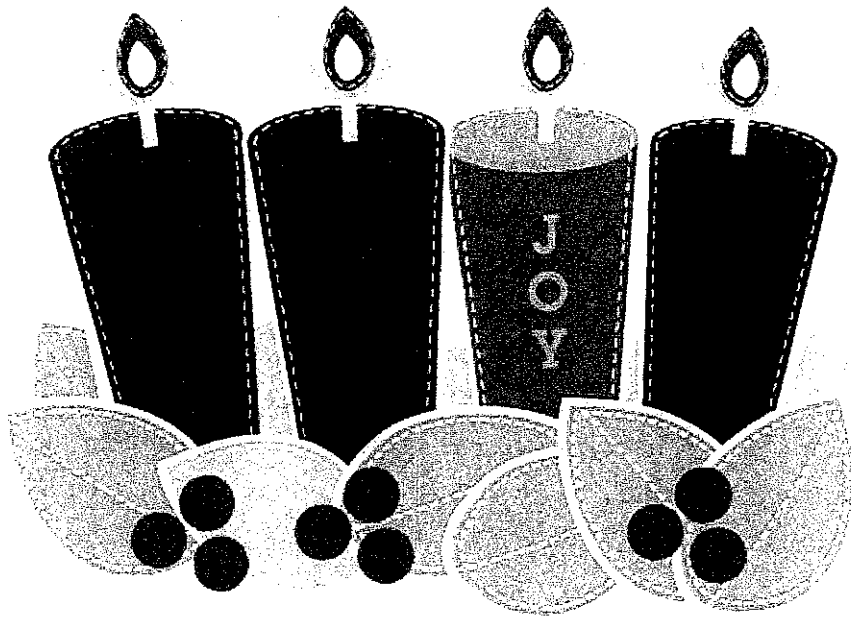


Advent Devotion Guide



Advent is a season observed in many Western Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. The term is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming".

How To Use:

Individual Devotional:

This section is meant for you to go through on your own. Read through the suggested Scripture readings. Pray that God will use His Word to change your heart and your life this Christmas season. Pray that what He is doing in your heart will overflow to those around you.

Family Devotional/Activities:

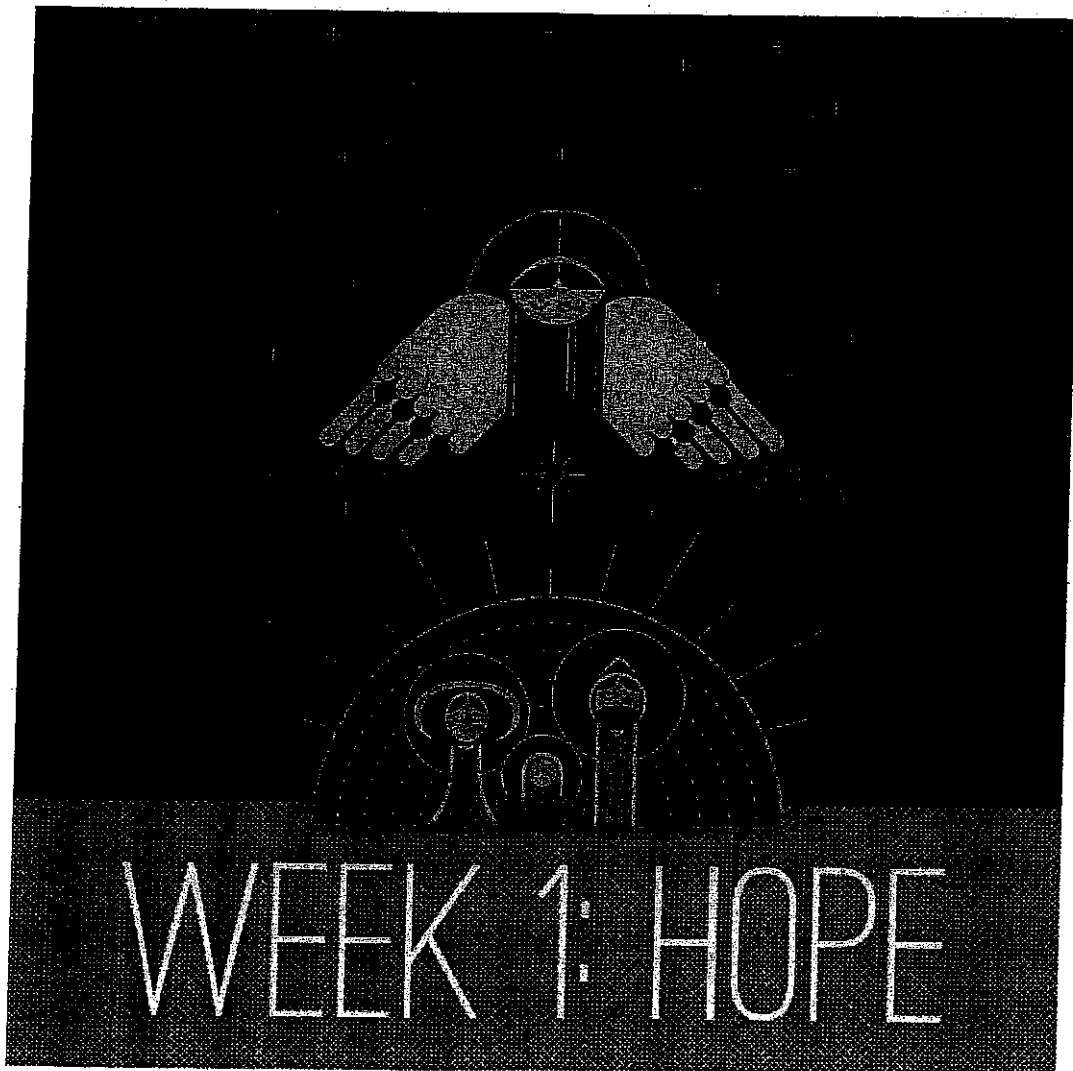
This section is meant to do with your family during the week. The Christmas season is one of full calendars and running errands. Put aside a few moments a week to sit down with your family and read God's Word together. Look for ways to apply His word to your families life.

