



THE WEARY WORLD REJOICES

**An Advent Devotional for
When It DOESN'T Feel Like Christmas**



For more than a millennium, Christians around the world have set aside a season to remember and proclaim the arrival (or “advent”) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The story of Christmas is way more than just one day can hold. We need a whole season to marvel at the incarnation of our Lord. We need time to let our hearts prepare him room. We need space to retell his story to our friends and family.

But life doesn’t often create time and space for us to reflect on the gospel. In fact, for many of us, our circumstances make it difficult to celebrate at all this Christmas season. Sometimes, it doesn’t feel like Christmas, and so we need a little help to see the light of Christ in the darkness around us.

We designed this devotional for that purpose—to help our church family remember and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, right there in the middle of the ups and downs of real life.

The devotional begins on December 1. Each entry takes a few verses from the Summit Bible Reading Plan for the day and provides a Christmas devotion, with an opportunity for you to respond. It should take about 10 minutes each day to do.

At the end of each entry we’ve provided a prompt for “Engaging with Kids.” Whether you spend time with kids this season because you are a parent, a doting aunt or uncle, a caregiver, or an invested community member, these prompts will help you contextualize the verses you are reading. Celebrating Christmas with kids always seems to make it more fun, and practicing Advent with kids may increase your sense of wonder. You can use these prompts every day, once a week, or just when it works out. Whether you choose to use these prompts with kids or not, we hope that they help you reclaim the joy of this season.

So from the young ones making their first Christmas memories, to those who have celebrated more Christmases than we can recall, this Advent season we join the crowd of Christians who came before us, along with our brothers and sisters around the world, to welcome the King again as we await his return in glory.

Day 1

“Word of the Father Now in Flesh Appearing”

Christy Thornton

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.” - 1 John 1:1–2 (ESV)

The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the greatest miracle in the history of the world.

In Jesus, God has come to us. He didn't just send a messenger to tell us about him. He didn't just send us a book so we could read about him. God himself came to us by becoming human, just like us. He became hearable, seeable, and touchable—just like we are.

And he is still nearby. As we hear the gospel, God invites us to know him through Jesus and to enjoy eternal life in him. All you have to do is believe, and you can have this life (John 20:31). That's what Christmas is all about!

But as incredible as that sounds, sometimes the wonder of God's arrival (or “advent”) gets lost in the shuffle. Sometimes, the miraculous feels mundane. Sometimes, the amazing feels ordinary. Sometimes, life is just difficult, and Christmas feels less wonder-filled and more burden-filled. Sometimes, Christmas just doesn't feel like Christmas.

So it's good for us to spend a season looking beyond our immediate circumstances—to stop and remember the miracle of God becoming human for us, to cultivate wonder and worship, and to ignite the fires of hope as we let the light of Jesus Christ burst through our darkness like the break of dawn.

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Respond: Take a minute to look beyond your immediate circumstances and adore Jesus. Write three things that are incredible about God becoming human, and pray those back to God in awe and adoration.

Engage with Kids: Sing “O Come, All Ye Faithful” together. Talk about what it means to adore someone and why we should adore Jesus. Answer the question together, “How do we adore him?”

Day 2

“God and Sinners Reconciled!”

Madison Collier

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” - 1 John 2:1–2

This time of year, we carry so much anticipation. We look forward to Christmas parties, opening gifts, and spending time with the ones we love. As we look forward to the next event, meal, or present, it's easy for us to lose touch with ourselves. We may even be unaware of some of the ways we mishandle the holiday hustle.

So let's take a moment and check in with ourselves. It may seem counterintuitive to look inward at a time of year that focuses outward by buying gifts for others and reflecting on Jesus' coming. However, while we remember that Jesus came into the world, we can neglect to recall that God sent him into the world because of us, his little children. The great display of Jesus “empty[ing] himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7), came from God's great love for we hopeless sinners.

Don't let the idea of you being a hopeless sinner lead you to despair and further disconnect you from the Advent season. Let it resonate with your need for a Savior. God knew you would still fall into sin and had mercy on you by sending his Son. Let joy and gratitude pour out with the knowledge that he prepared Jesus as our advocate and propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins.

While we prepare ourselves for the physical celebrations, we must not neglect our spiritual preparation. John encourages us with ways to be mindful in order to help keep us from sinning. He reminds us that we avoid sinning through abiding in God and keeping his commandments. When we don't do that perfectly, we can lean into the knowledge that Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection cover our sins and that he is advocating for us, even now. Glory to the newborn King.

Respond: In what ways are you overlooking your spiritual well-being and falling into sin? Take a moment to confess your sins, remember the gospel, and ask for forgiveness. Then, praise God that Jesus was born to be our advocate.

Engage with Kids: Ask the question, “If sin is the problem, how is Christmas part of the solution?” Talk about all the things that come up: What is sin? What is Christmas? Why did Jesus need to be born as a human? How are we saved from our sin? Guide kids to draw or write their answer to the original question.

Day 3

“The Family of God”

David Parisher

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” - 1 John 3:1

Advent is a time to celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, as a baby. In Advent, we remember that Jesus was made like us “in every respect” (Hebrews 2:17). He shares our humanity and is not ashamed to call us sisters and brothers (Hebrews 2:11). He is the one that made it possible for us to become part of God’s family, through his life, death, and resurrection. What a great joy for us, to be called God’s children and treated as his heirs!

At Christmas, many of us will gather with our earthly families to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We plan for it to be a time of great joy and happiness, but it so often does not work out the way we intend. Instead, Christmas becomes a time where anxiety, stress, and difficulty grow inside us. Families are broken. Plans overwhelm us. Grief over absent family members can overtake our hearts. At times, the events around Christmas can feel less like a celebration and more like an obligation.

As we prepare for this time with (or without) family members at Christmas, it is good for us to remember that we have been adopted into God’s family. He brought us near to himself and he wants us in his tribe. No amount of grief or brokenness changes that reality. We can rejoice that our heavenly Father loves us as his dear children and has promised to never leave us or forsake us. We can celebrate the birth of Jesus regardless of our family circumstances because we have been adopted into a greater family—a lasting one from which we will never be separated. Praise the Lord!

