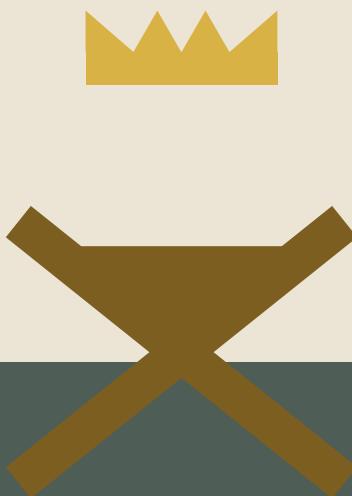


# ADVENT



ADVENT

## INTRODUCTION

Advent is such an exciting season. There's so much to look forward to. People all around us are looking forward to the Christmas season. There are lights, decorations, and all those presents to buy. It's easy for us to get distracted by all the cultural practices of Christmas.

This book is designed to help us refocus our anticipation. We must adjust our vision and move our eyes off lights and presents and onto the gift of God's grace made manifest in the birth of Jesus. Throughout history, the church has used the season of Advent to realign our hope in Jesus' first coming and reignite our anticipation of His return.

For the next four weeks, we will remember the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love we find in the coming of Jesus. We believe that because He kept His promise in the first Advent, He will keep His promise to come again and make all things new.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to realign our hearts toward Jesus in a season that can feel busy, distracting, or even stressful. There are daily readings, prayers, and discussion questions that can guide your conversations around the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. If you miss some days, that's ok, don't feel discouraged. Life happens! Try to find a regular time like meals, bedtime, or car time, and make these simple readings a part of your Advent rhythm. Even a short reading and prayer can help reorient our hearts toward Jesus.

## EXPLANATION OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As you prepare your hearts for Christmas, consider how you can decorate your home to help your family focus on the birth of Jesus. Which decorations direct your family to Jesus, and which ones distract you from Him?

Many families choose to celebrate this season with an Advent wreath. You can make a wreath from natural or plastic evergreen branches. Place five candle holders in the center of the wreath. Traditionally, three of the candles are purple, one is pink, and the other is white.

During the first week of Advent, light one of the purple candles to celebrate our **HOPE** in Christ.

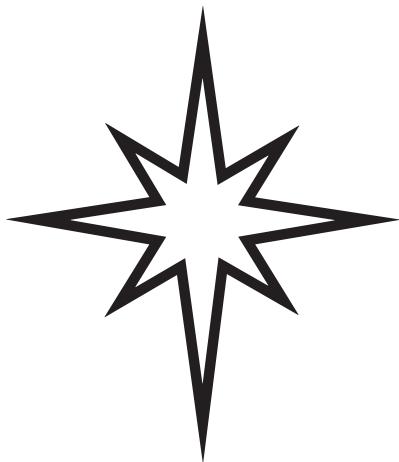
The following week, light an additional purple candle to remember the **PEACE** with God that Jesus made possible for us through the gift of His life.

In the third week, light the pink candle, as well as the previous two purple candles. The pink candle represents the deep **JOY** of knowing Jesus.

On the fourth week, before Christmas Day, add the final purple candle to remember God's incredible **LOVE** for us.

On Christmas Day, light all of the candles, including the white **CHRIST** candle, to remind your family that Christmas is all about Christ!

# WEEK 1



## Hope

waiting with eager  
expectation for what God  
has promised

## INTRODUCTION

Each week of Advent draws our attention to one aspect of our celebration, represented by the candles in the Advent wreath. During the first week, our hearts are drawn to **HOPE**.

**Hope is waiting with eager expectation for what God has promised.** This week, we enter a period of waiting. We are waiting for the celebration of Christmas Day, just like the Israelites waited so long for the Messiah to come. Each passage we read this week will reveal a characteristic of God that shows us He is worthy of our hope. As we explore these scriptures, think about what you hope for and in whom you place your hope. Take this week to realign your hope in the God of the universe, who is faithful and true.

## THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” **Romans 15:13 NIV**

## **WEEKLY FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

### **CHRISTMAS HOPES**

Have everyone draw something they are looking forward to this Christmas. Discuss the drawings as you introduce the concept of hope.