Additional Resources:

1. Free Advent E-Book for Families: <http://www.vergenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/AdventBook2013.pdf>-- A daily devotional including color and cut out ornaments.
2. Advent Sermons for Adults: <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/>
3. Advent Devotional Guide for Families: http://thevillagechurch.net/mediafiles/uploaded/a/0e3845269_1416596750_advent-guide-2014.pdf

Jesus Is the Hope of the World

Connections Community Church — Advent Devotion Guide



"The nations will put their hope in him"
Matthew 12:21 (NIRV)

Hope: Individual Devotional

Scripture Reading:

“At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was **eagerly waiting** (emphasis added) for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.
I have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared for all people.
He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

Luke 2:25-32 (NLT)

“But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children”

Galatians 4:4,5 (NLT)

When was the last time you hoped for something? Did it happen the way that you wanted it to?

Devotional Thought:

The word "hope" has come to mean something completely different now than it did when Scripture was written. Nowadays we use the word "hope" to mean something that we would really like to happen but are not really sure it ever will. In Bible times the word for hope carried the idea of confident expectation. When you hoped for something in Bible times you were not wishing for something to happen that you really wanted to happen, you were eagerly waiting for something to happen that you were confident was going to happen.

In the Scripture reading this week Simeon was told by God that he would see the Messiah before he died. Simeon believed that God would keep His promise. He eagerly waited for this promise to come true. One day He walked into the temple and saw baby Jesus. He knew immediately that this was the Savior whom God had promised that he would see. The hope of Simeon's life would become the hope of the whole world (Matthew 12:21).

God sent Jesus at the perfect time to bring hope to His people (Galatians 4:4). Before Christ the only thing that we could confidently expect was punishment for our sin. Through faith in Christ; death turns to life, Hell turns to eternity with our Savior, and this old corrupted earth becomes a New Earth where there will be no more death, no more tears, and no more pain.

Not many things happen exactly the way that we wished they would in our world today. We here bad news from the doctor. We get a bill in the mail that we can't pay. We loose the relationship that we did everything we could in our power to keep.

No matter what this Christmas season might bring to you and your family, you can be confident that the baby Simeon hoped for in that temple is the same Savior that we place our hope in to make all things new. Jesus will return and make all things new and that is something that we can confidently expect and hope for!

Application:

- Think of one hope that someone around you has that you are able to meet. Give that hope to that person and teach them about the only true Hope of the World.
- Pray daily for God to replace your hope in uncertain temporal things with certain eternal things.

Songs:

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus- Brian Johnson
Hope of the World- Hillsong

Hope: Family Devotional

Family Activity: Set aside 15 minutes one night this week and the following three weeks of advent. Use them to light an advent candle with your family and discuss that week's Biblical aspect of Advent.

Candle: Have one of your family members light the candle representing Hope. Read and discuss the following verse about Christ being the Hope of the World.

Scripture Reading:

In Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was a good and godly man. He was waiting for God's promise to Israel to happen. The Holy Spirit was with him. The Spirit had told Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Spirit led him into the temple courtyard.

Then Jesus' parents brought the child in. They came to do for him what the Law required.