Respond: Name one thing that is difficult for you this Christmas season. Spend time sharing your burden with God and remind yourself that you can trust him with it. Praise and thank your heavenly Father that we have been adopted into his forever family.

Engage with Kids: Ask kids how people can tell they belong in their family. Do they have their mother's eyes? Do they laugh just like their grandpa? Do they wear matching shirts on vacation? Discuss: What does it mean to be a part of someone's family? Read 1 John 3:1 and talk about what it means to be a part of God's family. Why does it show God's love that we are called his children?

Day 4

“The Most Profound Truth in All of Scripture”

Chris Pappalardo

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” - 1 John 4:9–10

You may not know the name Karl Barth, but he is widely regarded as the most influential theologian of the twentieth century. Toward the end of his life, Barth delivered a lecture at the University of Chicago. A Q&A followed, in which a student asked Barth, “Can you summarize your life’s work and theology in a sentence?”

His answer? “Yes, I can. In the words of a song I learned at my mother’s knee, ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’”

Barth spent his life digging into the intricacies of theology. He wrote more books than most of us will *read* in a lifetime. But in the end, what moved Barth most deeply is what still stops *me* in my tracks today—the reality of God’s love for us.

God loves me. God loves you. The words sound so simple, even cliché. *Of course* God loves us! That’s not news. Can we get on to the *real* stuff?

But Barth was onto something: *This is the real stuff*. Just look to the Apostle John. He clearly never got over Jesus’ great love for him. In his Gospel, for instance, he referred to himself not by name, but simply as “the one whom Jesus loved.” His identity became so wrapped up in Jesus’ love for him that it was the only thing that mattered.

This Advent, don’t rush past the basic truth of the Christmas story: God loves us, and the birth of Jesus is proof. Jesus entered our brokenness and barrenness, our sorrow and strife. He did it so we would have life. He did it so we would have love.

Don’t miss it: Jesus loves *you*.

Respond: What words come to mind when you think of yourself? Write down a few of them here. Then, underneath all of them, write “Beloved.” Because in Christ, *this* is the most fundamental truth of who you are.

Engage with Kids: Sing “Jesus Loves Me” together. Talk about what this song has to do with Christmas. How did Jesus prove his love for us?

Day 5

“O Come, O Bright and Morning Star”

Jacob Tarver

“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” - 1 John 5:11–12

Whether we want to admit it or not, darkness can be terrifying. Not just the kind of darkness that makes us reach for a night-light to sleep—which is scary enough! But total darkness, like that found in the depths of a cave or at the bottom of the ocean, strikes terror in the heart of any reasonable person. Anybody want to go explore those places without a light? *I’m good, thanks. I’ll stick with my night-light!*

The New Testament describes Jesus as light. A light that shines so brightly that darkness cannot overcome it. A light that offers life (John 1:4–5). He is the light that came down from heaven to bring light and life to the darkness that entraps us. How beautiful!

But what about when it feels like we can’t escape the darkness? When it feels like every remnant of light has faded and the darkness gets darker still, or when our friend or family member is sick? When the severed relationship just seems impossible to repair? When the feelings of loneliness, fear, or anxiety settle in, and we lose sight of hope altogether?

Jesus descended to that darkness for us on the cross. The light faded. Darkness seemed to win—until that third day dawned and the light and life of Jesus Christ rose again, defeating darkness forever. This is the hope we have in the gospel.

We will face darkness here on earth, but we have the hope of eternal life. While this may not cure our current circumstances or pain, it lifts our eyes to that coming day when pain and suffering will be no more. One day, the darkness will be finished for good.

Rejoice that God has given us eternal life through his Son!

Respond: Light a candle and sing or reflect on this refrain from “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:

O come, O Bright and Morning Star, and bring us comfort from afar!

Dispel the shadows of the night and turn our darkness into light.

Engage with Kids: Sit together in a darkened room. Challenge kids to see how long they can sit still and quiet. (Hold hands or pat backs to reassure if needed.) Light a candle or turn on a flashlight. Ask kids what difference the light makes. Are they more comfortable when they can see? Talk about how Jesus is the light that helps us see our way through this life.

Day 6

“Love Was Born at Christmas”

Kristy Wallace

“And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. ... Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

- 2 John 5–6, 9

We're familiar with Jesus' command to abide in him, but this passage gives a little more detail to the instruction: “Abide in the *teaching* of Christ.” And what is the teaching of Christ? Well, it's fully contained in the Gospels, but it's safe to start where Jesus did: love. Jesus repeatedly told his disciples to love God, love each other, and love their neighbors. Why? Because “by this all people will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35).

This Christmas season, take up the challenge to love.

- Love your family when they're difficult to schedule.
- Love your nephew when he declares your gift “boring.”
- Love your coworkers when the company party gets a little too jolly.
- Love your neighbors when they complain about the wattage of your light display.
- Love your children when they refuse to smile for the Christmas card photo.
- Love your roommate when she brings out her mismatched decorations.
- Love your friend by inviting him to the Christmas service for the 17th time, even if he's said no the first 16.
- Love the lost by celebrating Christmas with worship and the good news of the gospel.
- Love the hurting by serving joyfully.
- Love your God by praising his name each day of this Advent season.

In the words of her classic hymn, Christina Rossetti reminds us that God is love and so, “love was born at Christmas.” She urges us to “worship ... our Jesus,” and claims that “love shall be our token.” When Christ

was born, *love* came to live among us. This is cause for worship, and worship leads to the overflowing of his love through us. How will you love one another this season?

Respond: Look at your calendar for the coming week. Where can you make space for showing love to someone? Are you having a meeting with a cranky coworker or client? Do you have free time you could use to serve your community? Pray that God would lead you to walk in love this week for his glory.

