SMITHERS CRC

Advent Family Guide



Week 1 – The Hope of Christmas

Devotional

"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

— Romans 8:24–25

There is something special about this time of year. Christmas lights begin appearing in windows, familiar songs fill the air, decorations come out of storage, and we start counting down the days until Christmas morning.

There is so much to look forward to! Family gatherings, special meals, presents under the tree, favourite traditions, and time spent with the people we love.
But in the middle of all the excitement, Advent invites us to slow down and think about something even more important: hope.

You see, not everyone experiences Christmas the same way. For some, it's a season filled with excitement and celebration. For others, Christmas can bring reminders of people they miss, difficult circumstances, or things in life that aren't quite the way they wish they were.

And that's one of the beautiful things about the hope we find in Jesus: we don't have to pretend everything is perfect to have hope.

In Romans 8, Paul reminds us that the world isn't quite the way it's supposed to be. We still experience sadness, disappointment, and difficult days. There are things we wish were different, prayers we're still waiting to see answered, and situations we don't always understand.

But Paul reminds us that we have a hope that is bigger than what we can see right now.

Think about the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism says, "I think things will get better." Biblical hope says, "Even when things are difficult, I know God is with me, and I can trust Him with my future."

That's an important difference.

At Christmas, it's easy to get caught up in all the things we look forward to. And those things are good! We can enjoy the lights, the music, the food, and the traditions. But none of those things are where our deepest hope is found.

Our hope is found in Jesus.



There's a worship song called *Living Hope* by Phil Wickham that reminds us of this. It points us to the incredible truth that Jesus didn't just come into the world as a baby. He came to rescue us. He lived, died, and rose again, defeating sin and death so that everyone who trusts in Him can have a new life and a future with Him.
That's what makes Christmas so wonderful. The baby in the manger is the Saviour of the world. And because of Jesus, we have a hope that lasts far beyond the Christmas season.

So as you put up the decorations, listen to Christmas music, wrap presents, and enjoy time together this month, remember what all of this points us toward.

When the presents have been opened, the decorations come down, and another Christmas has passed, our hope in Jesus will still be there.

The best part of Christmas isn't what we find under the tree. It's the hope we've been given through Jesus.

Talk About It

- What is one thing you're really looking forward to this Christmas?
- Can you think of a time when something didn't go the way you hoped? How did trusting God help you through it?
- What makes the hope we have in Jesus different from simply hoping that things will go our way?

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy and excitement of Christmas. Thank you for family, friends, traditions, and all the wonderful things we get to enjoy this season. But most of all, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that He came to rescue us and give us a hope that will never fade. When life is exciting, help us to be thankful. When life is difficult, help us to trust you. And in the middle of all the Christmas busyness, help our family remember what matters most. Thank you for the hope we have in Jesus. Amen.

This Week

As a family, take some time to listen to *Living Hope* by Phil Wickham. Pay attention to the words and talk about how Jesus gives us a hope that lasts longer than any Christmas present or tradition.



Week 1 – The Hope of Christmas

Worship

"Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."

Advent is a season of waiting. As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, we remember that God's people spent generations waiting for the promised Messiah. They knew what it was like to live in darkness, to long for rescue, and to wonder when God would fulfil His promises.That's what makes the song *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* so meaningful. It is a song that gives voice to that longing. When we sing, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," we're joining God's people in their cry for a Saviour. But we're also reminded that God did not forget His people. He heard their cries and kept His promises. Jesus came into the world as the light in our darkness and the hope of all who trust in Him.

As a family, we know what waiting feels like. We wait for Christmas morning, for special moments, for things we're hoping will happen. Sometimes waiting is exciting, and sometimes it's difficult. But Advent reminds us that our hope isn't found in knowing exactly when things will happen or how everything will turn out. Our hope is found in knowing the God who keeps His promises.

And the beautiful thing is that Jesus has come, but we are still waiting. We look forward to the day when He will return, make all things new, and wipe away every tear. Until then, we wait with hope.

Talk About It:

- What are some things our family is looking forward to or waiting for?
- Why is Jesus called our hope?
- How does knowing God keeps His promises help us when we're waiting?

