

# Looking Toward Christmas

## Family Advent Wreath Celebrations

December 2009

Advent is a time we prepare for Christmas. The word literally means "The coming ..." It's a time of waiting and anticipation of the coming – the birth – of Jesus.

Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. The true meaning and significance of Christmas takes time to understand: the Advent season gives us time to prepare ourselves for the joys and promises of Christmas.

Advent is a time for reflection and inspiration. It's a time when as individuals and families we can draw closer to God and also close to each other as we anticipate and celebrate God's great gift to the world his son, Jesus.

The Advent wreath is a traditional way of celebrating the season. The wreath is round, with no beginning or end, celebrating that God's love has no beginning or end either. The candles represent Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world."

It's hard for families to get together for anything, especially in December! But this season of the year try to take a few minutes each day to prepare for Christmas as a family. It seems we can always find times for the things that really are most important ...

These little readings are designed to be short – or have the potential to be longer if you wish – so that you can fit them into your busy lives. Have fun with it. We have tried to provide some discussion questions to get conversations going -- in a family this is always an adventure. Enjoy it.

This guide complements our regular study and prayer guide, "*Looking Toward Christmas.*" We encourage parents and older children/youth to use that guide as well. It has more ideas for application and prayer. Often the readings in this booklet and the Study Guide are the same – just discussed in different depth. It will be enriching for adults to use the study and prayer guide for your own spiritual growth.

Feel free to be creative.

If the suggestions for prayers and songs in this guide don't work for you – that's fine! Feel free to do your own!

- You may wish to memorize the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel, or John 1, or another passage.
- You could act out some of the stories.
- You could make gifts for a "Jesus Star." In the center of the star write your family name. In each point to the star write a description of the gift you as a family want to do this Advent season [for example, visit a person who is shut in, go caroling in your neighborhood, give a gift to the food bank, etc.]. Or each person could make a star and think of things they can do to bless another member of the family.
- Drop off an anonymous gift at the home of a friend who has very little this Christmas.
- Rethink your Christmas gift giving: checkout <http://www.rethinkingchristmas.com> and [www.adventconspiracy.org](http://www.adventconspiracy.org)

The main thing to remember when Jesus is the center of our Christmas celebrations, they are so much more meaningful. Enjoy a time being together as a family and being with the Lord!

- Bruce

## WEEK ONE: HOPE

### Monday, November 30: Read Isaiah 9:6-7

This week we reflect on the theme of **HOPE**. Jesus' birth did not come out of the blue. The Old Testament contains clear visions of the advent of a Saviour who would fulfill God's covenant promises to Abraham and David. This week we will be thinking about some of those who came before Jesus who looked forward to His coming: the prophets and John the Baptist.

Isaiah 9 begins with a comment that *"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."* (Isaiah 9:2)

- What is darkness like? Why do most of us not like it very much?
- How does a light help us?
- In what ways is there "darkness" in our world?
- How can Jesus help us? (think about the titles/names given to Jesus in verses 6-7)

Jesus will come to be light in the darkness.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you are the Light of the world. Help me know how you can be my light. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### Tuesday, December 1: Read Psalm 23

This psalm is a familiar one describing how God cares for us as a shepherd.

- What does a shepherd do for his sheep?
- How does Jesus care for us?

You may wish to draw a picture to illustrate God's care for you.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you save us. Thank you that we are always safe in your hands. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### **Wednesday, December 2: read Isaiah 9:1-2 and 6-7 (or all of 9:1-7, if you wish)**

Are you ever afraid of the dark? How does light help us when it's dark? (We are no longer frightened; we can see our way; nothing is hidden; we're happier; we can do things because we can see ... what else???)

Jesus brings us light, light from God! We no longer need to be afraid of anything; He helps us know what is right and wrong; He gives us joy and peace; He helps us through difficult times ... what else???)

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you are the Light of the World. Help me to follow you and stay close to you. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### **Thursday, December 3: read Luke 1:5-22**

A key person in the Advent story, as we prepare for Jesus' birth, is John the Baptist. John's story is intertwined with Jesus'. John's mother, Elizabeth, is an older relative of Mary, Jesus' mother (Luke 1:36).

What good things does Zechariah do? (He serves God faithfully, He listens to God ...)  
What problem does Zechariah have? (He doubts God's power and promises ...)

- Do we ever doubt God's power or promises? Why?
- Can I trust God with whatever He says?