Engage with Kids: Help kids to make a drawing of concentric circles. Tell them to write the name of someone they see every day on the smallest circle, someone they see every week on the next circle, and so on. Use leading questions to help kids identify people they interact with and how they can show love to those around them this week.

Week 1 Family Worship



READ 1 John 4:7–12



PRAY Praise God because he is love. He always loves perfectly. Ask God for his love to fill your hearts and overflow to those around you.



SING “[Love Came Down at Christmas](#)”

Make-It-Stick Activity

Make a plan for your family to show love to others together this weekend. This could be friends, neighbors, or someone in your community. Here are some ideas:

- Shop together for gifts for one of our local partners or a program like Angel Tree, Operation Christmas Child, etc. Talk about how the kid(s) who receives gifts from you may never know who you are, but they (or their grownups) can still experience God's love through your giving.
- Make cookies or other treats and hand-deliver to neighbors, nursing home residents, or another intentionally chosen group. Use the opportunity to wish people a Merry Christmas and share why you are excited to celebrate this season.
- Help kids give away a special gift to their class, team, or neighborhood friends. Depending on your budget, this could be something lasting like a book about the Nativity, or something as simple as handmade cards. Either way, emphasize helping kids share why Christmas is special to them.
- Go caroling! This is a great chance to sing Christmas hymns, give out inviter cards for Christmas services, or even share the gospel with a captive audience.
- Get creative! You can show love in many different ways. Find what works for your family.

Day 7

“Imitating the Good That Comes from God”

Eric Stortz

“Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.” - 3 John 11

Have you ever been stuck? Caught in patterns of behavior or circumstances that you just could not seem to change? It can be miserable, aggravating, and even burdensome to feel like you can't find the way out. We all have this experience at some point in our lives.

God knows that about us. He knows our weaknesses and our failings, but he does not abandon us in our misery. We know this about God because of Christmas—because he sent his Son, Jesus, to walk among us.

Before the first Christmas, the world was stuck in evil and doomed to repeat generations of oppressive behavior. Even God's people committed horrible sins and could not break through into righteous living for a very long time. Then, Jesus came to earth. Finally, humanity had the perfect image of what a sinless person could be. His love was pure. His mercy was boundless. His words were wise, and his work was effective. Jesus put God's glory on display in everything he did and said.

Because of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, you have been given a choice. You can imitate your Savior by faith in him, or you can go back to the old ways of living. You can demonstrate that God is the source of your motivations and behaviors. Or you can forget all about him and live by your own standards. John made clear in his first letter that you will never imitate Jesus perfectly on earth. Still, Jesus broke us out of the evil that enveloped the world. He is the way for us to be made righteous.

Respond: Name one aspect of your life that Jesus has changed since you came to know him. Thank him for breaking the chains of evil in your life. Tell him that you embrace the purifying work of his Spirit in your life.

Engage with Kids: Explain that sin is doing things *my way* instead of God's way. Work together to name an example of how we could choose our way and an example of how we could choose God's way in each of these parts of celebrating Christmas: gifts, calendar (scheduling our time), food, worship, parties/gatherings. Help kids see that doing things God's way shows his love to others and shows that we are his children.

Day 8

“Waiting for Mercy”

Eric Stortz

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt.” - Jude 20–22

The Gospels tell us about Simeon and Anna, two people that waited decades to see the arrival of God’s chosen Messiah (or Christ). They represent God’s people on a larger scale, who had been in exile for generations. They had faith that God would act on their behalf and restore his people once again. Still, the waiting was difficult. They experienced difficulties and hardships, passing their days under the rule of foreign kings for centuries.

They were waiting for God’s mercy to bring them a better life, and their faith would be rewarded. It took time for God’s people to experience salvation, but the mercy they experienced through Christ was worth the wait. Through him, the world would be forever changed.

Looking back, we now know the full breadth of God’s mercy in Christ’s first coming. But we still have some waiting to do. We don’t yet live in a world free of brokenness and sorrow. God *will* put an end to suffering and make the world righteous once and for all. But we are still waiting, as Jude reminds us, for God’s mercy to play out to completion.

How should we wait? Jude gives us two big keys: 1) Build yourselves up in faith. Pray to God, who showers you with love. Remember who is working in you and in the world to make it better. 2) Show others mercy. Be a living display of the mercy God has shown you and will show you when he completes our restoration.

Respond: Think back to when you were younger and you were waiting for Christmas to come. Was there a present that you got that you were hoping for? Was there someone in your family that you hadn't seen for a while? What did it look like to wait with anticipation? How did it feel to get what you wished for after all that waiting? Take a few moments to pray, describing to God your anticipation for the restoration he will bring in the future.

Engage with Kids: Help kids think of something they have waited for or looked forward to. How did they feel when that day/thing finally came? Have they experienced waiting for something that never came? How did that feel? Explain that Advent is a time when we think about how amazing it is that Jesus came to rescue us from our sin. Remind them that everyone who lived before that time followed God with hope of a day that was coming. We have the gift of knowing that the day already came, and at Christmas we can celebrate that wonderful gift.

Day 9

“It Is Good to Be Near God”

Matt Betts

“I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. ... But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the LORD GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.” - Psalm 73:22–23, 28

The psalmist hits the nail on the head by comparing himself to an animal (Psalm 73:22–23). [Dallas Willard](#) illustrates this point, explaining that we are like a dog watching a game of chess. The dog has no idea what’s going on—he’s just happy to be there. He’s content to be near his master even though he can’t understand what’s happening around him.

We may feel like the psalmist—disoriented when we try to understand the work of God in the midst of a messy world and an evil culture.

Advent, the coming of Christ, speaks to a gospel of nearness where God comes near to us in the mess and turmoil of life. Or in the words of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we mourn “in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.”

Even now, we live in lonely exile until the Son of God appears. You may feel as though your life is a slippery slope that you are just stumbling through (Psalm 73:2). You may feel as though everyone else is doing better than you, including those who hate God (73:3). You may feel as though everything you’ve done for God is in vain (73:13). Your soul may be on the verge of bitterness (73:21).