Pray Together:

God, thank you for being a God who keeps His promises. Thank you for sending Jesus to be the light in our darkness and the hope of the world. As we wait this Advent season, help us remember that our hope is found in you. Teach us to trust you, even when waiting is hard, and help us look forward with joy to the day Jesus comes again. Amen!

Family Challenge: This week, whenever you notice yourself waiting (for dinner, for Christmas, or for something else), take a moment to remember that God keeps His promises. Jesus is our hope, and we can trust Him while we wait.



Scan me

Listen to the Song Here

Week 1 – The Hope of Christmas

Family Candle Lighting

Adult/Parent: Set aside ten minutes on during the week (we suggest Saturday evening) to talk about God's promise to rescue His children from sin. The only materials needed are five candles, matches, and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE
Have one member of the family light the first candle.

SCRIPTURE READING
Have one person read the following passages out loud.

Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!" And he would. One day, God himself would come.
- The Jesus Storybook Bible

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
-Isaiah 9:6

REFLECTION:

When might you need to be saved from danger? Whom would you call upon to rescue you? For example, if there were a fire, whom would you call to save you? What are rescuers typically like?

In the very beginning, God created a perfect world. There was no sin, pain, sickness, death, or sadness. God created Adam and Eve to live in His perfect world with joy and peace. But Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed God. When they sinned, God's perfect world broke.

There was a punishment for Adam and Eve's sin. Because God is perfect, sin separates us from Him and breaks the relationship we were created to enjoy. So Adam and Eve were separated from God. The punishment for their sin would also be placed on all humans who were born after Adam and Eve.

But before Adam and Eve left God's perfect Garden, God made a promise. God promised to send a Rescuer, someone to save Adam, Eve, and mankind from the punishment of sin. He promised to send Jesus!



God did not send Jesus to rescue His people right away. God waited thousands of years to send the Rescuer. During that time, God's people faced many hard things. While they waited, God gave them hints and clues about how Jesus would come, what He would do, and what He would be like.

These hints, written in Scriptures by prophets, would help God's people wait. The verse from Isaiah that we read together after lighting the Advent candle was written while God's people waited those thousands of years for the Saviour.

Some days, God's children waited patiently. Some days, they waited with tears and frustration. Some days, they wondered if God had forgotten His promise.

But God continued to whisper it over and over again as His children waited. And one day, when no one was expecting it, Jesus would come.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your goodness and mercy in sending Jesus to rescue us from our sins!

AMEN!



Week 2 - The Peace of Christmas

Devotional

"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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
— Isaiah 9:6

If there's one thing the Christmas season seems to promise, it's peace.

We picture quiet evenings, snow falling outside, Christmas lights glowing in the windows, warm drinks, and time spent with the people we love. We sing songs about silent nights and peaceful little towns. Everything about Christmas seems to invite us to slow down and enjoy a moment of calm.

But if we're honest, Christmas doesn't always feel very peaceful.

There are presents to buy, meals to prepare, places to be, and schedules to coordinate. Sometimes there are family tensions, difficult conversations, or the stress of trying to make everything just right. And even when the Christmas season is wonderful, the rest of life doesn't simply pause because it's December.

We can find ourselves surrounded by Christmas decorations and still feel anything but peaceful.

That's why the promise in Isaiah 9:6 is so important.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a coming King. God's people were living through difficult and uncertain times. They needed more than a temporary break from their problems. They needed a Saviour. They needed someone who could bring lasting peace.

And Isaiah gave Him a name: Prince of Peace.

When Jesus came into the world, He didn't come to offer a few moments of calm or a temporary escape from life's difficulties. He came to make peace between God and humanity. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus dealt with the sin that separated us from God and opened the way for us to be brought back into relationship with Him.

That's where real peace begins.

Sometimes we think peace means having everything figured out. It means no arguments, no worries, no difficult circumstances, and no problems. But the peace Jesus offers is much deeper than that.

Jesus never promised that following Him would mean an easy life. In fact, He told His disciples that they would face trouble. But He also told them, "Take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).



