

# Renew



An Advent Journey to Renew  
Peace, Hope, Joy & Love

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*A Collaboration of work from CBOQ*  
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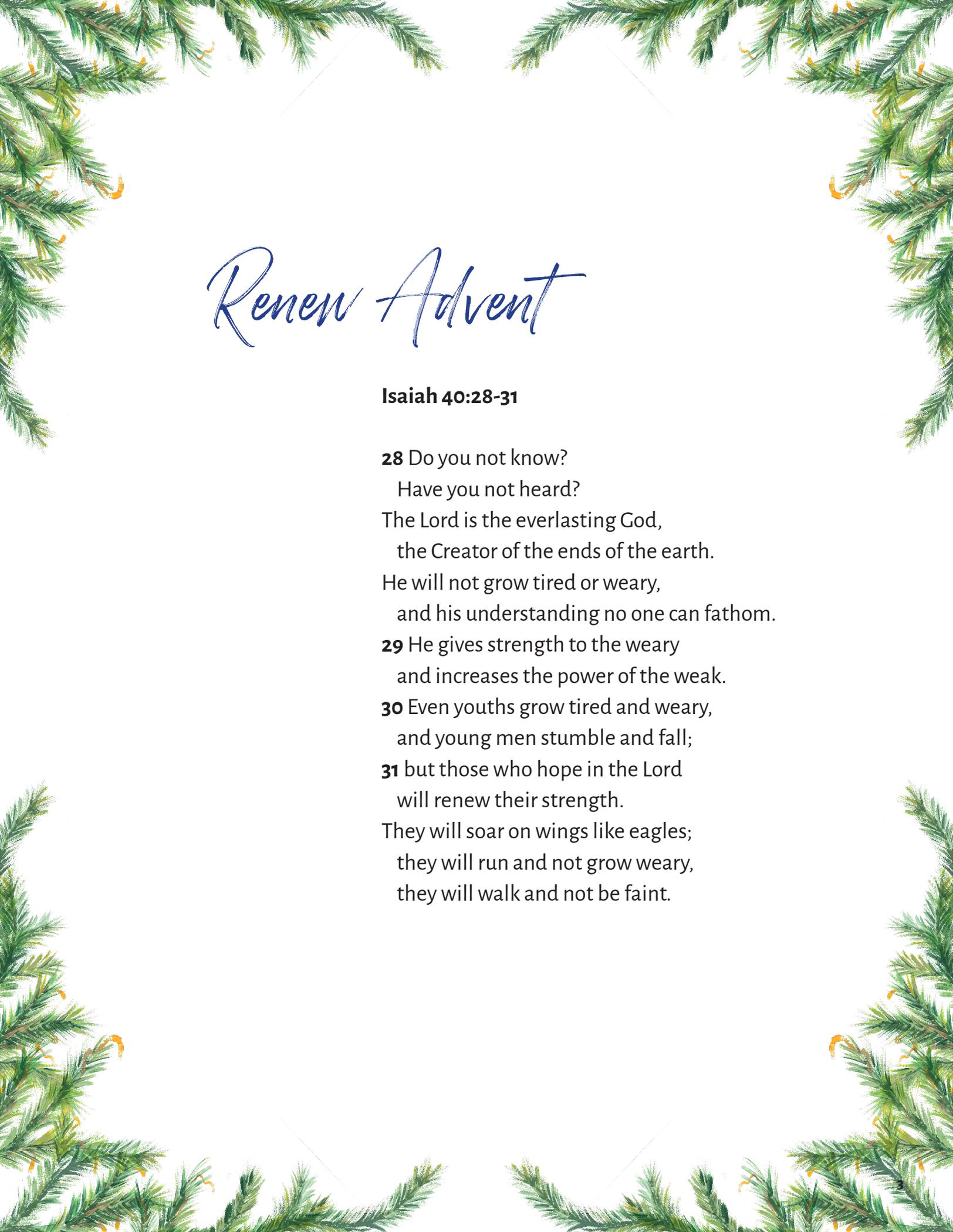
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# Renew Advent

## Isaiah 40:28-31

**28** Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

**29** He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

**30** Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

**31** but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

# Why Advent?

Advent is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds for the anniversary of the Lord's birth celebrated on Christmas. It is also a reminder of the promise of Jesus Christ to come again in His full and complete glory.