This is where God meets you—in the lonely exile.

Here, with him, we find peace. Here, with him, we find salvation. Here, with him, we find hope and refuge. Here, with him, we see the goodness of God—that God comes to be near to you in Jesus Christ. Will you come near to him?

Respond: Follow the pattern of Psalm 73 prayerfully. Spend a few moments being honest with God about your questions, doubts, grief, and frustration. Write them down. But don't stay there. Take the "nevertheless" bridge in Psalm 73:23. Bring your heart to the truth that Jesus is near. He is the refuge for your soul. "For me it is good to be near God."

Engage with Kids: Ask kids to name something that is hard for them to understand or accept about the world or about their life. Show them how to pray honestly to God, "I don't know why this is the way it is, but I trust in you. Help me be close to you and learn more about who you are."

Day 10

“God Is Not Dead, Nor Does He Sleep”

Chris Pappalardo

“Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence. Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame; let the poor and needy praise your name. Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!” - Psalm 74:20–22

On a Christmas Day during the American Civil War, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow heard nearby church bells ring out, reminding everyone of God’s promise of peace. But as Longfellow looked at his broken country, all he saw was violence and loss:

And in despair I bowed my head;
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;
 “For hate is strong,
 And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”

Most of us have felt what he felt. Like Longfellow, like the psalmist, we look around at our world and see a “land full of violence.” The poor are crushed. The wicked succeed. Injustice seems to be winning.

Or it may be more personal: You approach this year’s Christmas with one more heartache, one more chronic pain, one more empty chair at your table.

Advent does not attempt to explain away any of the darkness around us. Quite the contrary: Jesus was born *into* that darkness as God’s vehicle of overcoming it. The birth of Jesus is the answer to the psalmist’s prayer, the fulfillment of the covenant God made to Israel—and, by extension, to us. It was God’s plan to take all the darkness and make it light, to take all the wrongs and make them right.

When we see Christmas like this, we can look straight into a world of darkness and reply, as Longfellow did in the closing stanza of his poem:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;

The Wrong shall fail,

The Right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men.”

Respond: Where in your life does it seem that God is absent? What would it look like for you to choose to trust that “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep”?

Engage with Kids: Have kids list all the bad things in the world they can think of. What's scary? What makes them sad? Go through the list one by one and ask, “Is God (bigger/stronger/more powerful) than ___?” Help them see that he is. Pray together, praising God for being super big, strong, wonderful, powerful, and loving.

Day 11

“The Swaddled Infant Is the Crucified King”

Christy Thornton

“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.” - Psalm 75:8

In the Christmas season, Christian traditions weave their way into pop culture. Choruses of “Hark the Herald!” ring out in movies and sitcoms, and we even hear the words of Luke 2 recited by Linus at the crescendo of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Christmas draws people into Christianity, perhaps because it feels nonthreatening. After all, the whole thing focuses on a baby. How threatening can he be, anyway?

But the Christmas story extends far beyond the baby in the manger.

God created humanity to know, love, and obey him. But from the very first humans onward, every person who has ever lived has chosen to disobey God. And every one of us has earned the cup of God’s just punishment—every human but One.

Jesus never disobeyed God from his first day until his last, and he took on himself the penalty we deserved. That’s why he came. He was born to die and rise again.

That baby in the manger is the man on the cross. As he grew, he never lost his innocence and yet was counted among the wicked. He was clean of sin’s stain and yet clothed himself in our filthy rags.

That baby became the man who drank the foaming cup of God’s wrath. He drained the cup of our punishment down to the dregs and filled the cup of our salvation with the sweet wine of his blood. He died so that we might live.

So now, as we enjoy the Christmas traditions, we remember and proclaim that the swaddled infant is the crucified King. That’s what Christmas is all about!

Respond: Pray and ask God to show you one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Pray for God to give you opportunity and courage to share the gospel with them this Christmas.

Engage with Kids: Make a timeline of Jesus' life together. Don't overcomplicate it. Use markers or crayons. Use drawings instead of words. Talk about how each part of Jesus' life was important for us. He was born as a human so that he could feel the things we feel and experience what temptation was like. He did miracles and taught so that people would know what God is like. He died to take the punishment that we earned, even though he never sinned. He rose to life to show that he is more powerful than sin or death.

Day 12

“With the Dawn of Redeeming Grace”

Meghan Curtin

“You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.” - Psalm 77:14–15

Have you ever been so overwhelmed by your troubles that you can't find comfort even in God? Have you ever, bewildered and despairing, asked, “God, have you changed?” Maybe this Christmas season finds you more weary than rejoicing because of painful memories, present stressors, or uncertainty about your future. If so, you're not alone.

Read Psalm 77. Be honest with yourself and with God about your joys, fears, and sorrows.

The psalmist wonders if God has stopped being all that he has known him to be: favorable, gracious, compassionate, faithful (vv. 7–9). His soul refuses to be comforted. When he thinks of God, he moans (vv. 1–3). The Israelites must have asked similar questions when God stopped sending prophets for hundreds of years between Malachi and John the Baptist. Where was he? Would he fulfill his promise to redeem them?

Then, God answered.

Zechariah recognized God's voice. He understood that his son, John, would prepare the way for the one who would redeem God's people from slavery to sin:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1:68–69).

Like the psalmist, we can lament in this Christmas season. And like the psalmist, we can remember the past works of the Lord as testimonies that God is still faithful. Since he kept his promise to send a Savior and King for Israel and for all who “walk in darkness,” we can trust him to be with us, keep us in his love, and bring us into his glory forever.

Respond: Praise God for redeeming a people for himself—including you, if you have trusted his Redeemer, Jesus! Reflect and thank him for a past instance of “tender mercy” (Luke 1:78) toward you specifically.

Engage with Kids: Talk about how things change. How do animals change over time (stages, development, etc.)? How do people change as they get older (physically or in regard to things like wisdom, character, etc.)? How does a building change over time (paint chips, floors creak, etc.)? Explain that God never changes. He is the only unchangeable being in existence. When we feel like he's far away or has forgotten us, we can go back to his Word to be reminded what he's like, or we can remind each other of ways we have seen his goodness.