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

“Lord, you are the King over all.
Now let me, your servant, go in peace.
That is what you promised.
My eyes have seen your salvation.
You have prepared it in the sight of all people.
It is a light to be given to those who aren't Jews.
It will bring glory to your people Israel.”

Luke 2:25-32

Ask your children to tell you some things that they hope to get for Christmas?

Family Discussion:

Talk to your children about difference between what hope means now and what hope meant in the Bible. Talk to them about the gift that they hope to get. They really want that gift but they have no way of knowing weather or not they will actually get it.

However, as Christians we hope in the Salvation that comes from Christ. We can confidently expect that what God says will come true. The Bible tells us that before Christ the only thing that we could hope for was punishment for our sin.

God sent Christ to be the Hope of the World. When Jesus came as a baby, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again He changed what we as people could put our Hope in. We no longer have to confidently expect punishment of sin. Now if we trust in Christ as our Savior our hope is in Him.

No matter what happens in life we can confidently expect that we will be with God forever. He is coming again. We can live expecting that. Jesus is going to return to earth one more time and make all things new!

Prayer: Have someone in your family pray and give thanks to God for the confident Hope they have in Jesus both now and in the future.

Sing:

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

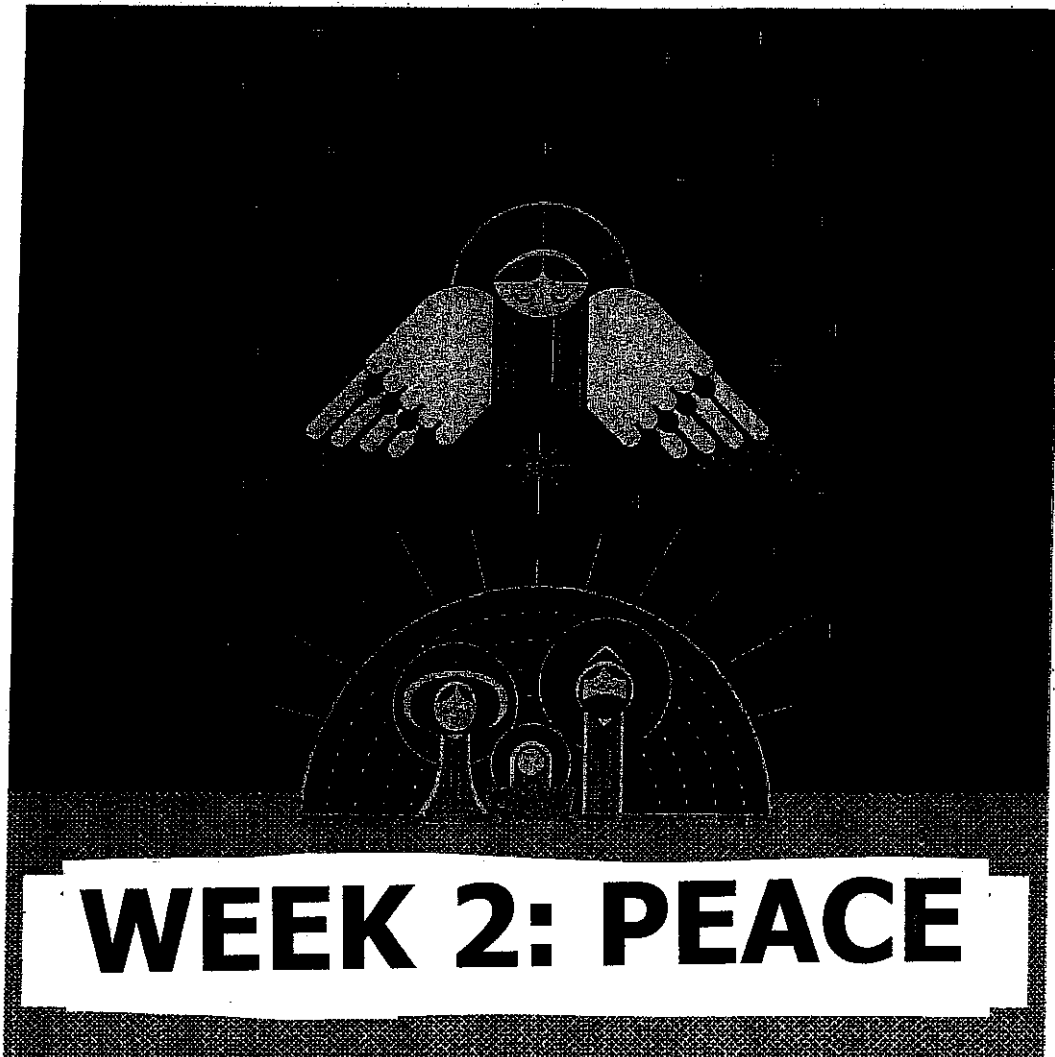
Application:

- Plan a fun Christmas activity in the next week or two. Don't tell your kids what it is or when it is going to happen. Just make sure you can pull it off. Give them hints throughout the week. Use those hints as an opportunity to remind them what true biblical hope is. Remind them that even though they don't know what the surprise is they do know the truth of Christ and that He will return and make all things new.