Jesus' promise is "*I am with you always*" (Matthew 28:19). List all of the times and places Jesus will be with you today. How is that an encouragement for you?

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you always keep your promises and always stay with me. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### **Friday, December 4: Luke 1:23-25**

Zechariah doubted God's promise: "*How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.*" (Luke 1:19)

Elizabeth believed God's promise: "*How kind the Lord is!*" she exclaimed. "*He has taken away my disgrace of*

*having no children.”(Luke 1:25)*

Elizabeth sees that every good thing that happens is a gift from God. What good things do you see in your life? What can you be thankful for? Thank God. Worship Him.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, how kind you are to us! Thank you for all your blessings (name a few). You are always with me. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

### **Saturday, December 5: Luke 1:76-77**

In this song, Zechariah – John the Baptist’s father – praises God for the coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:68-75 and 78-79 – read it them now if you wish; we will read them on Tuesday).

In Luke 1:76-79, Zechariah speaks directly about the birth of his own son, John: John *"will be called the prophet of the Most High, because he will prepare the way for the Lord (Jesus). John will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins."*

- What is sin? (making mistakes? "missing the mark"? doing/saying things you know are wrong? Not doing/saying things you know are right?)
- Do I ever sin? (Yes! We all do! *"If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves"* 1 John 1:8)
- What do I do about it? *"If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."*(1 John 1:9)

This is SO good for us to do! We can move on, free from guilt ... we can be at peace with each other and at peace with God.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you always welcome me to pray with you. It is good for me to be honest: I have sinned ... Thank you that you love to forgive me. Thank you that I am forgiven. Help me to live at peace with my family and friends. And thank you that I am at peace with you. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

## WEEK TWO: FAITH

### Sunday, December 6: Luke 1:57-66

This week we think about **PEACE**: the peace that comes through putting our hope in Jesus.

Elizabeth and Zechariah have a baby boy – who will be known as John the Baptist (parents, you may have to help explain who John is – it will come up this week in our study if you want to read ahead).

People tell Elizabeth and Zechariah what they should name the baby (Luke 1:59). Do they do what their friends suggest? Who do they obey (See Luke 1:13 and 1:60)?

- Do your friends ever encourage you to do things that are different from what God says?
- How do you feel when you know you do something wrong? (not "at peace"!)
- How do you feel when you make a decision to do what is right (good! At peace!)

This is a great opportunity to talk about peer pressure and remaining faithful to God. Talk about particular situations in which your kids experience these struggles. Don't be afraid to share some of your own experiences; it's good for your kids to know that you have struggled, too.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you are so pleased when we do what is right. Help us to always want to please you. Help us to make right choices. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

### Monday, December 7: Luke 1:57-66 (review ... focussing on the name 'John')

- What's in a name?
- Do you know why your parents gave you your name?
- Do you know what your name means?

In biblical times, names were hugely significant!

- The name "Zechariah" means "The LORD remembers."
- "Elizabeth" means "My God is a promise" or "My God is faithful."
- "John" means "The Lord is gracious" (in the sense of grace and love)
- "Jesus" means "God is our salvation."

How do these names "fit" the characters in this story? What does each name tell us about who God is? (He always remembers us; He is faithful; He is gracious; He is our salvation)

Put your name into these sentences:

- God always remembers and is always with \_\_\_\_.
- God will always be faithful to \_\_\_\_.
- God will always be gracious to/always loves \_\_\_\_.

- Jesus is the Saviour of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate our PEACE through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you always remember me. Thank you that you are always faithful to me. Thank you that you always love me. Thank you that Jesus is my Saviour. Thank you that I am at peace with you. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

## **Tuesday, December 8: Luke 1:68-75, 78-79**

Zechariah's song of praise to God did speak about the birth of his own son John (Luke 1:76-77 – we read this on Saturday). But most of his song is about the upcoming birth of Jesus, our Saviour.

Way back last Monday we read in Isaiah 9 about Jesus' birth: *"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."* Zechariah says now: *"Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace"*(Luke 1:78-79).

Try sitting together in darkness for even just a couple of seconds. Then turn on every light you have! What difference does light make? What can you do in the light you couldn't do in the dark?

How does Jesus make a difference in your lives?