### **WAITING IN HOPE**

Parents, plan a fun Christmas activity you know your children will love this or next week. It could be seeing a Christmas play or movie, decorating cookies together, or seeing Christmas lights.

At the end of your family Advent time, promise your kids that you will do something special together to celebrate Advent—something they will love—but don't tell them what or when. As the days go by, remind them of your promise and give them hints about what it might be. Let their expectation and excitement grow throughout the week. Use this opportunity to remind them of God's promise to send a rescuer and the anticipation God's people felt as they waited.

# DAY 1

## SUNDAY

### READ

Lamentations 3:21-24

### DISCUSS

Discuss a time that you've gotten up to watch the sunrise.

What does it feel like to start a new day?

How is God's mercy like the sunrise?

Why should that give us hope?

What does it mean to wait for God?

### PRAY

God, we are so grateful that your mercy is as consistent and predictable as the sunrise. Your faithfulness gives us hope even when life is hard. Help us put our hope in you this week as we wait on you. Amen.

# DAY 2

MONDAY

## READ

Psalm 130:5-8

## DISCUSS

Discuss a time when you stayed up really late. How did you feel at the end?

Why would watchmen look forward to the morning?

Have you ever longed for God to do something in your life?

What does it mean to redeem something? How does God redeem us?

## PRAY

God, thank you for loving us with unfailing love. Thank you for your promise of redemption through Jesus, and thank you, Jesus, for promising to return. We wait for you to renew the broken things in our lives and our world. Amen.

# DAY 3

## TUESDAY

### **READ**

Psalm 65:5

### **DISCUSS**

What is something that shows you God's power?

Discuss an “awesome deed” God has done in your life.

How does God's work in the past give us hope for the future?

According to this verse, who can put their hope in God?

Is there anything in your life that needs God's “awesome and righteous” work?

### **PRAY**

Thank you, Lord, for all you have done in our lives.

Thank you for working in our lives today. Help us see your faithfulness in our lives and put our hope in you for our futures. We wait for you to work in us. Amen.

# DAY 4

WEDNESDAY

## READ

Isaiah 40:28-31

## DISCUSS

What's the most tired you've ever been?

What happens to you when you are tired?

How is it good news that God never gets tired?

What does it mean to soar like eagles?

How can God's power and strength give us hope?

## PRAY

God, you are the creator who never gets tired. Thank you for loving us. Please help us hope in you so that we can keep doing what is right even when life is hard. We wait on you so that we can renew our strength. Amen.

# DAY 5

## THURSDAY

### READ

Luke 1:26-33

### DISCUSS

Do you have any younger siblings?

What was it like in your family when they were born?

What do you think it would be like to meet an angel?

How does Mary's baby bring hope to the world?

### PRAY

God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Just like Mary waited as the baby grew inside her, we await your return with excitement. Help us put our hope in you as the savior of the world. Amen.

# DAY 6

FRIDAY

## READ

Romans 15:12-13

## DISCUSS

Have you ever planted a tree? What happened to the tree?

What does the image “the root of Jesse” mean? Who is it talking about?

What do you think it means to overflow with hope?

How can your hope be contagious to others?

## PRAY

You are the God of hope. Nothing is impossible for you, and not even death can defeat you. Please help us overflow with hope. Help us live lives that inspire hope in others. We wait for you to do your work through us. Amen.

# DAY 7

## SATURDAY

### READ

1 Peter 1:3

### DISCUSS

What is the thing you look forward to the most about Christmas?

What does this verse mean when it says “new birth”?

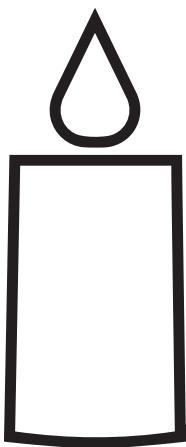
How does Jesus’ resurrection give us hope?

Consider singing a worship song to praise God for the gift of new life in Christ.