The peace of Jesus doesn't depend on everything around us being peaceful. It comes from knowing that we belong to Him, that we are loved by Him, and that nothing can separate us from His care.

That doesn't mean we never feel anxious or overwhelmed. It means that when we do, we have somewhere to turn. We can bring our worries to God in prayer. We can trust His promises when we don't have all the answers. And we can rest in the knowledge that our lives are held by the One who has overcome the world.

So this Christmas, as we enjoy the quiet moments and navigate the busy ones, let's remember that peace isn't something we have to create for ourselves.

It's something Jesus has given us.

The peace of Christmas isn't found in a perfectly quiet season. It's found in knowing the Prince of Peace.

REFLECT

- What are some things that tend to steal your peace during the Christmas season?
- How is the peace Jesus offers different from simply having a stress-free day?
- Is there something you're carrying right now that you need to bring to God in prayer?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Thank you that through Him we can have peace with you and know that we are never outside of your care. When life feels busy, help us slow down. When we feel worried, help us trust you. When things around us feel uncertain, remind us that our lives are secure in your hands. Help our family experience the peace that only Jesus can give, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. Amen.

THIS WEEK

Take a few minutes each day to slow down and pray together as a family. Whether it's before bed, around the dinner table, or in the middle of a busy day, take turns sharing one thing that's worrying you and one thing you're thankful for. Bring those worries to God and remind one another that Jesus is our Prince of Peace.



Week 2 - The Peace of Christmas

Worship

"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

There's something beautiful about the picture painted in the song *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. It describes a quiet little town, resting under the night sky, while something extraordinary is about to happen.

Bethlehem wasn't a particularly important or impressive place. It wasn't a great city filled with powerful leaders or grand buildings. It was an ordinary town, and on an ordinary-looking night, God did something extraordinary.

Jesus, the promised Saviour, was born.

Take a moment to read or listen to the words of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. As you do, pay particular attention to this line:

"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

Think about that for a moment. For generations, God's people had been waiting for Him to send a Saviour. They had experienced hardship, uncertainty, and disappointment. They knew what it was like to long for peace in a world that seemed anything but peaceful.

And now, in Bethlehem, that promise was beginning to unfold.

But Jesus didn't arrive the way people might have expected. He wasn't born in a palace, surrounded by wealth or power. He came as a baby, laid in a manger. The King of Kings entered the world in the humblest of circumstances.

And that's part of what makes the Christmas story so remarkable. God's peace didn't arrive through an army, a powerful ruler, or a great display of strength. It arrived through Jesus.

Sometimes we expect God to work in big, dramatic ways. We look for Him in extraordinary moments, big answers to prayer, or situations that suddenly change. But the Christmas story reminds us that God often works in ways we don't expect, in places we might overlook, and through moments that seem ordinary.

Bethlehem reminds us that God's greatest work can begin in the most unexpected places.



And the peace Jesus brings is not limited to a particular place, a particular season, or a particular kind of person. It is an invitation for all who come to Him.

As we celebrate Advent together, remember that the little baby in the manger is the King who came to bring us back to God. The peace announced that night was much bigger than a quiet evening in a little town. It was the beginning of God's great work of making all things new.

The world was waiting for peace, and God sent His Son.

TALK ABOUT IT

Take some time to consider these questions. There aren't necessarily right or wrong answers!

1. Why do you think God chose such an ordinary and humble place for Jesus to be born?
2. What surprises you most about the way Jesus entered the world?
3. Where might God be at work in the ordinary parts of our lives that we sometimes overlook?

PRAY

God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you that you didn't forget your people, but sent your Son into the world to bring us back to you. Thank you that Jesus came humbly, not as the world might have expected, but as our Saviour and King. Help us to recognize your work in the ordinary moments of our lives and to remember that the peace you offer is greater than anything this world can give. May our hearts make room for Jesus this Christmas. Amen.

FAMILY CHALLENGE:

This week, take a moment to notice the ordinary things around you: a meal together, a conversation, a helping hand, or a quiet moment at home.

