanking God for the Peace that comes when we trust in Jesus!

Read [Luke 1:26 –38](#), [46–47](#)

Prayer focus: Thank you Lord for coming for me. Thank you for coming to a manger in Bethlehem. It hurts me to know you were treated so badly. You lived a difficult life and died a horrible death on a cross. But thanks to you and your sacrifice, I can have a glorious life of peace and have it for eternity. Heavenly father, thank you for the Savior, who came to set me free. I want to hear from you. Help me to never miss anything – your word, your message, your still small voice. And help me to be a doer of your word – not just a hearer. Lord, help me to show kindness and compassion to everyone. Help me to have the courage to live a life that makes Jesus make sense to the people that need him as Savior and Lord and extends your peace to others.

Day 6: God's divine plan

God is a God of order and has had a divine plan in place from the beginning. Therefore, it's no surprise that there could be no question of His hand in this story of the birth of John the Baptist, the one who would come first to prepare the people for the arrival of their long awaited Messiah. John was a child long prayed for. Zechariah and Elizabeth were unable to conceive and were now way past becoming parents. Yet, here they were, elderly & pregnant and given the details, about to be parents of a very special young man.

Read [Luke 1:5-25](#)

Q: Describe the characteristics of Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth?

Q: What was Zechariah's first reaction to the angel, Gabriel? How had he been praying? How do you think you would have reacted?

Q: What was Zechariah's' response to the angel's words? What did the angel do because of his response?

Q: Imagine the joy of Zechariah and Elizabeth at the news of being pregnant! How does Gabriel describe Zechariah's soon-to-be son, John?

Q: Why was it necessary for John to come first? Had the people given up hoping? Were they unprepared?

Q: What would it be John's job to do?

Day 7: A faith filled response

Both Mary and Zechariah question the angel Gabriel about the news he is giving them. Mary's question of "how can this be" is different from Zechariah's question, "how can I be sure of this?" His question looked at the circumstances of his life as an obstacle. Mary, although such a young girl, seemed to know that God could do anything but wondered "how" He would pull it off.

Read [Luke 1:26-56](#)

Q: How did Gabriel greet Mary? How did Mary Respond? How did she feel? (vs 29)

Q: After hearing all the words of Gabriel, what was Mary's immediate response? How was this an expression of faith? Place yourself in her shoes, how do you think you would have responded?

Q: Why do you think Mary hurried to get to Elizabeth? Describe how Elizabeth greeted Mary. What was John's reaction from the womb?

Q: What did Mary say her relationship to God was? What would future people say about her?

Q: Describe Mary's faith and hope in God's promises. Is your faith and hope in God as confident as Mary's?

Q: Do you believe that "no word from God will ever fail?" If so, what promise or promises do you need to hold onto this Christmas season?

Day 8: The Promise Keeper

Think of a time when you questioned what God was doing in your life. Did you think He was way off base in how He handled the situation or were you willing to trust Him to work things out even if it didn't make sense? How did things turn out? Mary and Zechariah each sang a song of praise to God. ([Luke 1:46-55](#) and [Luke 1:67-79](#)). These songs were the realization of the promise made generations earlier by God to Abraham!

Read [Luke 1:57-80](#)

Q: Compare and contrast the song of Mary with that of Zechariah?

Q: What did Elizabeth and Zechariah's friends and family expect to name the baby? What name did Elizabeth and Zechariah both choose? Why? What happened as a result?

Q: What did Zechariah prophesy about his son John?

Q: John gave people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins by pointing others to Jesus! Who in your life helped point you to Jesus? Consider thanking them this holiday season for pointing you to Jesus!

Day 9: An Angel appears to Joseph

Nothing rattles hope quite like when God seems far away and very quiet. When the moments of silence come, I can begin to ask why should I keep following, trusting, praying, and obeying. Sometimes life can throw you a curve balls and can knock you out of the box! Life's unexpected and unplanned curve balls can disguise hope, camouflage hope, and even extinguish hope. When life throws us a high curve and our plans are halted we can tend to panic and oversteer and hope gets replaced with fear and possibility with futility! Today we will look at the Christmas story from the vantage point of Joseph to see where hope is found in these circumstances.