### PRAY

God, we praise you for the gift of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Help us live with the hope that you are stronger than sin and death. We wait for you to come again so that we can be with you forever. Amen.

## WEEK 2



# Peace

making things between us,  
God, and others the way  
they are meant to be

## INTRODUCTION

This week, we turn our hearts to **PEACE**.  
**Peace is making things between us, God, and others the way they are meant to be.**

As we look at our world, we see conflicts at every turn. While we may become overwhelmed, we realize our need for peace. This week, we will explore how God is our peace. He is the only one capable of making things right. As you read the Scriptures this week, rest in these truths: through Jesus, God made things right between us & Him and will one day make all things the way they are meant to be. May you focus your hearts and minds on Christ and rest in His peace.

## THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” **Isaiah 9:6 NIV**

## **WEEKLY FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

### **PRAYERS FOR PEACE**

Gather the Christmas cards your family has received so far this season. Lay them out on the floor. Gather around them in a circle and spend time praying for each of these families that they will experience God's peace this week.

### **PRINCE OF PEACE**

Grab a piece of paper and make a crown. Give everyone a chance to decorate a part of the crown. Write "Prince of Peace" somewhere on the crown. When you are finished, place the crown somewhere you will see it throughout the week. Use it as a reminder that Jesus is our Prince of Peace.

# DAY 8

## SUNDAY

### READ

Isaiah 26:3-4

### DISCUSS

Discuss what “perfect peace” means to each of you. How does trust in God contribute to this peace?

What does it mean to have a “steadfast” mind? How can we keep our minds focused on God even in challenging times?

How is God like a rock, providing stability and strength in our lives?

### PRAY

Thank you, God, for your promise of perfect peace to those who trust in you. Please help us keep our minds steadfast and give us the grace to trust in you, especially in challenging times. May we remember that you are our rock, and we can trust in you.

# DAY 9

MONDAY

## READ

Psalm 4:8

## DISCUSS

What are some things that can keep you from being able to sleep?

Tell everyone about the last time you had trouble going to sleep. What was keeping you up?

How can God's protection and presence bring us peace?

## PRAY

Thank you, Lord, for your protection and your presence. We are grateful that you are with us at all times. Please help us take comfort in your closeness to us. Tonight, help us remember your safety and grant us restful, peaceful sleep. Amen.

# DAY 10

## TUESDAY

### **READ**

Psalm 29:10-11

### **DISCUSS**

What is one of the most special gifts someone has gotten you? Why does it mean so much to you?

According to today's verse, what are two "gifts" that the Lord gives His people?

In what ways are strength and peace great gifts?

### **PRAY**

Father, thank you for your thoughtful gifts. We praise you because you are a good King. You know us and care for us. We ask that you bless us with peace today and help us remember your goodness. Amen.

# DAY 11

WEDNESDAY

## READ

Isaiah 9:6-7

## DISCUSS

Does your family have nicknames for one another? If so, share them with one another.

What are the names of Jesus in these verses?

In what ways is Jesus the “Prince of Peace”?

How do you need Jesus to be your Prince of Peace right now?

## PRAY

Jesus, thank you that your peace knows no end! We pray for peace in our hearts, in our families, and in our community. May we be people of peace and bring that peace to those around us. Amen.

# DAY 12

## THURSDAY

### READ

Luke 2:13-14

### DISCUSS

How do you think the Shepherds felt when they saw all the angels? How would you have felt?

What were the angels proclaiming to the shepherds?

How do you think proclaiming God's glory can bring us peace?

Consider singing a worship song together as a household as a way to proclaim the glory of God.

### PRAY

Father, thank you for being worthy of all our praise. Your glory is infinite. Bring us peace as we proclaim your glory to those around us. Amen.

# DAY 13

FRIDAY

## READ

Romans 5:1

## DISCUSS

What is it that destroys our peace with God? How many of us have sinned?

What does it mean to have “peace with God” through Jesus? What provided that peace? How do we accept that peace?

How can we share this good news of Jesus with others?

## PRAY

Father, we thank you that we have peace with you through Jesus. Help us grow in our understanding of Jesus’ sacrifice that brings us peace. Continue to strengthen our faith and help us make peace with one another because you have made peace with us. Amen.