(The idea for this application came from © 2013 The Village Church - Advent Guide)

Jesus is the Prince of Peace

Connections Community Church — Advent Devotional Guide



"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His government and its peace
will never end..."

Isaiah 9:6,7a (NLT)

Peace: Individual Devotional

Scripture Reading:

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

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

Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:4-14 (ESV)

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Romans 5:1 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:6,7 (NLT)

When was the last time you had a whole day of "peace and quiet"?

Devotional Thought:

Some of my most fond memories of College are Sunday's. As I think back to my Sunday afternoon's at college I cannot come up with many specific memories. All that comes to mind is hours of laying on my RD's couch mindlessly eating good food, spending time with great friends, and watching every football game there was to watch.

I looked forward to Sunday's and almost exclusively knew what I was going to be doing. I would work hard throughout the week to get all of my work done so that I had nothing to worry about on Sunday. If I did not succeed I would simply pretend to forget about whatever task I did not accomplish and go on with my Sunday ritual of couch laying, food eating, and football watching.

As I think about peace this week this is the picture that comes to mind. A rest from any and all work. A lack of anxiety about tasks not completed, bill's not paid, and relationships not mended. However, if we are honest this type of peace is hard to come by in the world we live in. Our list of task's never seem to be complete, the bill's never seem to get paid off, and their always seems to be relationships that are broken.

The Bible teaches us that the source of this lack of peace is sin. Disobedience to God has broken our relationship with Him. This very relationship is what we were created for. When we loose this relationship we try and fill the gap with anything and everything else. However, anything and everything else is temporary and no matter how many temporary things we throw into an eternal gap, the gap will never be filled. There will always be a lack of peace when there is a lack of relationship with God.

Jesus was sent to fix this relationship problem between us and God. He came to fix our inability to please God. The Angels in Luke 2 sang "...peace among those with whom He is pleased." The problem is that God is not pleased with any of us. We have all sinned and we have all fallen short of having a relationship with Him. However, if you place your faith in Jesus Christ you have peace with God because through Jesus He is pleased with you.

This peace is 2-fold. It is an eternal peace with earthly implications. We have an eternal peace given to us in salvation through Christ. The eternal gap is filled and a promise of new body and a new earth with no more bills to pay, task's to accomplish, and relationship's to fix will be a reality. Since we are sure of this future peace in Christ we can come to God in prayer with all of our present worries, anxieties, and fears. Knowing that the God who has given eternal peace cares for our every need gives us an earthly peace that goes beyond even our own ability to understand it.

Application:

1. Make a list of everything that you are anxious about. Pray to God and ask for His help to trust Him with all of your biggest fears and anxieties. **Read Mark 9:14-21.**
 2. Pray about one friend or co-worker that you can tell about the eternal peace you have received from God. Ask God to give you an opportunity to share of His peace with that one person.
- Put aside 10 minutes every day to read and pray through one of these passages of Scripture on peace (Philippians 4, Romans 5, Ephesians 2:14-17, John 16, Psalm 119:165, Isaiah 53:5)

Songs:

Angels we Have Heard on High- Christ Tomlin Hark the Herald Angels Sing- Chris Tomlin

Peace: Family Devotional

Family Activity: Set aside 15 minutes one night this week and the following week of advent. Use this time to light an advent candle with your family and discuss the current week's Biblical aspect of Advent.

Candle: Have one of your family members light the candle's representing Hope, Love, and Joy as you review the past 3 week's lessons. Have another family member light the candle representing peace as you prepare for this week's lesson. Read and discuss the following verses about the peace that goes beyond all understanding that is brought into the world by Jesus.

Scripture Reading:

So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.

While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. There was no room for them in the inn.

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were looking after their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

"May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!
And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

Luke 2:4-14 (NIRV)

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Romans 5:1 (NLT)

Ask your children to tell you the last time that they took something that was not their's? Ask them why they did it?

Read or summarize this teaching to your kids:

Peace is a feeling that we get when we don't need or want anything. It is the feeling that we get when everything is exactly how it should be. This is a feeling that we don't often get because we always seem to have something that we want or need that we don't have.

The reason we often feel like we want or need something is because we were all created by God to have a relationship with Him. However, sin came into the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and because of their disobedience we can no longer have a relationship with Him.