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate our PEACE through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you are the Light of the World. Thank you that because you are like light in the darkness I can always feel safe; I can always feel loved; I can always know what is right and wrong; I can always find my way to you. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

## **Wednesday, December 9: John 1:1-9**

A different John than John the Baptist wrote the Gospel of John and the Letters of John (1, 2, 3 John). This

author John (let's call him that for now), was a fisherman, brother of James, son of Zebedee, and a very close friend of Jesus – with Jesus all the way through to His resurrection (see John 21). I know it gets confusing!

Author John also uses the image of Jesus as the Light of the World. John tells the story of Jesus healing a man who had been born blind. Twice around that healing Jesus says, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12, 9:5). Think about a person who was born blind like that man.

- What would that have been like?
- Now imagine Jesus healing you so you can see. What would life be like now?

We know Jesus – and we can appreciate the "light" he give us: wisdom, direction, right and wrong, comfort, peace, joy, etc. (other things??). We cannot even begin to imagine what life without Him could look like! Let's be thankful that we do have Jesus, the Light of World, in our lives!

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you made each of us beautiful, special, precious and unique. Help us to thankful for who you made us. Help us also to help other people find Jesus. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

#### **Thursday, December 10: John 1:19-28**

Some people thought John the Baptist was the Saviour. Before Jesus started teaching people, John the Baptist was preaching and teaching. But John saw himself as a signpost, pointing toward the Saviour – Jesus. John, himself, was not the long-awaited Saviour.

Everyone needs to know about Jesus! Like John the baptist, we can help point people toward Jesus as "the reason for the season."

- In what ways can you point toward Jesus this Christmas?
- How can you keep Jesus at the centre of your Christmas celebrations?
- Who can you invite to church?
- Who could you talk to and who can you remind that Jesus is what Christmas is all about?

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, help me to keep You at the centre of my Christmas. Who can I talk with about You this Christmas? I pray for people who do not know that Christmas is all about You. May they come to know You and Love You, too. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus*

*that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

### **Friday, December 11: Luke 3:10-14 (or all of Luke 1-20)**

John the Baptist pointed people to Jesus, the Saviour. He also taught people that they need to live in God's way. Many people were living in ways that were acceptable in their society, but were not good enough for God.

- Some people were very rich (had two shirts) while some were very poor (had none);
- Some people were dishonest and cheated others (tax collectors collected more than they should have);
- Some people threatened people or stole from others (some really nasty soldiers did this, apparently).

God wants us to always do what is right.

- What are some of the ways in which you are tempted to do wrong things?
- What should you do when you are tempted to do something you know is wrong?

Hopefully, you can resist the temptation! Remember God does forgive us when we do mistakes!

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, give me the strength to be able to resist temptations. You know the things that are difficult for me (name them, if you wish). Please make me wise. Help me to do what is right. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

### **Saturday, December 12: Galatians 5:22-25**

These verses tell us how God wants us to live. What does each of these mean? How can you put it into practice in your life?

- Love: how can I be more loving today?
- Joy: what can I rejoice in? How can I be a joyful person?
- Peace: how can I have peace with other people? With God?
- Patience: pray that God would help you be a patient person ...
- Kindness: is there someone you can be extra kind to, today? How?
- Goodness: what does it mean to be a "good" person? How can you be good today?
- Faithfulness: how can you be faithful to God today? To your family? A friend?
- Gentleness: Who needs a gentle touch today? How can you encourage someone by being gentle?
- self-control: in what ways do you struggle with self-control? How can you work on that?

*"Follow the Spirit's leading in every part of your lives" - work on that this week!*

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you help us when we put our trust in you. Help me to trust you like Joseph did. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord help you to stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything with love today. (1 Corinthians 16:13)*

### **WEEK THREE: LOVE**

#### **Sunday, December 13: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a (up to "love never fails")**

This week we reflect on **LOVE**. There is a lot of love in the Christmas story. God loved the world so much, He sent Jesus. Zechariah and Elizabeth love God, love each other, and love John. Joseph and Mary love God, each other, and Jesus. We think about the amazing love God shows to us.

This chapter describes the kind of love God has for us, and the kind of love we are to have for one another. List each of the qualities of love in these verses on a piece of paper.

- Talk about each one. How being "patient" a part of love? How being "kind" essential to love? Etc...
- Apply each one to your life: how can I be patient? Kind? Etc...

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you are the God who loves me. Thank you that you show us your love through Jesus coming among us. Help me to love you. And help me to love my family and friends. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** *May we remember that "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." God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

#### **Monday, December 14: John 3:1-4, 16-17**

Nicodemus asks about what it means to be part of God's love – to be "born again" as a child of God. Jesus clearly talks about why Christmas happened – why He came (John 3:16).