As a family, share one ordinary thing you're thankful for each day. Thank God for those moments, and remember that He is at work even in the ordinary. Like Bethlehem, something ordinary can become part of something extraordinary in God's hands.





Week 2 - The Peace of Christmas

Family Candle Lighting

Adult/Parent: Set aside ten minutes this week (we suggest Saturday evening) to talk about God's mercy in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches, and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the previous week's candle and the 2nd candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- **Luke 2:3-7**

And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his wonderful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby Son.

- **The Jesus Storybook Bible**

REFLECTION

Do you remember the promise we talked about last week? God's promise to send a Rescuer? His promise to send Jesus? Well, Jesus came, just like God said He would!

After thousands of years of waiting, on an ordinary night, Jesus came. God gave His people hints and clues about how Jesus would come. He told them that Jesus would come from Bethlehem, be a Ruler, and bring peace. Many expected a soldier; some expected a politician. No one expected a baby. But that's how Jesus came.



Mary and Joseph lived in a town called Nazareth. One day, the king gave an order that everyone was to go back to their hometown to be counted for something called a census.

Mary and Joseph travelled a long way to the town of Bethlehem, where Joseph's family was from. When they got to Bethlehem, the town was full of other travellers, and there was nowhere for Mary and Joseph to stay. So they found a stable to sleep in. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby, and Jesus, the Savior, was born.

Jesus, the King of heaven, left His perfect home to be born as a baby to a young man and woman. He became fragile and helpless. His room that night was a stable—dirty, smelly, and full of noisy animals. His bed was not kingly and luxurious; it was a feed box that animals ate out of. But everything that happened that night was exactly what God had planned and promised. Jesus came, just like God said He would. God saw that we needed to be rescued from sin. He cared about us in our need, and He acted. He sent Jesus.

The events of that night, in that stable in the little town of Bethlehem, would change the world forever.

CLOSING PRAYER:
Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to be born as a baby who would save us from our sins! AMEN!



Week 3 – The Joy of Christmas

Devotional

“But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.'"

Luke 2:10–11

There's a certain kind of excitement that comes with Christmas.

Maybe it's the excitement of seeing presents appear under the tree, hearing your favourite Christmas songs, enjoying special treats, or knowing that family and friends will soon be gathering together. There's something about this season that gives us plenty of reasons to smile.

But have you ever noticed how quickly those moments pass?

The presents get opened, the food gets eaten, the decorations eventually come down, and before we know it, Christmas is over. The excitement we looked forward to for weeks can disappear in a matter of days.

So here's a question worth thinking about: Is there something deeper than happiness that we can hold onto?

When the angel appeared to the shepherds on that first Christmas night, the message wasn't simply that something exciting had happened. The angel announced something that would change everything:

"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."

Notice that the angel didn't say this news would bring happiness to some people, or excitement for a particular group. This was good news of great joy for all people.

And what was the news?

A Saviour had been born.

The joy of Christmas wasn't ultimately about the setting, the circumstances, or even the excitement of a newborn baby. It was about who that baby was and what He had come to do.

Jesus had come to rescue His people.

That's an important distinction because happiness and joy aren't quite the same thing. Happiness is often connected to what's happening around us. We feel happy



when things go well, when we receive something we've wanted, or when we're surrounded by people we love.

But the joy we find in Jesus runs much deeper.

It doesn't mean we're always going to feel happy. It doesn't mean we won't experience sadness, disappointment, or difficult seasons. In fact, some of the most faithful Christians we know have walked through incredibly difficult circumstances.

But Christian joy is rooted in something that doesn't change. It comes from knowing that we belong to Jesus, that our sins are forgiven, that we are loved by God, and that our future is secure in Him.

Think about what that means for us. Our joy doesn't disappear when Christmas is over. It doesn't depend on whether we get the presents we hoped for, whether our plans work out, or whether everything in life is going smoothly.

Our joy is grounded in the good news that Jesus has come.

And there's even more to celebrate. The baby born in Bethlehem grew up, gave His life for us, and rose again. He is alive, He is King, and He has promised to return and make all things new.

That's a reason for joy that lasts far beyond December.