Read [Isaiah 7:14](#) & [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Q: Describe the life you envision Joseph may have been planning his life with Mary?

Q: How may you of most likely responded when Mary shared she was pregnant? How did Joseph respond to the news?

Q: Scripture describes Joseph as a righteous man. What consequences did he most likely face by saying Yes to God's plan?

Q: How does God desire and expect we should act when facing the curveballs of life?

Q: How did Joseph's actions show his faith in the Lords word?

Day 10: The Word Became Flesh

The miracle of Christmas is found in the snapshot taken by John. The big idea of John's account is that at that first Christmas God showed up in a manger. The creator in a cradle, the infinite was an infant. John says that God literally wrapped Himself in skin (vs.14). Now this is not only amazing, but very distinctive! Of all the religions of the world, Christianity has a God who became a man, not a man who became a God! God was in the manger. Jesus was God wrapped in skin. He cried when sad, bruised when hit, bled when cut, and laughed when happy. Our God became a man! Not only that, the Bible says that he wrapped Himself in skin and He pitched His tent among us (vs.14). That is literally what it means that He made His dwelling among us! John also says that Jesus is not only God wrapped in skin, pitching his tent in the backyard of our life, but he also is the explanation of God. Verse 18 says He is the "exegete" of the Father, meaning He is the explanation of the Father. If we ever wondered what God is like we can look at Jesus. The fact that God became a man means I can know Him and that He can sympathize with me.

Read [John 1:1-18](#)

Q: List all the things you think of when you think of God.

Q: List all the things you think of when you think of a baby.

Q: Why is it significant that the "Word became flesh"? What does it communicate to us about God?

Q: Jesus is described as the true light that gives light to everyone! How has Jesus illuminated your life?

Q: How does God becoming a man change the way you and I can pray and interact with God?

Q. Do you feel that God is with you personally or do you feel he is distant? What methods does God use to show us he is with us today?

Joy

Weekly candle lighting template for week 3.

From a human perspective, this whole situation must have seemed crazy to Mary & Joseph. Not only was Mary expecting the baby who would save the world, but now she and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem for the census. Basically, going to the place where they were born to be counted. As hectic as this might have seemed, this is exactly how God wanted Jesus to enter the world. What a joyful moment when he was born! It happened and Mary & Joseph got to be apart of it all. None of this was planned the way they wanted it. Experience Joy in all of it. Light the candle of Joy! Spend a moment praying and thanking God for the Joy we can have even when things do not go our way.

Read [Luke 2:1-7](#)

Prayer focus: Lord, your promise to King David was faithful and true. Thank you for all the promises to me in your Word. Promises to protect me, provide for me, give me peace and joy, and eventually bring me to live with you. I pray that you will give me daily assurance that all your promises are true and reliable. I pray that my confidence in you is apparent to others and helps make Jesus make sense to everyone I meet. I pray that I recognize the security of my joy and can live in response to what you have done for me.

Day 11: The Shepherd's visit Jesus

The announcement of Jesus by the angel to the shepherds is one of the most important events in human history. Jesus, the only savior, is now on the scene and has come to bring salvation to all. When God had the greatest news to share, with whom did He share it first? Shepherds had little power or influence, they probably thought of themselves unlikely to hear this news first. These shepherds were amazing, and they began to glorify and praise God! Then, these simple, uneducated shepherds began sharing the good news that God had become a man!

Read [Luke 2:8-20](#)

The angel said to the shepherds, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all of the people."

Q: What was the good news? Why would it bring joy? Does this news bring you joy?

Q: What were the shepherd's responses upon returning from seeing Jesus?

Q: Are we responding to Jesus the same way, daily, as the shepherds did once they met Him?

Day 12: The Ancestors of Jesus – Part 1

The record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham is listed in Matthew 1:1 – 17. Sometimes we encounter a passage like this in our Bible reading and we skip over it because we deem it boring or not necessary. This is far from the truth. We see promises given in Genesis that found their fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ!