How is this encouraging to you today? If you have not yet memorized John 3:16, do so! It is a wonderful summary of the gospel.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you so loved all the world that you gave you Son, Jesus, to save us. (If you have not yet prayed, telling Him that you believe in Jesus, this is a great time to do it! The Scripture simply say "Whoever believes in him" will be saved – Do you believe? Affirm that to God!) Thank you that you save me. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that *"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."* God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

## **Tuesday, December 15: 1 John 4:7-10**

*"This is how God showed his love among us ..."* Talk about how God showed His love through Jesus. How did Jesus show God's love? Though His teaching, His miracles, His healings, His helping people ... Ultimately, of course, Jesus showed God's love through dying for our sins upon the cross.

Christmas is the beginning of all of this. If Jesus had never been born, He could not have showed us all these things about God's love! Christmas is the beginning of something so wonderful ...

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you were born to show us how to live, to help people in trouble, and to pay the price for all our sins. Thank you that you are "God with me" when I need help. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that *"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."* God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

### **Wednesday, December 16: 1 John 4:11-16**

- Since God loves us so much, how ought we to treat one another?
- What does this mean in your home?

Verse 15-16 is a great promise – *"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."* If you are EVER tempted to think, "God doesn't really love ME" or "Maybe I'm not saved" remember these verses. If we believe Jesus is our Saviour, we are saved! Nothing can ever separate us from His love! That is great news.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that I am saved. You will never let me go. Help me to love my family and friends. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that *"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."* God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

### **Thursday, December 17: 1 John 5:1-5**

Note the strong theme of assurance in 5:1. If we believe in Jesus, we are saved. Period.

How ought we to show our love for Jesus? What commands do you know that we ought to do? (How about *"love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength"* – what does that mean? How about *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* – what does that mean?)

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that I am saved. Help me to love you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength (perhaps mention specific things that means in your life). Help me to love my neighbour as myself (specifics?). Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that *"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."* God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

### **Friday, December 18: Ephesians 1:1-10**

These verses tell us how much God loves us. We can do nothing to earn His love. He just loves us: it's His gift to us (that's what "grace" means – an undeserved, free, unconditional, never-to-be-paid-back gift).

Have you ever received a gift like that? Something that was undeserved, free, unconditional, never-to-be-paid-back? How did you feel?

God has saved us so that we can serve Him: what can you do for God (verse 10)?

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for the gift of your love. Help me to appreciate it so much. And help me know what I can do to serve You. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that *"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."* God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

### **Saturday, December 19: Luke 1:26-38**

- When the angel tells Mary she is going to have a baby – and Mary isn't married yet – she is "troubled"! This is not surprising. What does angel tell her? (Luke 1:30)
- When an angel appeared to Zechariah and was startled and afraid, what did the angel say? (Luke 1:13)
- When angels appeared to the shepherds in a field and they were afraid, what did the angels say? (Luke 2:10)

In each case, what does the angel say?

What are you afraid of? What does God say to you? This is an opportunity to talk about our fears and God's love. Because God loves us, we know that we are safe in His hands. He never leaves us. He always protects us. He will always do what is best for us. So ... *"Do not be afraid ..."*

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that I can pray to you about everything that bothers me.*

*Today I want to pray about (specific things). Thank you that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching, Over silent flocks by night, Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. The shepherds feared and trembled, When lo! above the earth, Rang out the angels' chorus that hailed the Savior's birth. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger, The humble Christ was born. And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**Blessing:** May we remember that "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." God so loved you that he gave his one and only Son, that as you believe in him you shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

## **WEEK FOUR: JOY**

### **Sunday, December 20: Luke 1:46-55**

This week we think about **JOY** – the joy that comes through the birth of the saviour, Jesus.

Mary rejoices in God's blessing on her life and the blessings that will come through Jesus, her son.

What blessings has God brought into your life? List them. Rejoice in them. Give thanks for them.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for all the blessings we have received from God: (be specific). Thank you that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)

### **Monday, December 21: Philippians 4:4-7**

Sometimes we just don't feel like being joyful. Paul wrote these sentences when he was a prisoner! He was stuck in a Roman prison, but he still could rejoice ... in the Lord!

What is his advice to you when you don't feel joyful?