As Christmas approaches, you hear Christmas songs flooding the radio, grocery stores, and the shopping malls. Your news feeds and reels begin to fill up with colours of green, red, white, lights, candy canes, and Christmas trees. You see the hustle and bustle of the parking lots. You observe the calendar filling up with obligations for work events and family gatherings. This may be the first Christmas in years where we experience the "new normal" of life with and beyond COVID. During such a hectic season there is an opportunity to find RENEWal. To RENEW is an opportunity to resume, re-establish or even replace.

Using Isaiah 40 as a framework for Advent we will take a journey to RENEW our understanding of the Advent words: **Peace, Hope, Joy and Love.**

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource is organized around the four candles and words of Advent: Peace, Hope, Joy, Love. In it, you will find a short video sharing, scripture readings, a written devotional, readings for lighting candles, an activity for children and contemplative practices that can be used for each week of Advent. (Access videos at [baptist.ca/advent](http://baptist.ca/advent))

'RENEW Advent' has been designed for congregations, small groups, family ministries, youth groups and children's ministries and even personal use, to deepen your engagement with the season of Advent.

It is our prayer that through this Advent season, God will renew Advent in your faith community and your personal journey of faith.

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**WEEK 1:** *Renew*  
**PEACE**

**Scripture Readings (NIV)**

 **Watch Videos**

**Isaiah 2:1-5**

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw  
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:  
2 In the last days  
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established  
as the highest of the mountains;  
it will be exalted above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it.  
3 Many peoples will come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the temple of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths."  
The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
4 He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.  
5 Come, descendants of Jacob,  
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

**Psalms 122**

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."  
2 Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem.  
3 Jerusalem is built like a city  
that is closely compacted together.  
4 That is where the tribes go up—  
the tribes of the Lord—  
to praise the name of the Lord  
according to the statute given to Israel.  
5 There stand the thrones for judgment,  
the thrones of the house of David.  
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
"May those who love you be secure.  
7 May there be peace within your walls  
and security within your citadels."  
8 For the sake of my family and friends,  
I will say, "Peace be within you."  
9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your prosperity.

**Romans 13:11-14**

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

**Matthew 24:36-44**

36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."



# Devotional

 Watch Video

## Transcript

### *A Journey of Renewed Peace*

This is the first Sunday of Advent. We begin the journey for renewed peace. Should I go or not? We have the option to move forward in renewal or remain where we are. We know it can be unsettling, unknown, uncertain, and upsetting. But the journey is prepared for us to step forward in faith. Our text from the Gospel of Matthew talks about those who do not even know there is a journey going on.

People were eating, drinking, marrying, living life, and working, and they did not know there was a journey. This is not wrong. They were just doing their thing, focusing on their own lives. Matthew's call of Advent is to wake up and pay attention to what is going on around you. These are not bad things as we live day to day.

It's not about adding something more to our calendar or doing this or that, but the call is "be ready because the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Be alert. Be ready. So what are we ready for? Isaiah's passage gives us some different insight. It is a vision, a dream, a look into the future, Isaiah says, in the days to come.

Not now, not today. One day, someday. It's like the pageant contestant being asked, What do you want in life? And of course, the clichéd response: world peace. It's a dream. A look into the future. Not now. Not today, but one day. We can renew our understanding of peace; that it's not far away. We know what goes on in our world with wars and rumors of wars, strife and conflict, nations and people and our treatment of one another.

But adventure is about anticipating something great on the horizon, something better than we could ever imagine. But the cross reminds us that while there are elements yet to come, there is something *now*. We live in the power of the resurrection *now*. We can have a vision for God's dream, but we can practice that *now*. And this calls us to choose the way of peace *now* in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities, in person and online.

What could be more practical than taking our lives, our culture, our community, and carving away anything that does not look like the vision we have for God's reign of peace? Isaiah's vision for peace invites us to live in such a way as to live for peace now. Are we known—are you known as a person of peace for the reign of God?

Are we an influencer of the way of peace to others; peacemakers at school and offices, in government and community? Christians have stands on policies and laws as citizens. Christians have become known more for what we are against. But what we must be better known for is the notion that we live under the rule and reign of a God who will bring peace.

So be alert. Be ready. Let us renew our idea of peace today. We can live as a people today under the rule and reign of God who brings peace for today. We can choose to journey today, to live in the advent promise of renewed peace.

## Children's Moment

 Watch Video

### Transcript

#### *The Mystery of Christmas*

Everything is changed. It is now the time of purple. Purple is the color of kings and queens. No one could wear purple except royalty.

Roman citizens could wear a little stripe of purple, but that was all. Purple is a serious color.

Something serious is about to happen. A King is coming, but he is not the kind of king that people thought was coming. This King had no army, no house, and no riches. This King was a baby born in a barn.