So as we move through this Christmas season, enjoy the excitement, celebrate with the people you love, and make memories together. But remember that the greatest reason for joy isn't something we can wrap, buy, or put under a tree.

It's someone we can know.

Christmas reminds us that our joy isn't found in everything going right. It's found in knowing that Jesus has come, Jesus is alive, and Jesus is King.

REFLECT

- What are some things that make you happy? How are those different from the joy we find in Jesus?
- How can we hold onto joy when life is difficult or disappointing?
- What difference does knowing that Jesus is alive and King make in the way we approach Christmas?

PRAY



Heavenly Father, thank you for the good news of great joy. Thank you for sending Jesus into the world to be our Saviour. Thank you that our joy doesn't depend on everything going perfectly, but is rooted in who you are and what you

have done for us. When we're happy, help us be thankful. When we're struggling, remind us of the hope and joy we have in Jesus. Help our family celebrate Him this Christmas and share His joy with those around us. Amen.

THIS WEEK

As a family, try to find one reason each day to celebrate something God has done. It could be something big or something small. Share those moments with one another, and remember that even in ordinary days, we have an extraordinary reason to rejoice: Jesus is our Saviour and King.



Week 3 – The Joy of Christmas

Worship

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King."

If there's one word we hear a lot at Christmas, it's joy!

We see it on Christmas cards, in decorations, in songs, and in the excitement of children counting down the days until Christmas morning. Christmas is often described as the happiest time of the year.

But have you ever noticed that sometimes it's hard to feel joyful?

Maybe something hasn't gone the way you hoped. Maybe you're having a difficult week at school or work. Maybe someone in your family is having a hard time, or perhaps you're just feeling tired from everything going on.

Does that mean we can't have joy?

The Bible shows us that joy is something much deeper than simply being happy. Happiness often depends on what's happening around us. We feel happy when things go well, when we get something we've been hoping for, or when we're spending time with people we love.

But the joy we find in Jesus is different. It isn't dependent on everything going perfectly. It comes from knowing who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

That's what makes the song *Joy to the World* such a wonderful Christmas song.

Interestingly, this song isn't just about the excitement of a baby being born in Bethlehem. It's a celebration of Jesus coming as King! When Isaac Watts wrote these words, he was celebrating the arrival of the King who would bring salvation and restore all things.

Think about the opening line:

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King."

The reason for our joy is that Jesus has come! God didn't leave the world to figure things out on its own. He sent His Son to rescue us from sin and death and to bring us into His Kingdom.

And the best part? **Jesus is still King today.**



That means our joy isn't limited to Christmas morning, opening presents, or spending time with family. Those things are wonderful gifts, but they aren't the source of our deepest joy.

Our joy comes from belonging to Jesus. It comes from knowing that we are loved by God, forgiven through Christ, and part of the story of what He is doing in the world.

And one day, Jesus will return and make everything new. There will be no more sadness, suffering, or death. Everything will be as God intended it to be. That's something worth celebrating!

So as you sing Christmas songs, decorate your home, and enjoy the excitement of the season, remember that the greatest reason for joy isn't what Christmas brings us. It's who Christmas brings us to.

Jesus has come. Jesus is King. And that is reason enough for joy!

TALK ABOUT IT
Take some time to consider these questions. Everyone can participate!

1. What is something that makes you really happy? Is happiness the same thing as joy?
2. Why does knowing that Jesus is King give us a reason to have joy, even when life is difficult?
3. What is one way our family can share the joy of Jesus with someone else this Christmas?

PRAY
Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us so many reasons to celebrate. Thank you for the joy of Christmas, for the people we love, and for the many blessings you give us. Most of all, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that He came to rescue us, that He is King, and that one day He will make all things new. Help us remember that our joy is found in Him, even when life doesn't go the way we planned. Help us to share that joy with the people around us this Christmas. Amen.

FAMILY CHALLENGE
This week, look for one opportunity to bring joy to someone else. It doesn't have to be something big. You could encourage someone, help a neighbour, invite someone to join you, or do something kind without expecting anything in return.

As a family, remember that the joy we have in Jesus isn't something we keep to ourselves. It's something we get to share!