Write out what he says:

- Do not be anxious about anything,
- in every situation – by prayer and petition – with thanksgiving – present your requests to God.

Then what happens?

- the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.  
**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.  
**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.  
**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, help me to be anxious for nothing. Help me be thankful. Thank you that I can bring all my requests to You. May your peace guard my heart and mind. Thank you that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always. (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)*

## **Tuesday, December 22: Luke 2:1-7**

Talk about how this reflection by Billy Graham gives us pause as we prepare for Christmas:

*"No room for Jesus? No room for the King of kings? No, but room for others and for other things. There was no room for Jesus in the world that he had made – imagine! Our lives are so full. There is so much to be done. But in all our busy activities are we in danger of excluding from our hearts and lives the One who made us? 'Oh, come to my heart, for Jesus; there is room in my heart for you.'"*

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.  
**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.  
**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.  
**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for the birth of Jesus. Help me make room in my heart for you. Be the centre of our Christmas this year. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always. (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)*

## **Wednesday, December 23: Luke 2:8-14**

Imagine the life of a shepherd. It was a tough life – cold and thankless. It was meagre life – poor paying and low status. It was a dull life – monotonous and boring. And then all heaven breaks loose! Can you imagine? None of us can even begin to comprehend what it is like for an angel of the Lord to appear, surrounded by the radiance of the Lord's glory. And then to have the angel speak. *"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"* Then to have the angel joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."*

How can you celebrate Jesus as the centre of Christmas this year? Why not make a birthday cake for Jesus? On Christmas day you can sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus and blow out the candles?

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.  
**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.  
**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for Jesus. Help me to remember that Christmas is first of all about Him and His birth. Thank you that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)

#### **Thursday, December 24: Luke 2:15-20 (Christmas Eve Service, 7 p.m.)**

The shepherds could easily have enjoyed the angels' celebration and stayed in their fields. But they didn't. They went to find Him. They spent time with Him.

At our Christmas Eve service we will spend some time worshipping Jesus! In all of the excitement of Christmas, remember to find time for Him! Talk about how Jesus is at the centre of your Christmas this year.

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you that you are the reason for Christmas. Thank you for all the fun and joy I can have this time of year. Help me, though, to keep you in the centre of it all. Thank you that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)

#### **Friday, December 25: Reread Luke 2:1-20**

Celebrate Jesus' birth today! Have a party! And talk about who Jesus is: your Saviour, your King, your Creator, your Sustainer, your Comforter, your Mighty God, your Wonderful Counselor, your Prince of peace, your Deliverer, your Shepherd, your Healer, your Provider, your Hope, your Rock, your Salvation, your Joy ...

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**LIGHT THE FIFTH CANDLE:** This is the CHRIST CANDLE, celebrating Jesus' birth, today!

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for this day when we celebrate your birth! Thank you for all the blessings you bring into my life! Thank you for the joy of knowing that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains*

*Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)

### **Saturday, December 26: Matthew 2:1-6**

The Magi travelled thousands of kilometres to come to worship Jesus. What would have been some of the challenges along the way?

At times it is hard to keep remembering Jesus and to keep following Him. Pray that God would help you keep the spirit of Christmas – focussed on Jesus – first in your life

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**LIGHT THE FIFTH CANDLE:** This is the CHRIST CANDLE, celebrating Jesus' birth!

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you for so much for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for all the blessings you bring into my life! Thank you for the joy of knowing that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)

### **Sunday, December 27: Read Matthew 2:1-12 (only one service @ 11:00 today)**

Offer your gifts to Jesus today: the gifts of your love, your worship, your time, your obedience, and your life ... what does it mean to give yourself to Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, I want you to be first in my heart. I want you to help me think about good things. I want to do the right things. I want to love you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. Thank you for all the blessings you bring into my life! Thank you for the joy of knowing that I am your child. Thank you that you love me. Help me love and obey you. Amen.*

**Light the first candle:** We light this candle to remember the HOPE we have in Jesus.

**Light the second candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the PEACE we have through Jesus.

**Light the third candle:** We light this candle to celebrate the LOVE of God, shown to us through Jesus.

**Light the fourth candle:** We light this candle with JOY; we want to worship Jesus this Christmas.

**LIGHT THE FIFTH CANDLE:** This is the CHRIST CANDLE, celebrating Jesus' birth, today!

**Song:** *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord of peace and joy give you His peace and His joy at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.* (adapted from 2 Thessalonians 3:16)