The King who was coming is still coming. This is full of mystery. You know, a mystery is hard to enter sometimes.

That is why at this time of year, this season we call Advent is so important. Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it's there. This time of year, you will see people hurrying in malls, buying things and doing this and that.

But they'll miss the mystery. They don't know how to get ready. Or maybe they just forgot. The church learned a long time ago that people need a way to get ready to enter or even come close to a mystery like Christmas. The church set aside four Sundays—*four Sundays* to get ready for this mystery. This is such a great mystery that we need time to get ready.

During this time, we are all on the way to Bethlehem. We are all making this journey. We are all getting ready to enter the mystery of Christmas.

This journey was not just back then. It is also now. *Stop. Watch. Pay attention.*

Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.

I wonder what you will do to get ready for the mystery of Christmas.



# Candle lighting + Prayer Resource

## Reader One:

Our Advent journey to RENEW begins with contemplation and a willingness to change. We must realize we are not always where God would want us to be. We acknowledge we have not yet arrived. Renewal asks the question, what needs to change in my life? We are invited to renew our commitment to one another. To bring peace to relationships, peace to strife, peace to brokenness. We shall go in peace.

## Reader Two:

Isaiah says that in days to come, the nations shall stream to the mountain of the Lord, God will judge and rule and there we will beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks; there, we will learn war no more. God will teach us peace.

## Reader One:

We light this first candle to burn as a sign to RENEW peace among all people.

*(Light one candle on the wreath.)*

## Reader Two:

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that God may teach us the ways of peace.



## Prayer of Peace

God of justice and peace,  
from your throne you pour out mercy and  
kindness, that all the earth may marvel in  
awe and wonder.

We lift our eyes in hopeful expectation peace,  
we open our hearts to yearn for the coming  
days of peace.

We extend our hands as instruments of peace  
today for Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns  
for ever and ever.

Amen.

## Intercession

May God hear these prayers,  
which come from the unlikely corners  
of our lives.

We seek peace.

We seek to be peacemakers.

We pray in intercession for peace:

Global wars and conflicts,

Relational conflicts,

Political, Ideological, Theological

Polarizations,

Anxieties, worries, fears

Let us be your instruments of peace,  
as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

## Contemplative Practice

### Speak:

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Ps. 122:1, NRSV).

### Reflect:

Where do you see peace in Isaiah 2 and Matthew 24?

Reflect on the peace that God's light will shine on the mountaintop, revealing the goodness of new life.

What makes God's peace different from the seeking of "world peace?"

### Engage:

Take a prayer walk with another person, take a hike, walk in your neighbourhood, or just about anywhere.

As you walk, look around you for signs of peace.

### Pray:

Gracious God, we seek you everywhere with expectant eyes that invite us to see peace in the world today. Make me a channel of your peace. Amen.

## Benediction

Be a people of peace.

Let peace live in your heart and share the peace of Christ with all you meet.

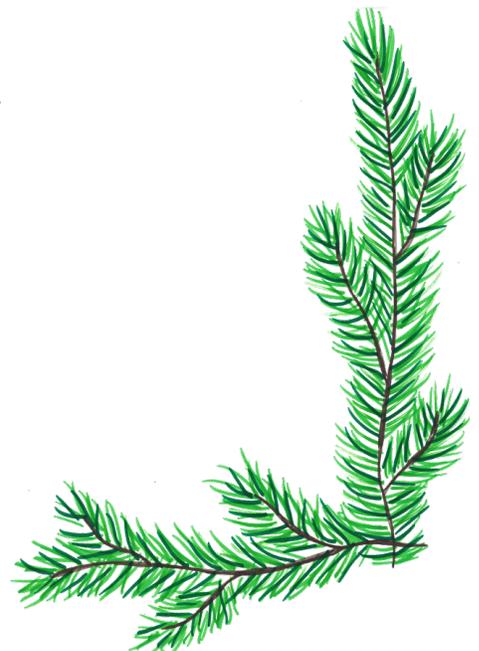
Share peace by demonstrating compassion and not fear.

Share peace by giving the benefit of the doubt.

Share peace by prayer for our world.

As you go out into the world, share peace with those you meet.

Amen.