Week 3 – The Joy of Christmas

Family Candle Lighting

Adult/Parent: Set aside ten minutes this week (we suggest Saturday evening) to talk about God's mercy in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches, and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the candles from the previous weeks and a 3rd candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

- **Matthew 2:1-2**

The journey that had begun so many centuries before had led three Wise Men here. To a little town. To a little house. To a little child. To the King God had promised David all those years before.

- **The Jesus Storybook Bible**

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

- **Matthew 2:11-12**

REFLECTION

The first people God told about Jesus' birth were the shepherds. He used a spectacular band of angels to shout from the skies that Jesus had come. But the angels were not alone in proclaiming the good news that night, and the shepherds were not the only people to learn of the Rescuer's coming.

That same night, God placed a special star in the sky, a bright body of light that announced the birth of the King. Some men in a faraway country saw this star. These men were called Magi. They were educated men who studied the skies and nature. Most scholars believe these men came from Persia, or modern-day Iran. There was something very special about these men.



Throughout the Bible, God promised to send a Rescuer to save the Israelites from their sins. But these Magi were not Israelites. They were Gentiles. That means they were not from Abraham's family and likely did not know and worship God. But that night, God did something that no one expected. By placing that star in the sky, God showed unbelievable mercy toward all people. In showing the Magi that Jesus, the King of heaven, had been born, God was extending salvation to people of all nations.

When the Magi saw the special star that God had placed in the sky, they left their home country to find Jesus. Their journey took a long time. They did not arrive in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. In fact, it may have taken them up to two years to reach the place where Jesus was.

The Bible tells us that when the Magi found the place where Jesus was living with Mary and Joseph, they entered the house, bowed down, and worshiped this small child who had come to save sinners. They then gave Jesus precious, costly gifts.

Throughout the Advent story, we see that God is generous. He sent a company of angels to shout the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, and He put a special star in the sky to guide men from a faraway country to Jesus. He desires that all people know, love, trust, and obey Him. And God promises that one day men, women and children from every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship Jesus. God will rescue people from all over the world, and we will worship Him as He deserves.

CLOSING PRAYER
Lord, we praise you and ask you to show people of all nations the good news that Jesus came to save sinners, just like us. AMEN!



Week 4 – The Love of Christmas

Devotional

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

— 1 John 4:9–10

Christmas is often described as a season of giving and receiving love.

We think about the people closest to us, the traditions we share, the meals around the table, the gifts we carefully choose, and the time we get to spend together. We look for ways to show people that they matter to us.

And there's something really wonderful about that.

But as we get closer to Christmas, it's worth stopping to remember where the love we celebrate at Christmas actually begins.

It begins with God.

One of the most remarkable things about the Christmas story is that God didn't wait for us to come looking for Him. He didn't wait for the world to get its act together or for people to become good enough to deserve His love.

He came looking for us.

John reminds us that God's love was demonstrated by sending His Son into the world. And then he makes a really important point: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

Think about that.

Sometimes we can approach our relationship with God as though His love depends on how well we're doing. We might think that if we're good enough, pray enough, read our Bibles enough, or make fewer mistakes, then God will love us more.

But that's not the message of Christmas.

The message of Christmas is that God loved us while we were still sinners. He saw our brokenness, our rebellion, and our need for rescue, and He sent Jesus.



The manger is a reminder that God's love isn't something we earned. It's something He freely gave.

And Jesus didn't come simply to be a good example or to teach us how to live better lives. He came to do what we could never do for ourselves. He came to take our sin upon Himself, to give His life on the cross, and to bring us back into relationship with God.

That's the depth of God's love. That’s how much He loves you.
And when we begin to understand just how deeply God has loved us, it changes how we live.

We become people who love others, not because they've earned it, not because it's always easy, and not because we expect something in return. We love because we have first been loved by God.

That might mean showing patience when someone frustrates us, forgiving someone who has hurt us, including someone who feels left out, or choosing kindness when it would be easier to walk away.

As we celebrate Christmas, those are the kinds of things that help us reflect the love of Jesus to the people around us.