# DAY 14

## SATURDAY

### READ

Philippians 4:6-7

### DISCUSS

What are some things that make you anxious? Why do you think those things make you anxious?

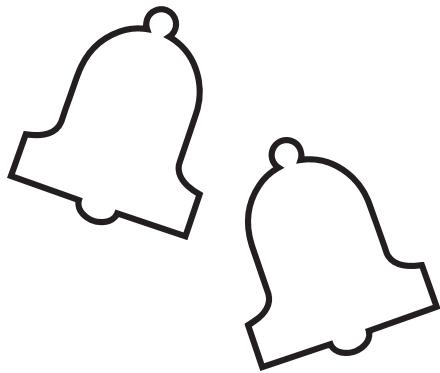
How do you think God's peace "transcends all understanding"?

Take a few moments to sit in silence together. Everyone, think about one or two things you are anxious about and tell God about those things.

### PRAY

Lord, thank you for listening as we share our worries with you. We know you care for us and want to offer us peace. We ask that your peace would guard our hearts from worry and anxiety. Remind us this week to offer our worries to you in exchange for your peace. Amen.

## WEEK 3



# Joy

delighting in what God has  
done and continues to do

## INTRODUCTION

This week, we turn our hearts to **JOY. Joy is delighting in what God has done and continues to do.** With the hustle and bustle of everyday life, especially around Christmas time, we can easily forget where our joy truly comes from. True joy comes from knowing Jesus, and during this season, celebrating the birth of our Savior. As we read the passages this week, focus your attention on the one who can bring lasting joy in this season and the rest of your lives.

## THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” **Philippians 4:4 NIV**

## **WEEKLY FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

### **JOY ORNAMENT**

To remember the joy that Jesus' birth brings, create a new ornament together. The ornament can be as outlandish as you like! Make sure everyone has a part in making it (picking the color, writing the year, designing the ribbon, etc.). You can recite this week's memory verse as you place the ornament on the tree.

### **SERVING WITH JOY**

This week, take some time to brainstorm how you can serve a neighbor. You could bake them treats, take out their trash, or feed their pets. Pick a time to serve your neighbor and put it on your calendar. Before you go, take a moment and pray for the person you are serving to experience the joy of Christ this week.

# DAY 15

## SUNDAY

### READ

1 Chronicles 16:25-27

### DISCUSS

Discuss what it means to you to “delight in God.”

How does having a personal relationship with Jesus bring you joy?

Why is “the Lord most worthy of praise”? What are some events in your life for which you praise God?

How do we find joy in God’s dwelling place?

### PRAY

Thank you, Lord, for your perfection. Please help us find our joy in you. You are worthy of praise; you are gracious, loving, merciful, and mighty. We know lasting joy can only come from you, God. Help us keep our eyes focused on your splendor and majesty. Amen.

# DAY 16

MONDAY

## READ

Psalm 16:9-11

## DISCUSS

What are some things that can distract you from finding your joy in God?

How can remembering the promises of protection and instruction from this verse help bring you joy?

Discuss a time when you found joy in a difficult circumstance because of God. What was going on? How did you delight in the Lord and have joy during this time?

## PRAY

Thank you, God, for your promise to never abandon or forsake us. Help us find joy in difficult circumstances because of your faithfulness. We pray that our hearts will be glad and our tongues will rejoice from the joy we have in you, no matter what, Lord. Amen.

# DAY 17

## TUESDAY

### READ

Malachi 4:2

### DISCUSS

What do you think it means to “go out and frolic like well-fed calves”?

How does God’s righteousness heal us and bring us joy?

What are some things God has provided us with that bring us joy?

### PRAY

We love and praise you, Lord. You have provided for us in such wonderful ways. Help us notice the healing rays of your righteousness so we can rejoice in you, God. Amen.

# DAY 18

WEDNESDAY

## READ

Isaiah 9:2-3

## DISCUSS

What is the “great light” that the people walking in darkness have seen?

Why does Jesus’ birth bring us such great joy?