**WEEK 2:** *Renew*  
**HOPE**



**Scripture Readings (NIV)**

[▶ Watch Videos](#)

**Isaiah 11:1-10**

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—  
3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.  
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.  
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.  
5 Righteousness will be his belt  
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.  
6 The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.  
7 The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
8 The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.  
9 They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.  
10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;  
the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

**Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19**

1 Endow the king with your justice, O God,  
the royal son with your righteousness.  
2 May he judge your people in righteousness,  
your afflicted ones with justice.  
3 May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,  
the hills the fruit of righteousness.  
4 May he defend the afflicted among the people  
and save the children of the needy;  
may he crush the oppressor.  
5 May he endure as long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, through all generations.  
6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field,  
like showers watering the earth.  
7 In his days may the righteous flourish  
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.  
  
18 Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
who alone does marvelous deeds.  
19 Praise be to his glorious name forever;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen and Amen.

**Romans 15:4-13**

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;  
I will sing the praises of your name."

10 Again, it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

11 And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;  
let all the peoples extol him."

12 And again, Isaiah says,

"The Root of Jesse will spring up,  
one who will arise to rule over the nations;  
in him the Gentiles will hope."

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Matthew 3:1-12**

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

# Devotional

▶ Watch Video

## Transcript

### *Hoping and Waiting.*

Hi I'm Cid and I have the privilege of serving with CBOQ! I want to talk today about how Advent teaches us to hope, and hope is nothing unless we wait. You know, we love instant everything. The first thing I do when I go into a hotel room is look for the coffee. How soon can I have an instant coffee?

We love instant. We love instant coffee, instant tea, and instant food. And today we can have instant friends. And if you post something on your feed, whether you're baking a cake or burning a cake, somebody is going to give you instant gratification. They're going to say, "Hey, I like it" because we love instant everything. We can have whatever we want and we can have it now.

We can have it instantly. And this desire, this need, for instant, creates an instant culture. An instant culture is that which says you can have it now without the work that's normally required to get it. But having things instantly isn't always good without the process, without the work; it produces it prematurely.

Think about the people that have won the lottery. Look at the statistics of those who won the lottery: "Oh, we don't want that." We don't want it instantly because it produces something without the work that's required. Having things instantly isn't always good. You know, nothing is taught until something is learned. To have it, to learn it requires us to have the process. It takes waiting. It takes time.

And that's where we get to Romans, where it says in Romans 8: "No one hopes for what they already have." All scripture is teaching us to hope. And hope is nothing unless we wait. So Advent teaches us to wait because God—the character of God—teaches us that his timing isn't always our timing.

So we hope, because we hope in the character of God, we hope in the promises that he gives us. And we hope, because of the work that he's doing within us. It's what he's doing within us, not what's happening around us that causes us to have hope.

And so when we pray for people to have hope. It's nothing unless we teach them to wait. When we encourage people to have hope, it's nothing unless we teach them to wait. When we support people to have hope, it's nothing unless we teach them to wait. So hope is nothing unless we wait.

Advent is all about teaching us to wait: wait on the Lord, wait on His coming, and wait on his timing. We wait and therefore, we have hope.

God bless you.



# Children's Moment

▶ Watch Video



## Transcript

### *The Hope of Jesus*

So what are you hoping for this Christmas? I mean, seriously, what are you hoping for under your tree? The fact is, we have these ideas of what we hope for or maybe wish for. These are words that we use a lot of times interchangeably. But maybe one way to look at this is that a wish is something that is really for you, something that you want, that's really for yourself.

And hope is really something that is for someone else. It's for the benefit of others. And so when we look at this idea of wishes and hopes, perhaps this Christmas season, we want to focus a little more on hope.

When you look at the Bible, a lot of times the greatest hope that people were asking for is that God would be with us. You know, God who created everything, God who created us, God who created people from the very beginning.

The fact is that at the very beginning, we had this relationship with God. We had this relationship where we were completely in sync with him. We got to hang out with him. We got to talk with him. We were immersed in this relationship of love and grace and joy. The thing is, God gave people a choice: "Do you want to love me or do you want to do things your own way?"

You know, the Bible talks about this thing called 'sin' and one person defines sin as this: Sin can be defined as *a person choosing right and wrong on their own terms*. And so people chose: "God, I don't want what you think is best. I want what I think is best." And because of that, it separated us from God, it moved us away from him. And the fact is, we can't give back to God ourselves.

And so in the Bible, for centuries, people kept on asking, how do we get back to God? How do we have this relationship back with God in the midst of all the struggles, all the things happening?

God made this promise. He said that Jesus would come. Jesus, who is God and human, would come to Earth. And in fact, one of Jesus' names is Emmanuel. It actually means "God with us". During Christmas, this is what we get to celebrate; the fact that *God is with us—Emmanuel*. This is the hope that has already started happening. Jesus is still alive.