Day 13

“Shepherd and King”

Toiya Williams

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.” - Psalm 78:70–72

A shepherd cares for his sheep. Why would God use a shepherd to become a king?

In the story of David, God takes a simple young man caring for his sheep and makes him a very important man who began caring for people instead. From the family of King David would come a ruler who would shepherd the people of Israel (Matthew 2:6).

The simple fact that in the Old Testament, King David was once a shepherd points to a much greater Shepherd to come. This Shepherd would not leave his sheep to become a king, but instead would be a King who would leave his throne in heaven to come and be a Shepherd here on earth—a shepherd of people.

A shepherd’s job is to care for the sheep. He makes sure that his sheep have every need met and cares deeply for them. Sometimes, what we experience in life is really hard. We may feel sad, angry, or hopeless. In Jesus, we can have hope because he cares for us.

During this time of waiting on Christmas, we can remember that Jesus Christ is known as the “good shepherd.” What makes Jesus a good shepherd is that he “lays down his life for the sheep” and says, “I know my own and my own know me” (John 10:11, 14). We can follow this good shepherd.

In a world where we can sometimes wonder if we “belong,” we see that the Bible tells us that God is loving and cares for us. We can believe that God had a plan to bring a King to earth to save us, to guide us as his people, and to call others to become one of his sheep. The good Shepherd and King guides us and never leaves us. We can trust him! With that, we can hope during this Advent season. The King is coming!

Respond: Reflect on the past year. What has been hard? In what ways have you grown? Pray, asking God to show you where he has cared for you through these things. Praise him for the help, community, love, or encouragement he has provided in your life.

Engage with Kids: Search in advance for videos on YouTube of sheep being dumb. Watch a few, have a good laugh, and then talk about the important role a shepherd plays. Discuss: How is God a shepherd to us?

Week 2 Family Worship



READ Psalm 77:11–15



PRAY Praise God for the wonderful things he has done. Ask him to remind you of his words so that you can hope in him and keep his commandments.



SING ["The King Is Coming"](#)

Make-It-Stick Activity

Using Matthew 1 as a guide, make a family tree for Jesus. This doesn't need to be perfect. Use color! Have fun. While you work together, talk about what you know of the people in Jesus' family line. Talk about how God works through all things and makes all things work together.

Day 14

“The King of Kings Salvation Brings”

Jacob Tarver

“Do not remember against us our former iniquities; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!” - Psalm 79:8–9

“The King of kings salvation brings” is a line we sing so often at Christmas that we can overlook its weight. **By his blood, Jesus purchased salvation, freed us from sin, and reconciled us to God.** Read that last sentence again.

Do you believe that? Or do you view God as keeping a list of your sins, looking down on you in condemnation? Maybe the reason it doesn't feel like Christmas is because you are stuck in sin, and it feels like you can't escape. *Why would God send his Son for someone broken, like me?*

Friend, it is precisely because of our brokenness that God sent his Son. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). He is a Father who loves his children and would do anything to get them back, not a tyrant keeping a list of your sins.

In fact, the psalmist says that God removes our transgression and sin from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). This is why Jesus came. He bore the weight of our sin and shame on the cross so that we could have a relationship with his loving Father.

Repent and believe. Forgiveness is a free gift; you need only to receive it.

Respond: Take a pencil and write out any way you've sinned recently. Then, erase each one, saying, "In Christ, God does not remember against me my former iniquities," and receive God's forgiveness. God doesn't keep a list of your past sins. You don't need to either.

Engage with Kids: Because of the good news of Jesus, we can be saved. When we are saved, God looks at us and sees Jesus' goodness. Make a list of sins you have been guilty of. Now, draw a line and make a second list. What is it about Jesus that can take the place of your sins in God's eyes? For example: If you sometimes lie (first list), good news: Jesus is the truth (second list). If you sometimes hate your brother (first list), good news: Jesus is love (second list).

Day 15

“God Longs to Satisfy Us”

Lesley Hildreth

“Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. But he would feed you with the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” - Psalm 81:13–16

The writer begins this psalm by calling people to worship. But in our verses above, we see the speaker shift—no longer does the psalmist call the people to worship, but God himself calls to his people. They have forgotten his faithfulness and have disobeyed his commands. Even still, he calls out to them.

Time and again, God was willing to restore Israel if they would come back to him in faith and repentance. God promised safety from their enemies and prosperity in the Promised Land. God longed to satisfy his people, if only they would hear and respond.

God’s desire to satisfy his people is most evident in the gift of his Son. Jesus came to us, lived among us, and continues to live within us through the Holy Spirit. He lived the life we could never live and paid the price for our sins so that we could receive the ultimate, eternal satisfaction in him.

Christ is our rock from whom the sweetest of honey flows, and nothing in this world can compare to him. Nothing can satisfy us like he does. Advent is a time to remember our Savior, to worship him, to gather with others, and to give him praise—to delight in our all-satisfying God.

Respond: Ask God to reveal to you if and where you are looking for satisfaction outside of him. If needed, confess and repent. What is one action step you can take this week to turn away from those things? Praise God for the gift we have in Christ. This week, who can you call to worship Christ and find satisfaction in him?

Engage with Kids: Chat over a shared dessert, snack, or meal. What does this food satisfy (e.g., hunger, craving, need for nutrients or energy)? What things does God satisfy?

Day 16

“A Light in the Darkness”

David Parisher

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!” - Psalm 84:11–12

The birth of Jesus is the greatest gift that the world has ever received. His birth was light in the darkness of this world (Isaiah 9:2; John 8:12), a sun during the night. As the angels sang on a dark night thousands of years ago, the events of the first Christmas signaled that God’s favor would again rest on his people (Luke 2:13–14). We celebrate with the angels when we hear this good news proclaimed every Christmas!