And perhaps that's one of the most meaningful ways we can celebrate this season: by remembering that we are deeply loved by God and allowing that love to shape the way we treat others.

So as Christmas approaches, enjoy the gifts, the gatherings, and the traditions. But don't miss the greatest gift of all.

Christmas is the story of a God who loved us so much that He came to us.

REFLECT

- Why is it important to remember that God's love isn't something we have to earn?
- How does knowing that God loved us first change the way we treat other people?
- Who is someone in your life who might need to experience the love of Jesus through you this Christmas?



PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so deeply that you sent your Son into the world for us. Thank you that we don't have to earn your love, but can receive it through Jesus. Help us to understand just how much you love us. As we celebrate Christmas, shape our hearts to look more like Jesus. Help us to be patient, forgiving, generous, and kind. Show us how to share your love with the people around us, especially those who need it most. Thank you for the greatest gift of all: Jesus. Amen.

THIS WEEK

As a family, look for one intentional way to show God's love to someone else this week. It might be helping a neighbour, inviting someone to join you, writing an encouraging note, or doing something kind for someone who might not expect it.

Remember, we don't love others to earn God's love. We love because God has already loved us.



Week 4 – The Love of Christmas

Worship

Christmas is a season filled with reminders of love. We think about the people who mean the most to us, the gifts we give, the time we spend together, and the little ways we show others that we care.

But have you ever stopped to think about how God showed His love for us?

The song *Noel* by Chris Tomlin and Lauren Daigle invites us to look again at the incredible story of Jesus' birth. It reminds us that the baby lying in a manger wasn't just another child born into the world. He was God's Son, the promised Saviour, and the greatest expression of God's love for us.

The word "Noel" is traditionally associated with Christmas and the birth of Christ. When we sing this song, we're celebrating something extraordinary: God came into the world to be with us.

Think about that for a moment. God could have chosen to remain distant. He could have left us to figure things out on our own. But instead, He came near. He entered our world, experienced life as we do, and ultimately gave His life to rescue us from sin.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:9:

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

Notice how John describes love. He doesn't simply tell us that God loves us. He points to what God did.

God showed His love by sending Jesus.

And that makes the Christmas story so much bigger than a baby in a manger. Jesus came with a purpose. He came to bring us back into relationship with God. He came to take away our sin and offer us new life. The manger points us toward the cross, and the cross points us toward the empty tomb.

That's the depth of God's love for us.

As a family, we know that love is something we show through our actions. We show love when we help one another, forgive each other, share what we have, and make time for the people around us.

But before we can share God's love with others, we need to understand just how much He has loved us.



We don't have to earn it. We don't have to be perfect. We don't have to prove ourselves worthy of it. God's love is a gift, freely given through Jesus.

And when we truly understand that, it changes the way we live.

As Christmas approaches, take some time to look beyond the presents, the decorations, and the celebrations. Remember the incredible gift God has given us.

The greatest expression of God's love wasn't something He said. It was someone He sent.

TALK ABOUT IT

Take some time to consider these questions:

1. What does the song *Noel* help us remember about the birth of Jesus?
2. Why is Jesus' birth such an incredible demonstration of God's love for us?
3. If we've been loved so generously by God, how can we show that same love to others this Christmas?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son into the world. Thank you that Jesus came to rescue us and bring us back into relationship with you. Help us never to take that gift for granted. As we celebrate Christmas, remind us of the incredible love you've shown us, and help us share that love with the people around us. Thank you for Jesus, the greatest gift we could ever receive. Amen.

FAMILY CHALLENGE

As Christmas approaches, find one intentional way to show someone God's love. It could be helping someone who needs a hand, including someone who might feel left out, giving something away, or simply taking time to encourage someone.

As you do, remember that we don't love others to earn God's love. We love because He first loved us.





Week 4 – The Love of Christmas

Family Candle Lighting

Adult/Parent: Set aside ten minutes this week (we suggest Saturday evening) to talk about God's mercy in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches, and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the previous week's candles and the 4th candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

- **Luke 2:8-12**

Behind the angel they saw a strange glowing cloud–except it wasn't a cloud, it was angels... troops and troops of angels, armed with light! And they were singing a beautiful song: "Glory to God! To God be Fame and Honor and all our Hoorays!"