What is the “harvest” and the “plunder” Christ gives us that we can rejoice in?

## PRAY

God, we are blind without you. Thank you for leading us out of the darkness and into the light. Help us, in this season of many distractions, focus on the light that your birth brings to our lives and the eternal joy we have because of it. Amen.

# DAY 19

## THURSDAY

### **READ**

Luke 2:8-11

### **DISCUSS**

Why do you think the shepherds were terrified when they saw the angel?

Have you ever felt joy during or following a frightening situation?

How does Jesus' birth bring joy to all people?

### **PRAY**

Father, thank you for sending Jesus into the world to save us. We can't express our gratitude appropriately for the gift you gave us in Christ's birth. Help us focus our attention on the joy we have this season because of Jesus' birth. Amen.

# DAY 20

FRIDAY

## READ

Matthew 13:44

## DISCUSS

Have you ever found something valuable or interesting while walking around outside? How did you feel?

In the parable, the man is overjoyed when he finds the treasure of the kingdom of heaven. How has knowing God filled you with joy?

In the parable, the man sold all his possessions to gain the treasure. Have you ever given something up because God asked you to? Did you find greater joy?

## PRAY

God, we are so grateful and joyful for the gift of knowing you. Please help us remember the joy of accepting and having a relationship with you. We pray that we will never value anything in our lives more than you. Amen.

# DAY 21

## SATURDAY

### READ

Philippians 4:4

### DISCUSS

What do you think it means to rejoice?

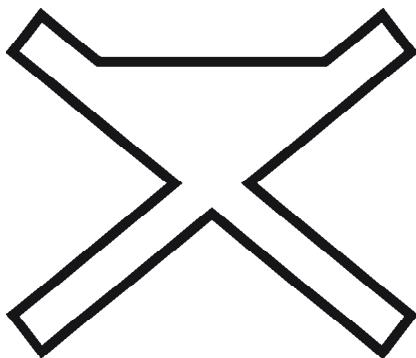
What are some things you rejoice in besides God?

How can we rejoice in the Lord?

### PRAY

God, you are worthy of our praise. Help us always rejoice in you and never forget the gift we have been given in Jesus' birth. We love you and praise your holy name.  
Amen.

## WEEK 4



# Love

caring for others the way  
God cares for us

## INTRODUCTION

This week we turn our hearts to **LOVE. Love is caring for others the way God cares for us.** We like to use “love” to describe how we feel about all kinds of things. We use the same word to describe how we feel about pizza as we use to express our feelings for our families. As we read the passages this week, we will see God uses the word love in a deeper way. God has a unique word for love: agape (uh-gah-pay). Agape is the highest form of love. We will learn how God loves us and how we can love others.

## THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16 NIV**

### NOTE:

This last week of Advent culminates in Christmas Day. Depending on the year, this week may contain a different amount of days. You may need to double up on passages so you can finish with Christmas Eve & Christmas Day.

## **WEEKLY FAMILY ACTIVITY**

### **PRAYERS OF LOVE**

As a family, write the names of some people in your community you can pray for this week. Pray they would know God's love for them. Pray for any need you might know they have right now. Pray that you could be a friend to them and show them God's love. This week as you end your Advent time, pull this list out and pray for them each day.

### **SHARING TRADITIONS**

Think about some of your favorite family traditions. How can you take one of those traditions and share it with a neighbor? Do you make cookies every year? Make a few more and share with a neighbor or two! Do you drive around to view Christmas lights? Ask a neighbor or friend to go with you. Do you have hot chocolate night? Make a hot chocolate basket to take to someone else. Find a way to share your traditions with someone else to show them that you love and care for them!

# DAY 22

## SUNDAY

### READ

Exodus 34:6

### DISCUSS

If you could wish for a never ending supply of something, what would it be? What are some things you do have in abundance?

What does this verse say God has in abundance? How else is God described in this verse?

How do you think God's love led to him sending Jesus?