As we celebrate this Advent season, we remember that Jesus is our light in a dark world. He is the greatest blessing that we could ever receive. The psalmist tells us here that the Lord bestows favor and honor on his people. God’s favor has never been more evident than when he sent us his one and only Son.

Sometimes, it feels like the darkness in our world snuffs out all the good. Our circumstances so easily squelch our joy and make the world feel dimmer. Yet, the glory of Jesus shines ever brighter than the darkness we feel. We need only to let his light radiate through the darkness of our circumstances. He shines forth as we meditate on his goodness, lifting our eyes from the lesser things that draw our gaze away from him.

The poem “When Shiloh Came” by Marie Butler sums this up well:

A light in the darkness—a wonderful thing—
A babe in the manger, the heir of a king.
From the palace of God came a guest in the night
To a manger and darkness, and sorrow and blight.
The seed of a woman, the brightest and best,
The blossom of ages, the promise of rest.

Respond: Spend some time thanking God for how he has been light in the darkness in your life this year. How have you seen the Lord be a sun (comfort) and shield (protector) to you? Thank God for his faithfulness and provision.

Engage with Kids: Name some of your favorite things. What Christmas carol, dessert, or movie is everyone's favorite? Explain that when something is our favorite, that means we love it the most. We want more of it. When God shows us his favor, he is giving us more of himself. He is showing that he loves us.

Day 17

“When Mercy and Holiness Meet”

Daniel Riggs

“Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.” - Psalm 85:10

How is it possible that God can simultaneously be just and loving?

Have you ever heard that question? Have you ever asked that question yourself? Most of us wonder that at some point.

We so often feel the tension between God’s love and his perfection. If God is perfectly holy, then he cannot bear to allow sin to exist unpunished. But if God is perfectly loving, then he cannot possibly bear to punish his own creation. And those two statements must surely contradict each other. Right?

But that’s where Jesus enters the picture.

You see, in Christ, God’s “steadfast love and faithfulness meet.” In Christ, “righteousness and peace kiss each other.” By sending Jesus, God shows us that not only is he righteous—and as a result, punishes sin—but he is also loving and peaceful. And he wants to impart all of those attributes to us.

Jesus is God in the flesh, and he lived the perfect, sinless life to become the only acceptable sacrifice for sin on our behalf—and that’s good news for us!

When we look ahead to the sacrificial work Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, God proves himself to be both perfectly just and righteous—punishing the sinless, perfect Son for the sins of the world (1 John 2:1–2) and, at the same time, perfectly faithful and loving—providing the way of salvation for all who repent and believe.

Respond: Grab your phone (or your CD player, or your phonograph, or whatever you've got) and listen to one of the all-time classics: "O Little Town of Bethlehem." (I recommend Frank Sinatra's version, personally.) Listen to the words carefully and reflectively, picturing Jesus—eternity's greatest gift, given to us—at his birth. And just like the psalmist promised that "steadfast love and faithfulness" would meet, there he lay. "The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in thee tonight."

Engage with Kids: Listen to or sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" together. Talk about this song. What does it mean for hopes and fears to meet? How does Jesus offer hope that answers all of our fears?

Day 18

“Hello Darkness, My Old Friend”

Matt Betts

“Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.” - Psalm 88:16–18

John of the Cross called what the psalmist experienced in Psalm 88 the [“dark night of the soul.”](#) In many psalms, lament is followed by praise, but here, there is no upward turn. The psalmist ends by declaring that darkness is his only friend and companion. We can feel the pain in his soul. Darkness tends to work this way. It turns our world upside down and leaves us disoriented. Under the crushing weight of our circumstances, we can even believe that God is the enemy and darkness is our only true friend.

Whether you are in a dark season that feels hopeless, or you are in the dark because you are far from God and his light, heed these words from Tim Keller: “We may hear our hearts say, ‘It’s hopeless!’ but we should argue back.”¹ The greatest “argument” of all against darkness is the gospel.

It was no accident that the circumstances around Jesus’ birth occurred at night. He entered the world as we sat in darkness—physically and spiritually. He broke through our darkness like the dawn. Jesus is our sunrise (Luke 1:78) who gives light to all those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Still today, he willingly enters into your darkness to bring his light. He can pierce through darkness of mind, body, and soul to bring love, truth, and hope. He illuminates the darkness, revealing its scheme to pose as your friend and orienting you to his truth. Jesus is your source of light and your truest friend.

¹ Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (Penguin Group, 2013), 289.

Respond: Set a two-minute timer and create a list of ways you feel tempted to focus on the darkness in your circumstances. Write your sorrows to God. Then, set a four-minute timer and write about Jesus' light—his goodness, the gospel, and his hope. Lift your gaze and remember the truth.

Engage with Kids: Discuss: When you feel scared or worried, what helps? (Allow talk time before moving on to the next question.) If you keep thinking about the scary thing and talking about it, does that make it better? No! You need to set your mind on something better or find safety (in a grownup, a friend, or a new place). It's okay to say when we are scared, but to move past being scared, we need to set our mind and eyes on something better.

Day 19

“Advent Promises”

Joseph Scarfone

“I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, ‘Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.’ You have said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: “I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.”” - Psalm 89:1–4

We firmly stand on the promises of God and the fulfillment of those promises through the birth of Jesus Christ. This psalm beautifully captures the essence of God's faithfulness and his covenant with David, which ultimately points to the coming of our Savior.

In these verses, we see the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. His covenant with David was a promise that would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Lauren Daigle's song “Light of the World” echoes this truth as she sings, “The world waits for a miracle, the heart longs for a little bit of hope. O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

God's fulfilled promises foreshadow the promises yet to come, and so Advent's beauty is twofold. First, we foster hope as we look back to the birth of Jesus. Second, we anchor our hope as we look forward to his return to completely fulfill his promises. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul reminds us, “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”

Jesus, the light of the world, came to dispel the darkness and bring salvation to all who believe—a story God foretold long before his arrival. Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise to David and was a testament to his unwavering faithfulness.