Deep down in our hearts we all remember what it was like to have a relationship with God. We remember that feeling of peace knowing that we did not need or want anything else. We desperately want to feel that way again. We often try and fix this on our own by taking toys that aren't ours, by being mean to our brothers and sisters, and by disobeying our parents.

These things make us feel better for a little while but we always end up feeling the way we did before. Without a relationship with God we will always need or want something to fill the gap that is in our hearts that comes from not having a relationship with Him. However, Jesus came to fix this gap between us and God. If we believe in Jesus we can have a right relationship with God again.

Having a right relationship with God brings peace back into our lives. The empty feeling that we get from needing or wanting something can now be filled with God. He knows everything that we could ever need or want and He promises to take care of us.

One day everyone who places their faith in Jesus will spend eternity with God forever in Heaven. We will have peace forever. We will not want or need anything. Until that day comes we can trust that even when we want or need something now we know that God loves us and He is going to take care of us. This gives us a feeling of peace that people who don't have a relationship with God could never understand. Do you have a relationship with God through Jesus that gives you peace, or are you still trying to create your own peace because you are separated from God by your sin?

Prayer: Have someone in your family pray and thank God for sending Jesus to give us peace with God.

Sing:

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

(Refrain)
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Application:

- Tell your children a story of a time when you were in need and God showed up and provided for you in exactly the way that you needed Him to. Explain to them about God's character and how he will always take care of His children. Teach them about the peace that comes from knowing that God will take care of us.

*Jesus is the Good News that
Brings Eternal Joy*

Connections Community Church — Advent Devotional Guide



“Even though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, you believe in him. You are filled with a glorious joy that can’t be put into words. You are receiving the salvation of your souls. It is the result of your faith.”

1 Peter 1:8,9 (NIRV)

Joy: Individual Devotional

Scripture Reading:

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

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

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:4-14 (ESV)

"...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

Think about the last time you had a really difficult circumstance in your life. What was your attitude toward that circumstance? Why?

Devotional Thought:

As I once again sat down to study for another week of Advent devotional writing, I began to see a common denominator between our three subjects of study so far. The first week we learned about hope and how hope in Jesus is not a wishing for something unsure, but a confidence in the One who is sure. Last week we learned how the love of Christ is not some warm and fuzzy feeling we get when something makes us happy, rather it is the sacrificial giving of oneself as a demonstration of love even to our worst enemies. This week we learn about joy.

Joy is something that is often hard to come by in our world today. This is because joy is often defined by the circumstances around us, and to be honest, it can be hard to find things to be joyful about in our world's current circumstances. Everyday when we turn on the news, drive down the street, or interact with co-workers and friends we are continually confronted with sickness, sin, tragedy, and death. These are not circumstances that often produce joy.

However, just like the hope we have in Christ is far more concrete than the hope of this world. Just like the love of Christ is far more beautiful than the love of this world. The joy found in the first coming of Christ and the confidence of His second coming far outweighs any of our current circumstances. In our Scripture reading in Hebrews, we see that Jesus endured one of the most horrific circumstances in all of history on the cross. How was He able to endure the cross? The Bible says "For the joy set before Him."

Christ was so confident of the future reward that the present circumstances could not take away His joy. Because of Jesus we can have the same type of confidence in our future reward. One day we will be with God forever and enjoy all of creation with no more tears, no more sin, and no more shame. So, when we are confronted in this life with even the most difficult circumstances we can be sure that God will bring us through to a future reward that is so great it can't even be compared to the best gifts we receive here on Earth. That confidence is how we can find joy even in the difficult circumstances of our lives.

So what is the common denominator between our three areas of study this advent? As followers of Christ hope, love, and joy are not just temporary things that make life a little more enjoyable. They are eternal promises that cannot be taken away no matter what life may bring. This advent season I hope and pray that you have all received the eternal hope, love, and joy from Jesus Christ our Lord and will look to lovingly share them with others.

Application:

- Spend some time writing down the trials, stresses and difficult circumstances you are going through right now. Take a few moments to think about how difficult these circumstances will be when you are spending eternity with God forever. Give God thanks for a confident eternal reward that helps produce joy even in difficult circumstances. If you are struggling having this joy read through James 1. Pray and ask God to give you a confident joy even in difficult circumstances.

- Put aside 10 minutes every day to read and pray through one of these passages of Scripture on joy (Romans 8:18-39, John 15:1-11, Psalm 16, Psalm 13, James 1:1-17)

Songs:

O Holy Night-

Shane and Shane

Joy to the World- Tomlin

O Come O Come

Emmanuel- Shane and Shane

Joy has Dawned-

Kings Kaleidoscope

Joy: Family Devotional

Family Activity: Set aside 15 minutes one night this week and the following week of advent. Use them to light an advent candle with your family and discuss this week's Biblical aspect of Advent.