Read [Genesis 12:3](#), [22:18](#) & [Matthew 1:1-17](#)

Q: Who was the promise given to in Genesis to Abraham?

Q: Where does His name appear in the genealogy recorded in Matthew? Why was it important that Jesus descended from Abraham?

Q. Matthew directed his gospel primarily at Jewish readers. Why do you think he would start his gospel with Abraham and then 42 generations leading up to the birth of Christ?

Q: Rahab is listed in verse 5. What did you learn about Rahab from [Joshua 2](#)?

Q: Why do you think God, in His sovereignty, would have someone like Rahab in the lineage of Jesus?

Day 13 - The Ancestors of Jesus – Part 2

God sent a prophecy to King David through the prophet Nathan. God promised David and his descendants that He would bring the promised Messiah to the world through the geological line of David. What a promise! What an honor!

It was important to show that the Messiah was the legitimate heir to the throne of David. God was faithfully working through many generations to bring the promised Messiah to the world. The fact that Jesus Christ could trace His family tree all the way back to David was just more evidence that He was the true son of David, the rightful heir to the throne in Israel.

Read [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#), [Isaiah 9:7](#), [Jeremiah 23:5](#), [Luke 1:26-33](#), [Romans 1:2-4](#)

Q. Many people spend considerable time and money tracing their genealogy, i.e. their family tree. Why is it important to know our heritage and who we are descended from?

Q: What promise was given to David in 2 Samuel 7?

Q. Why do you think God made the covenant with King David and promised him that he would bring the promised Messiah to the nation through David's family line?

Day 14: The ancestors of Jesus – Part 3

We find the genealogy of Jesus recorded in two gospels. Matthew traces the genealogy from Jesus to Abraham. Luke traces the genealogy from Jesus to Adam. There is good reason to believe that Matthew and Luke are, in fact, tracing entirely different genealogies. Many theologians believe that Luke is recording Mary's genealogy and that the gospel of Matthew was recording Joseph's.

Read [Jeremiah 23:5](#) & [Luke 3:23-38](#)

Q: Compare and contrast the genealogy of Luke 3 with Matthew 1 (that you read yesterday).

Q: Many scholars believe that Luke was tracing the lineage through Mary's genealogy. Why would this be a significant observation for the birth of Jesus?

Q: Does Jesus' genealogies give you any indication as to how long God has planned for Jesus to be the blessing to the nations?

Day 15: Visitors Arrive from Eastern Lands

The King was disturbed when he heard about Jesus' birth, yet he wanted to go worship? Spoiler alert, Herod did not want to worship Jesus, he wanted to kill Him. See, King Herod was a paranoid ruler who would do anything to protect his power, even if it meant killing his own family members! He had a pride issue! And sadly, for many of us, just like the King, we want to retain power and authority in our lives! We want to be our own Lord, our own king, and our own ruler! Is that the story of Christmas or are we missing everything?

See, Herod lived this prideful and paranoid life because he had an inaccurate picture of Jesus, and sometimes, so do we! In this passage, Jesus is given the title of shepherd. And only when we understand who Jesus truly is (our good shepherd and our salvation) can we respond to Jesus how we truly should. The magi in this passage understood who Jesus was and responded accordingly through worship!

Read [Isaiah 60:6](#) & [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Q: How can we live like King Herod? How are we prideful, and in what areas are we not giving up authority to Jesus?

Q: What impressed you about the response of the magi?

Q: How are you living like the magi this Christmas? How are you responding to Jesus, and what kind of worship are you bringing Him! Expensive meaningful worship and gifts like gold, myrrh, and frankincense – or leftovers?

Love

Weekly candle lighting template for week 4.