As we meditate on Psalm 89:1–4, let us remember God's great love and faithfulness. Let us sing of his goodness and declare his promises to all generations. Just as Lauren Daigle's song encourages us to look to the light of the world, may we find hope and joy in the gospel message this Advent season.

Respond: Listen to Lauren Daigle's song ["Light of the World."](#) Sit in the beauty of Emmanuel and write out, "Glory to the light of the world!"

Engage with Kids: Play with a flashlight. Talk about what a light does and how it helps in various situations. Talk about how Jesus is the light of the world. What does that mean? How does that light change things?

Day 20

“Son of God, Love’s Pure Light”

Kristy Wallace

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” - Colossians 1:19

Perspective is a powerful thing. When you think of Christmas, is there a nostalgic picture in your mind that is never fully realized by the reality of the season's offerings?

I love Barbara Robinson's book *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Though it's written for elementary aged kids, it has become something I read every year by the twinkle lights. In the book, a sleepy little church is set afire when the rowdy band of Herdman kids show up and take over the annual Christmas pageant with bullying, swearing, and general mayhem. Adults and kids alike are certain everything has been ruined, but when the night comes, the Christmas pageant is an unimaginable success:

Everyone sang “Silent Night,” including the audience. We sang all the verses too, and when we got to “Son of God, Love’s pure light” I happened to look at Imogene and I almost dropped my hymn book on a baby angel.

Everyone had been waiting all this time for the Herdmans to do something absolutely unexpected. And sure enough, that was what happened.

Imogene Herdman was crying.

In the candlelight her face was all shiny with tears and she didn’t bother to wipe them away. She just sat there—awful old Imogene—in her crookedy veil, crying and crying and crying. ... she had caught on to the idea of God, and the wonder of Christmas. ... Christmas just came over her all at once, like a case of chills and fever.²

In Jesus Christ, “the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” That should cause us to cry too, and shout and sing! God gave us the best gift ever: himself. Through Jesus, he made a way for us to be restored to him. He made a way for us to become his temple. This year, seek out a perspective shift. Maybe

² Barbara Robinson, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (HarperTrophy, 1972), 103–106.

Christmas will come over you, too, like a case of chills and fever. Because the Son of God was born one night in Bethlehem, died one afternoon in Jerusalem, and rose again one morning from the tomb, the fullness of God can dwell in you too!

Respond: Take a look at your calendar for all your Christmas plans and traditions. Now pray, asking God to show you what Christmas actually means to you. What needs to be embraced, refocused, or scrapped?

Engage with Kids: Sing “Silent Night” together. Look up (or write down) the lyrics and talk about them. Which ones are poetic and which are biblical truth?

Week 3 Family Worship



READ Luke 2:1–20



PRAY God, you are the most loving and generous. Thank you for giving us the gift of your presence through Jesus, your Son, and through your Holy Spirit. Help us to worship this Christmas as we celebrate your very good gifts.



SING [“Silent Night” \(The King Is Born\)](#)

Make-It-Stick Activity

Watch a beloved Christmas movie or read a picture book together. Talk about what the book or movie gets right about Christmas and what is different from what we celebrate. We can enjoy movies about Santa or Frosty for their entertainment value, but what do they say about Christmas? Is the lesson true? Is it important? Is it biblical? Discuss over popcorn or cookies!

Day 21

“Underneath the Tree”

Marsela Marshall

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” - Colossians 2:13–14

In a few days, we'll be unwrapping presents from underneath the tree. There's a joy that comes with seeing what others have gifted us. Gifts make us feel seen, considered, and loved. But they also come at a price. They communicate that we are worth it; our gain is worth the cost.

Thankfully, we don't have to wait for a specific day of the year to receive the greatest gift of all. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). We tend to think of eternal life as simply meaning that we will live forever, which is true. But the gift is actually Christ's life in us by the Holy Spirit, which is eternal because he is eternal. God made us alive *together with Christ*. And now, Jesus lives his life through us!

When we sin, Christ's life in us convicts us of that sin and enables us to repent. When we feel anxious or afraid, Christ's life in us fills our hearts and minds with the promises of his presence and his provision. When we don't know how to navigate a broken relationship or a challenging circumstance, Christ's life in us gives us wisdom for how to live in a manner worthy of the gospel. The struggles of life don't stop just because it's Christmas time. But praise God that the power of Christ's life by his Spirit is at work in us all the time! It's the gift that keeps on giving.

Though this gift is free to us in Christ, it came at a price. To give us life, Christ gave up his. Our trespasses deserved death, but Jesus died in our place because our gain was worth the cost of his life. We were worth it. He canceled our sin-stained record by nailing it to the cross. And underneath his bloodstained tree, we find forgiveness. We find eternal life.

Respond: What is the most expensive gift you've ever received at Christmas? What did that gift say about how much the giver valued you? Christ valued us so much that he gave himself to us as a gift. What emotions does that create in your heart, that he considered you that valuable? Pray those emotions back to God in gratitude.

Engage with Kids: Talk about the punishment for different things: breaking a rule at home, breaking a rule at school, breaking the speed limit, breaking a bigger law, betraying a friend, sinning against God. What does it mean for God to cancel the debt of our sin? Pray together, thanking God for his good gifts of love, grace, and forgiveness.

Day 22

“He Rules the World, with Truth and Grace”

Madison Collier

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” - Colossians 3:3–4

We so easily lose the meaning of this season in our day-to-day busyness. Christmas is about celebrating something that already happened: the beginning of Jesus’ life on earth some two thousand years ago. We celebrated it last year, the year before that, and the year before that. We re-create the same schedules and traditions over and over, and the repetition of trees, carols, and commercials can drown out our enthusiasm—well, at least for me!

But Christmas isn’t just about what *has* happened; it’s also about what *will* happen. Jesus’ mission on earth did not stop with his miraculous birth, but included 33 years of loving and saving the lost, to the point of dying for our sins. Then, even death was not the end. He rose from the grave, continued his ministry, and ascended into heaven. Our Savior is alive and well and is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:2)!