- **The Jesus Storybook Bible**

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

- **Luke 2:15-17**

REFLECTION

As Mary and Joseph held their newborn Son during those late hours of the night, God began spreading the wonderful news of Jesus' birth. And He began with an unusual group of people. Kings, queens, and religious leaders were not the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus. Instead, God told the most unimportant of people His good news first. Back in those days, people looked down on shepherds and even hated them. Most people considered them criminals, thieves, and liars.



Yet these were the first people to hear that the Rescuer had come. And the way they heard that good news was nothing short of amazing.

While the shepherds watched their sheep in a field outside of Bethlehem, an angel appeared. The Bible tells us that the shepherds were filled with great fear. This angel was a warrior of the Lord. And he shone with the glory of God. The bright radiance of heaven itself interrupted the deep darkness of the night. It was as if God peeled back the curtain of heaven and gave the shepherds a small glimpse of Himself. The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid. God did what He had promised—He sent Jesus to rescue God's people from their sins. God was making peace between Himself and sinners through Jesus.

Upon telling the shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth and how to find Him, the angel was joined by thousands of other angels who began singing about the greatness of God. That dark, quiet night sky was filled with a beautiful, blinding light and roaring song that left the shepherds forever changed. Once they had heard the news, the shepherds were desperate to go and find Jesus and see the marvellous thing that God had done.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for sending angels to share the good news of Jesus' birth to sinners just like us! AMEN!



Christmas Day

The Christ Candle

Adult/Parent: Set aside ten minutes this week (we suggest Christmas Eve) to talk about God's mercy in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches, and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Light the four Advent candles from the previous weeks, and then proceed. You will be prompted to light the Christ Candle later.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- John 1:1, 4–5

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Isaiah 9:6

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- John 1:14

REFLECTION

Over the past four weeks, we've been lighting candles to remember the promises of God. We've talked about hope, peace, joy, and love. Each candle has reminded us of something wonderful about the God we worship and the promises He has made to His people.

But tonight, we light one more candle. The Christ Candle.

This candle is different from the others. It reminds us that all the promises of God find their fulfilment in one person: Jesus Christ.



Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God's people were waiting for Him. They were waiting for a Saviour who would rescue them, a King who would reign forever, and someone who would bring light into a world filled with darkness. Through the prophets, God promised that this Saviour would come.

And then, on that first Christmas night, He did.

God didn't send another prophet or simply give His people another promise. He sent His own Son. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, entered our world as a baby. The Creator stepped into His creation. The King came not in a palace, but in a manger. God came near to us.

John tells us that Jesus is the light of the world, and that the darkness has not overcome Him. Think about what that means. The darkness of sin, the brokenness of our world, the pain we experience, and even death itself cannot defeat Jesus. He came to rescue us, to bring us back to God, and to give us life that lasts forever.

That's why we celebrate Christmas.

The Christ Candle reminds us that Jesus is not simply one more part of the Christmas story. He is the centre of it all. He is our hope when life feels uncertain, our peace when the world feels chaotic, our joy when life is difficult, and the greatest expression of God's love for us.

Tonight, as we gather with family and friends, open presents, share meals, and celebrate Christmas, may we remember that the greatest gift has already been given.

Jesus has come. The Light of the World has entered our darkness. And because of Him, we have a hope that will never fade.

The candles we've lit remind us of the promises of God. The Christ Candle reminds us that God has kept them all in Jesus.

LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

As you light the centre candle, remember that Jesus is the reason we celebrate. He is the Light of the World, the promised Saviour, and the King who will one day make all things new.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for keeping your promises and sending your Son into the world. Thank you for Jesus, the Light who shines in the darkness, the Saviour who rescues us from sin, and the King who reigns forever. As we celebrate His birth, help us keep Him at the centre of our Christmas and at the centre of our lives. May our homes be filled with the hope, peace, joy, and love that are found in Him. Thank you for the greatest gift we could ever receive. In Jesus' name, Amen.