After Jesus was born, the first people to find out are some unassuming shepherds in a field minding their own business. The angel announced Jesus' birth to them. They rushed to see the baby for themselves. They were so excited that they spent the rest of the night telling everyone they could about Jesus. Isn't it amazing that God chose shepherds to be the first ones to hear about Jesus' birth? God cares deeply about every person. Even the ones that do not seem that important. Everyone is important to God. That is how big God's love is. Do you ever feel like you are too bad that God cannot love or forgive you? That is when we need God the most. It is when we know we cannot do it ourselves. God's love is that big. Light the candle of Love and Hope and Peace and Joy and put it on the snowflake sheet. Spend a moment praying and thanking God for the Love he has for us. If you want to, you can also ask God to forgive you for the things that you do wrong. Ask him for help. Tell him you're sorry and you need him. You can say YES to Jesus and understand God's Love for you.

Read [Luke 2:8-20](#)

Prayer focus: Thank you for loving me enough to give up heaven and come to live among your people. Thank you for coming and dying for me. Thank you for giving me the hope of eternal life. Help me not to just keep this good news to myself. Give me the confidence and power I need to share the gospel with the folks you put in my path each day. Help me to understand the depth of your love which motivates me to extend that love to others.

Day 16: The Messiah would be rejected by His own

The Messiah, Jesus Christ, was faithful to His mission. He gave up heaven and came to earth to live for one purpose. He was to live a perfect life and then be crucified. The sole purpose of His mission was to take the punishment for the people He created and loved and redeem them for all eternity. The prophet Isaiah also predicted that these same people would reject Him. The apostle John observed and recorded that these people despised him.

Jesus came with a message of hope and reconciliation for a sick and sinful world. He performed miracles of healing for the sick and even conquered death in their midst by restoring dead people to life. Yet very few accepted Him. They rejected and despised him. Even today, little has changed.

Read [Isaiah 53](#), [John 1:10-11](#)

Q. What thoughts do you think were on the mind of the Lord as he continued to love people despite their hatred for him and his message?

Q. Have you ever been rejected or despised because of your beliefs or because of something you said? Does that fear of rejection keep you from sharing the gospel with friends or family?

Q. What did Jesus tell us would happen to us in this world if we are faithful to carry his message to those he loves?

Day 17: A result of Christmas - Hope

God's people anticipated a day where a person would rescue them from their difficult situation. They expected a king that would reign on the throne of King David. Many believed God would fulfill His promises of a Messiah for His people, yet the fulfillment of these promises and prophecies came in a way that many did not expect! We like the Jews can often misplace our hope. Many of us have placed our hope in things that are dying. Hope in money disappoints, hope in appearance fades away, hope in relationships disillusion, hope in Jesus grows because He is alive! God does not simply give me a hope that I am saved from my sin and simply need to wait around for heaven, but He gives me a hope that is saved for a purpose.

Q: Describe the meaning and significance behind being born into a living hope?

Q: How has your hope grown since choosing to align your life to the Jesus?

Q: How does the inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade influence your hope?

Day 18: A result of Christmas - Peace

In Luke's Christmas account in Chapter 2, we see that He chose some unlikely recipients to convey His message to. Suddenly a great company of host appear with the angel in the account and are shouting "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Peace on earth and good will toward men! This phrase has become part of some of our most loved Christmas songs...we sing them every Christmas, yet if we are honest they are lyrics that sound good in a song or a Hallmark card but PEACE is something that was PROMISED but seems to be MISSING from most of our lives! Instead of PEACE there is PANIC, PROBLEMS, PRESSURE, PAIN, and there are PEOPLE! Peace with God paves the way to peace with myself and peace with others! Happy people are at peace with themselves, others and with God. Because of Christmas I can have peace with God! Peace with God is restored by confessing my sin and saying "Yes" to where Jesus is leading me. We can quit trying to make our peace with God and start living at peace with God.

Read [Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

Q: What are some ways people try to find peace?

Q: "Sin kills peace." What are some ways that sin and its consequences destroy peace?

Q: How has peace with God been made available?

Read [Philippians 4:4-9](#)

Q: The opposite of peace and contentment is worry, anxiety, and a disabling fear. What are the things that you tend to worry most about and why?