Candle: Have one of your family members light the candle's representing Hope and Love as you review the past 2 week's lessons. Have another family member light the candle representing Joy as you prepare for this week's lesson. Read and discuss the following verses about the joy that can not be taken away from believers because God sent Jesus to us.

Scripture Reading:

So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.

While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. There was no room for them in the inn.

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were looking after their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

"May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!
And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

Luke 2:4-14 (NIRV)

"Even though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, you believe in him. You are filled with a glorious joy that can't be put into words. You are receiving the salvation of your souls. It is the result of your faith."

1 Peter 1:8,9 (NIRV)

Ask your children to tell you about the last time that they were really really happy? How long did it last? What happened to that made you not happy anymore?

Read or summarize this teaching to your kids:

Happiness is a good feeling that God created. It is how we often feel when things that we like happen. Happiness is something that we all like to feel. Sometimes it is hard to feel happy because of sin.

Sin is what came into the world when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Because of their one disobedience we are now all born in rebellion to God. We choose to sin every day. When we lie to our parents, hit our brother or sister, or take toys that are not ours. All of these choices are choices that we make because we think they will make us happy.

We think lying to our parents will keep us from getting in trouble and that will make us happy. We think hitting our brother or sister will make them leave us alone and that will make us happy. We think that a new toy that isn't ours will make us happy. A lot of times these things will make us happy for a few minutes, a few days, or even a few weeks but that happiness always ends up going away. Why?

Well happiness that is found in little things like new toys, fun parties, and not getting in trouble are all temporary things. The toys will get old, the parties will end, and we will eventually get in trouble for something we did wrong. This type of happiness will never last forever.

God sent Jesus to bring us a type of happiness that is way better than the happiness of a new toy or a fun party. Because God sent Jesus we can have a type of happiness that is much better because it can never never be taken away. This type of happiness is called joy.

Joy is eternal because it comes from God. We can have joy even when things aren't going our way. Joy comes from believing that through Jesus's death and resurrection we will get to spend eternity with God forever. Now when bad things happen they cannot take away our joy because we know that no matter what through Christ we will be saved. No matter what happens through out the day we can have joy if we have a relationship with Jesus.

Prayer: Have someone in your family pray and give thanks to God for our salvation. Because God has promised us eternal salvation with Him, nothing can take away our joy!

Sing:

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

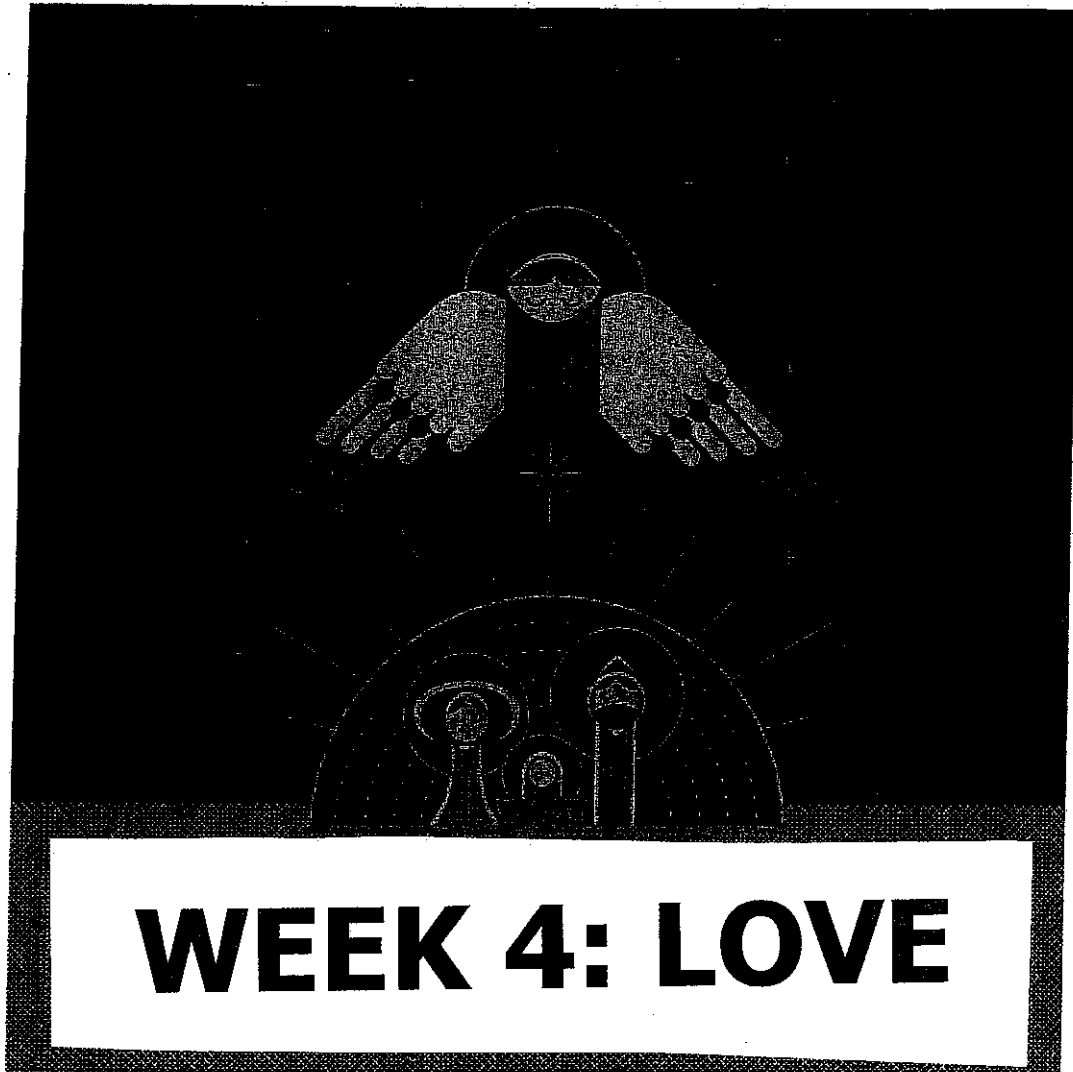
Application:

- **Watch "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" with your family:**

Talk about how this is a small picture of the Joy a Christian has. The Grinch tried to take the happiness away from the Who's but he couldn't because the Who's weren't happy at Christmas because of presents but because it brought the community together. In the same way, but on a much greater scale, no enemy can take away our joy. Because no matter what comes our way as believers we are guaranteed our salvation through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Love

Connections Community Church — Advent Devotional Guide



WEEK 4: LOVE

"How did God show his love for us? He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him."

1 John 4:9(NIRV)

Love: Individual Devotional

Scripture Reading:

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

20 But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, 23 "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Matthew 1:18-23 (NIRV)

The Lord himself will give you a miraculous sign. The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:9 (NIRV)

Think about the last time that someone told you that they loved you. How did you know that they were telling the truth?

Devotional Thought:

Last week we talked about how the word hope meant something quite different in Bible times than what it has come to mean nowadays. In the same way the word love has been hijacked by our culture. It is most often used to describe the warm and fuzzy feeling we get when we are around a person we care about. However, the word that God uses to describe His love for us is a very different form of love.

God's love for us is not dependent on who we are or what we have done. God's love is not contingent on what we do or how we make God feel. God's love for us is not an empty word that he speaks to us. God's love is an action. We are reminded this Christmas season that God's love is demonstrated to us by the sending of His one and only son to be born a helpless baby in a stable.

Take a moment to think about that type of love. No seriously, stop reading for a few minutes and ponder the type of love it would take for God to send Jesus to be born as a helpless baby in a stable, to live a perfect and sinless life, and to die a death He did not deserve. All of that for what? To save a rebellious and sinful people that wanted nothing to do with Him? This is the perfect demonstration selfless love, a love that will do anything to meet our biggest need.

God is more interested in the salvation that we need than in the rebellion that we want. He is not willing to stand by and let us continue in our sin. He loves us too much for that. He stepped down into this world in the form of a helpless baby so that He could confront us with the wickedness of our own sin and provided a salvation that we could never earn on our own.

He is Immanuel, God with us. He wants to have a relationship with us. He wants us to give Him our lives and our hearts. This Advent season let's take time to think about God's demonstration of love to us in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Let's get connected to that love and look for ways to demonstrate that type of love to others. Let's get to know God for who He really is, Immanuel (God with us).

Application:

- Talk to someone very close to you (maybe your spouse or your kids) about using the money that you would have used to buy them a gift to give to someone in need this Christmas.
- Put aside 10 minutes every day to read and pray through one of these passages of Scripture on God's love (1 John 4:7-21, Isaiah 53, Luke 2:1-21, Philippians 2:1-11, Micah 5:2-5)

Songs:

Born to Die- Shane and Shane

Away in a Manger- Shane and Shane

Love: Family Devotional

Family Activity: Set aside 15 minutes one night this week and the following three weeks of advent. Use them to light an advent candle with your family and discuss that week's Biblical aspect of Advent.

Candle: Have one of your family members light the candle representing Hope as you review last weeks lesson. Have another family member light the candle representing Love as you prepare for this weeks lesson. Read and discuss the following verses about God sending Christ to be the perfect demonstration of love to the world.