So now, we celebrate Christmas as part of an ongoing story that we get to be a part of. When we become Christians, we die to our old ways of living and put our lives in the hands of Christ, as we trust and follow him. As we call to mind the gospel, we are rejuvenated in celebrating the birth of the One who is our very life. Not only that, but remembering his birth should serve as a reminder that Jesus will appear again.

Take the famous Christmas hymn “Joy to the World,” originally written by Isaac Watts to celebrate the second coming of Christ. Watts recognizes the ongoing rule of Jesus when he writes, “He rules the world with truth and grace,” trusting that Jesus was sitting at the right hand of God at that very moment. Then, the famous hymnist challenges us to “let every heart, prepare Him room.” This is not just a song about Jesus’ birth, but a song celebrating his ongoing work as we await the return of our King. The anticipation of Advent and the holiday hustle take on new meaning when we think about how Jesus’ birth is not the last time he appears. When he does appear again, he will fulfill his promises to make all things new (Revelation 21).

Respond: Listen to “Joy to the World” and consider the lyrics closely. What parts of this song have lost their meaning for you? How can you focus on the coming of Christ and “prepare him room” today?

Engage with Kids: Find the lyrics for “Joy to the World” online or in a songbook. Look at them together and talk about them, line by line. Praise God by singing this song together.

Day 23

“The Gospel for All”

Joseph Scarfone

“At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.” - Colossians 4:3–4

Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Paul was in prison because of this gospel mystery, and declaring it was his personal mission. In these verses, Paul, even while in chains, asks for prayers not for his release but for the opportunity to share the gospel. This request highlights the centrality of the gospel in Paul's life and mission. The “mystery of Christ” he refers to is the profound truth of God's redemptive plan through Jesus, a plan that was once hidden but is now revealed to all.

During Advent, we reflect on the coming of Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise to redeem humanity. Just as Paul sought an open door to share this good news, we too are called to be ambassadors of the gospel. Prepare your heart and mind to receive Christ anew and to share his love and message with others this season.

Paul's request for clarity in proclaiming the gospel reminds us of the importance of communicating the message of Christ effectively. During this season, we encounter numerous opportunities to share the hope and joy of the gospel. Whether through words or actions, we can be vessels of God's love and the gospel mystery.

As we reflect on the arrival of Christ, let us also pray for open doors to share the good news. May we, like Paul, have the courage and clarity to proclaim the mystery of Christ. Let us remember that the true essence of Advent is not just in the anticipation of Christ's birth, but in the active sharing of his love and gospel with the world.

Respond: Take a moment to reflect on the gospel mystery and how God has showered you with his lavish love. Use this to motivate you to share the gospel with your One (one person in your life you have identified that you would like to share with). Make a plan to call or text your One and share the gospel mystery.

Engage with Kids: Make Christmas cards that share God's love. Pray for the friends you'll give them to.

Day 24

“The Night the Dark Became Light”

Christy Thornton

“Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” - Luke 1:78–79

The Bible begins with darkness. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ... and darkness was over the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:1–2). Then, into the void, God spoke, “Let there be light” and vanished the night.

In the light of God, life came to the world. Trees sprouted, birds chirped, and animals waddled into existence. The first man and woman flourished in the light of life, delighting in God and his creatures.

Then, a new darkness settled over the land. The man and woman rejected the radiant glory of God and in their rebellion, severed themselves from his light. They and all their children were doomed to pass their days in the gloom of the shadow of death.

But God, in tender mercy toward us, spoke light into our darkness by sending his Son—“the radiance of his glory” (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus entered our darkness and vanquished our night. He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). He brings life to our death, peace to our stress, and joy to the weary world.

On that first Christmas Eve, the day broke through shadows and the light of life made his face to shine upon us (2 Corinthians 4:6). Now, by faith, we can flourish as we delight in God, basking in his “marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9) and returning to the purpose for which he made us.

So even under the star-speckled sky, we remember the dawn of the Son. Christmas Eve is the night the dark became light, and wrong was made right again.

Respond/Engage with Kids: Turn off all the lights in one room of your house, light a candle (or turn on a flashlight) in the center of the room, and read Luke 1:68–79 out loud with your family and friends. Then, share your testimonies of how God brought you from the darkness into his marvelous light.

Day 25

“The Weary World Rejoices”

Christy Thornton

“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 2:10–12

Merry Christmas! Today, we remember and proclaim the good news that the Son of God became human to save us. But for many of us, even on Christmas Day, the weariness of the world lingers. Even in the midst of vibrant celebration, we feel heavy with the burdens of life.

And that’s OK. The good news of Christmas doesn’t require us to leave our weariness behind in order to have joy—quite the opposite. The good tidings of Jesus Christ bring joy to us right in the middle of our troubles. That’s literally what Christmas is about.

By becoming human, God came for us. He shared in our weakness and made our weariness his own. He became like us in every way, and yet he was different. The weary world did not overcome him. Instead, he overcame the weary world.

God made the world. Sin made it weary. Jesus came to make it new again.

In fact, his birth signals the beginning of the end of the weary world. One day, all who believe in Jesus will live in a world free of pain and dying, of tears and crying. With Jesus’ birth, that new world breaks into the old. Baby Jesus is God’s down payment on the perfect world to come, and his infant coos sound the death knell for our weariness.

By faith in him, we let Jesus’ joy break into our downcast souls, and he transforms us into ambassadors of the new world to come. He sends us into the weary world to bring good news of great joy to all. As we proclaim Christ in word and deed, his newness keeps breaking in as people believe and have joy—right there in the middle of all their troubles!

Respond: Where do you feel weary? How can you express faith in Jesus and invite his joy into your weariness? Think of one person you know who might be weary this Christmas Day. Find one way (call/text/write a card) to bring them the “good news of great joy” of Jesus today.

Engage with Kids: Talk about Christmas cheer: It can come from things like festive decorations, delicious treats, jingle bells, and twinkling lights. How is joy different? Reread and discuss Luke 2:10–11. Joy only comes from God! Help kids think of one or more ways they can spread *joy* today (not just cheer).