Q: What effects has worry had on the peace and contentment that is available for you from God?

Q: What does the passage say about the process of avoiding worry and anxiety?

Q: Is your peace and contentment often closely associated with your circumstances? How would you be able to tell whether that was the case or not?

Day 19: A result of Christmas - Love

Love is the basis for everything with God. If there was no love given by Him, we would not even have a hope of being in a relationship with Him. It is because of His love for us that we can have hope. The atonement of Jesus was a substitutionary sacrifice that satisfied the demands of God's justice upon and for sin. With His sacrifice, Jesus paid the penalty of man's sin, bringing forgiveness, imputing righteousness, and reconciling man to God. Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin and through faith man can accept Christ's substitution as payment for sin. 1 John says perfect love drives away fear. Fear is an unpleasant emotion. It is caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat.

Read [1 John 4:7-21](#)

Q: Circle/count how many times the word love is used in this passage?

Q: What is the biblical definition of love based upon this passage?

Q: How has God designed us to need love?

Q: How does God Himself (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) exist in a perfect relationship of love?

Q: How does it change the way you identify yourself and your worth knowing that you are loved by the Creator of the universe and the King of Kings?

Q: Do you have a hard time accepting the great love God has for you? If so, why?

Q: How does your view of yourself affect your ability to love others? If someone is having trouble loving others, what should be the first place for them to start?

Day 20: A result of Christmas - Joy

A popular song at Christmas is Joy to the World. In the song, we are encouraged to be joyful because the Lord has come. Theopedia.com describes joy as “a state of mind and an orientation of the heart. It is a settled state of contentment, confidence, and hope. It is something or someone that provides a source of happiness. It appears 88 times in the Old Testament in 22 books; 57 times in the New Testament in 18 books.” The gospel offers a remarkable, unordinary, and exceptional joy that is not often found, seen, or experienced. It is not an occasional happy attitude or a superficial smile but an uncommon and consistent joy that runs deep like a reservoir in our spirit. This uncommon joy is possible regardless of what is happening to us and around us. When the Gospel takes root in my life and God’s Spirit transforms me, I can begin to live with an uncommon joy that’s not dependent on: My circumstances, what anyone thinks of me, how much money I have, how successful I am at my job, how many trophies I’ve acquired, or how perfect my church attendance is.

Read [Philippians 2:1-16](#)

Q: We all have empty egos. How do people often go about trying to fill them? How does a hurting ego often draw attention to itself?

Q: How does an uncommon joy keep us from having to validate ourselves, from comparing and competing with others and always having to draw attention to ourselves?

Q: How does the gospel promote harmony and humility within the lives of those who have this uncommon joy?

Q: How does whining, complaining and arguing snuff the light of an uncommon joy? Why is it so easy to complain and argue? What is the thing that I most often complain or argue about? How has it affected my joy?

Q: An uncommon joy is not necessarily logical. With that said, how do you know when you have it or not?

Q: In what ways will joy manifest itself? What is one area you could pray for joy to take root in your life?

Christ

The “Word” John is talking about is Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He has been with God from the beginning, giving life and breath to all things. Christmas is the celebration that Jesus became like us. He lived and died and rose again, so that we could have life that lasts forever with God. Let us celebrate that Jesus came to rescue us and God is always with us.

Light the candle of Christ and Hope and Peace and Love and Joy and put it on the snowflake sheet. Spend a moment praying and thanking God for Jesus! If you have young children, you may also want to sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

Read [John 1:1–5, 14](#)

Prayer focus: Dear Lord, Immanuel, thank you for coming to earth to redeem those you love. Thank you for submitting to a death on the cross so that I might have forgiveness of sin. It is incredible to me when I think that God sees the righteousness of Christ which has been imputed to me because of your work on the cross. Help me to live each day with the assurance that my sins are gone – remembered no more. Help me to live with the confidence that comes from knowing I have a place in the family of God. I have eternity to praise my Savior who made all the difference for me. Thank you, Immanuel, for coming to us.