Scripture Reading:

How did God show his love for us? He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him.

1 John 4:9 (NIRV)

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

20 But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, 23 "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Matthew 1:18-23 (NIRV)

Ask your children to list some people they love? Ask your children what they would do to help those people they love?

Family Discussion:

As you read the story of Christ's Birth with your kids be sure to paint a clear picture of this demonstration of love to your children. Explain to them how much of a sacrifice it would be for God, the Creator of everything, to become a baby and to live on the Earth. Explain to them that God sent Jesus in order to show us how much He loves us.

Explain to your kids that God showed us this love because we really needed it. Teach them about the depravity of man ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Ask them when the last time they sinned was. Teach them that the penalty of even just one sin is Hell.

All of us who have sinned against God deserve Hell and there is nothing that we can do about it. However, God sent Jesus to show us how much He loves us. He loves us so much that He would send His one and only son to receive the punishment that we deserved for our sin. If we repent of our sin and believe that Jesus paid the penalty for us we can spend eternity in Heaven with God forever.

Spend your time focusing on how much God must love us to send His son Jesus. God wants us to have a relationship with Him so much that He sent Jesus. That is the greatest love the world has ever known. Ask your kids if they have ever put their trust in Christ's payment for their sin. If they have not walk them through how they could do that today.

Prayer: Have someone in your family pray and give thanks to God for showing us how much He loves us by sending Jesus as a baby.

Sing:

Away in a manger,
No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down His sweet head

Be near me Lord Jesus
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever
And love me I pray

Application:

- This week make sure to do whatever activity you had promised your kids from last week. Remind them of God's promise to send Jesus. He did that just as He said He would. Tell them that God has promised that Jesus will return to the Earth one more time and fix all of the problems that sin causes. That is a day to hope for!

(Idea for this application came from © 2013 The Village Church - Advent Guide)

- Give your child the money from one Christmas gift he/she would have received and allow them to choose a ministry or a person in need to give it to. This is one way that we can show other people a small glimpse of the Love that Jesus has given to us.

(Idea came from Matt Chandler's Advent Sermon on November 30, 2014)

Readings for the Season of Advent 2016

Advent comes from the Latin word (Adventus) meaning coming, the word that could describe Advent is Maranatha meaning Lord Come. As you read the verse selections for each day meditate on the wonder and amazement of the fulfillment of all the promises of Jesus Christ's First Advent. Then ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the certain knowledge of Jesus Christ's soon Second Advent to allow His continued work of sanctification in your life.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. ~ 1 John 3:3

	<i>Promise</i>	<i>Fulfillment</i>
11/27 First Sunday of Advent	Gen 3:15 John 14:1-4	Gal 4:4 Rev 1:7,8
11/28 Monday	Mal 3:1	Luke 7:24-27
11/29 Tuesday	Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33
11/30 Wednesday	Psalm 45:6,7 102:25 - 27	Heb 1:8-12
12/1 Thursday	Psalm 8:2	Matt 21:15
12/2 Friday	Dan 9:25	Luke 19:37-42
12/3 Saturday	Hos 11:1	Matt 2:14,15
12/4 Second Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 7:14 Acts 1:9-11	Luke 1:26-31 Matt 24:27-30
12/5 Monday	Isaiah 40:3-5	Mark 1:1-4
12/6 Tuesday	Psalm 2:7	Matt 3:17
12/7 Wednesday	Isaiah 9:1,2	Matt 4:13-16
12/8 Thursday	Deut 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
12/9 Friday	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11
12/10 Saturday	Psalm 110:4	Heb 5:5,6
12/11 Third Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 9:6, 57:19 Dan 7:9,10	Luke 2:8-14 Rev 20:11-15
12/12 Monday	Gen 49:9,10	Rev 5:5
12/13 Tuesday	Jer 31:15	Matt 2:16-18
12/14 Wednesday	Mal 4:5,6	Mark 9:11-13
12/15 Thursday	Psalm 78:2-4	Matt 13:34,35
12/16 Friday	Isaiah 61:1,2	Luke 4:18,19
12/17 Saturday	Zech 9:9	Mark 11:7-11
12/18 Forth Sunday of Advent	Mic 5:2 1Thess 4:16-18	Luke 2:4-7 Rev 4:1-2
12/19 Monday	Isaiah 53:1	John 12:37,38
12/20 Tuesday	Psalm 41:9	Luke 22:47,48
12/21 Wednesday	Zech 11:12	Matt 26:14,15
12/22 Thursday	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4,5
12/23 Friday	Psalm 22:17,18	Matt 27:35,36
12/24 Saturday	Zech 12:10	John 20:27
12/25 Sunday Merry Christmas	Jer 31:31-34	Acts 1:1-9