### PRAY

Lord, we thank you for your abounding love that surrounds us, comforts us, and gives us hope. Help us, O Lord, to love one another as you have loved us, with a patient, kind, and selfless love. We praise you for your faithfulness, for you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. We trust in your faithfulness, knowing you will never leave or forsake us. Amen.

# DAY 23

MONDAY

## READ

Jeremiah 31:1, 3

## DISCUSS

What does everlasting mean?

Can anything change God's everlasting love?

How does knowing God loves us with an everlasting love make you feel?

## PRAY

Father, thank you for your everlasting love. Thank you for sending your Son to this earth as a baby to die for our sins so we can spend eternity with you. We see your everlasting love in Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Help us love others the way you have loved us. Amen.

# DAY 24

## TUESDAY

### **READ**

Isaiah 11:1-3a

### **DISCUSS**

Where is Isaiah in the Bible?

Who are these verses talking about?

Isaiah was written around 700 years before Jesus was even born! How do you think Isaiah knew that Jesus would be born 700 years before it happened?

What does this say about our God and His love for us?

### **PRAY**

Jesus, 700 years before you were born, Isaiah told us that you were coming and you would be full of wisdom and understanding; God's spirit would rest on you, and you would council and be full of might. You have shown your love for us by always having a plan to bring us to you. Help us trust you will take care of us and provide us with everything we need in every circumstance. Amen.

# DAY 25

WEDNESDAY

## READ

John 3:16

## DISCUSS

How did God show His love for the world?

What is eternal life? What do you have to do to have eternal life with God?

Do you believe in Him? Have you told God that you believe He loves you, that He sent His son to die for you, and that you want eternal life with Him?

Think about one other person who may need to hear about this verse and make a plan to share it with them.

## PRAY

Father, thank you for loving the world so very much!

Thank you for the promise of eternal life if we put our faith in you. Help us share the good news of Jesus' love and sacrifice with everyone around us so they might have eternal life. Amen.

# DAY 26

## THURSDAY

### READ

1 John 4:10-11

### DISCUSS

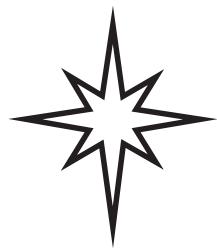
What is love? How many times is “love” used in these two verses? Why do you think love is used so many times?

Because God loved us, what should we do to others?

Do you remember when we discussed the word Agape at the beginning of the week? Based on the verses we have read this week, can you say what Agape means?

### PRAY

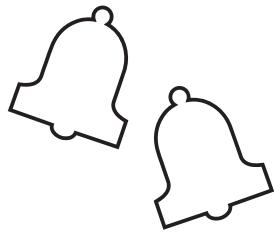
Lord, you have shown us what love truly is. The world gives us false examples of true love, but you have shown us the meaning of love by loving us so much you sent your Son to die as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Thank you for loving us and for showing us what love is. Help us love everyone else with the kind of love you first gave us. Amen.



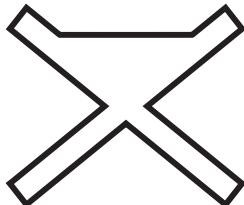
Hope



Peace



Joy



Love

# **DECEMBER 24**

## ***CHRISTMAS EVE***

### **READ**

Gather around with some hot chocolate and read  
Matthew 1:18-24.

### **DISCUSS**

What's the most vivid dream you've ever had?

What do you think Joseph felt when he had a dream in  
which an angel spoke to him?

What does it mean that Jesus will save us from our sins?

### **PRAY**

Thank you, God, for the gift of your son Jesus. Thank you  
that He came to save us from the power of sin and death.  
Thank you for giving us a life filled with hope, peace, joy,  
and love. Amen.

# **DECEMBER 25**

## ***CHRISTMAS DAY***

### **READ**

Merry Christmas! Before you open gifts, read Luke 2:1-20.

### **SING**

Pick your favorite Christmas carol and sing it together.

### **PRAY**

Lord, thank you that we can celebrate your birth today. Thank you for keeping your promises and giving us hope. May our hearts be filled with peace as we remember your birth. May our joyful celebration today be a picture of the joy you have placed in our hearts. Help us remember you came because of your great love for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