So, during this Christmas season, maybe a couple of questions to think about: One is that, if Jesus is actually with us, if God is actually with us, if God is Emmanuel, what changes in our lives?

Maybe another question to ask is, well, how can I actually bring the hope of God to the people around me, people I care about, maybe people I don't even know, some place I don't even know, maybe even people I don't like? You might have some of those people.

But the fact is that the hope of Jesus is available during Christmas and any time and perhaps during this Christmas season, you might want to think about that and actually bring the hope of God to others around you and ask your family, ask your friends, what they think of it as well.

Share those ideas, share those experiences, so that perhaps this Christmas, the hope of Christ will illuminate in your life.

# Candle lighting + Prayer Resource

**Reader One:**

Life is full of unknowns and anxiety that can sometimes overwhelm us. There is too much to do; our lists are long; our calendars are filled up; we worry that something will go wrong, or we won't end up in the right place or take the right route. There is hope because we are not wandering ahead, but rather, we follow behind the one who knows where to go, goes with us and sustains us along the way.

**Reader Two:**

Who else should we put our hope in? Celebrities? Influencers? Ourselves? Isaiah says that there is one who is to come who will be the fulfillment of all our hope. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on this one, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Who else should we put our hope in?

**Reader One:**

We light the candles of peace and of hope to give us strength for the unknown.

*(Light two candles on the wreath.)*

**Reader Two:**

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that God may teach us the ways of peace and hope.



**Prayer of Hope**

God of infinite grace,  
 you fill us with joyful expectation.  
 Make us ready for the message that  
 prepares the way.  
 Grant us hope beyond our limited  
 imaginations.  
 May we eagerly anticipate and await the  
 kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
 who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
 now and for ever.  
 Amen.

**Intercession**

God of hope,  
 Like John the baptizer we direct others toward  
 the hope of the one to come.  
 As we joyfully await the glorious coming of  
 Christ, we pray to you for the needs of the  
 church and the world.

We pray in intercession for hope:  
 Hope in the midst of loss  
 Hope in the midst of despair  
 Hope in the midst of the unknown  
 Hope in this midst of declining health

Hear our humble prayer  
 that we may serve you by directing others to  
 the true hope found in Christ.  
 May we do so with joy until the day of the  
 coming of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
 who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
 Amen.

## Contemplative Practice

### Speak:

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things” (Ps. 72:18).

### Read:

Isaiah 11:1-10 and Romans 15:4-13

### Reflect

Where do you see hope in Isaiah 11 and Romans 15?

Where do you see signs of hope in an anxious world?

### Engage:

Slow down and reflect on your story.

Where have you been an instrument of division, fear, and hate?

Where have you been an instrument of hope?

Bring your family together to share stories of gratitude and salvation.

### Pray:

Gracious God, we seek you everywhere with expectant eyes that invite us to see hope in the world and in our circumstances. We pray for others to find the hope that only Jesus Christ can bring. Amen.

## Benediction

Be people of hope.

Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet.

Share hope by seeing other's dignity

Share hope by hearing someone's story

Share hope by praying for our world.

As you go out into the world, share hope and peace with those you meet.

Amen.



**WEEK 3:** *Renew*  
**JOY**



**Scripture Readings (NIV)**

[▶ Watch Videos](#)

**Isaiah 35:1-10**

1 The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the Lord,  
the splendor of our God.  
3 Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
4 say to those with fearful hearts,  
“Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you.”  
5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.  
7 The burning sand will become a pool,  
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.  
In the haunts where jackals once lay,  
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.  
8 And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.

9 No lion will be there,  
nor any ravenous beast;  
they will not be found there.  
But only the redeemed will walk there,  
10 and those the Lord has rescued will return.  
They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

**Psalms 146:5-10**

5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God.  
6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth,  
the sea, and everything in them—  
he remains faithful forever.  
7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed  
and gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets prisoners free,  
8 the Lord gives sight to the blind,  
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord loves the righteous.  
9 The Lord watches over the foreigner  
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,  
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.  
10 The Lord reigns forever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord.

**Luke 1:46b-55**

My soul glorifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their  
inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful

55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors.”

**James 5:7-10**

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**Matthew 11:2-11**

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

4 Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

7 As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.”

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

# Devotional

▶ Watch Video



## Transcript

### *Overflowing Joy*

Each Sunday is supposed to be a celebration of who Christ is, what he has done, and what he continues to do.

It is the reason Christians gather in worship to honour Christ. The third week of Advent is a time of great joy, a time to be thankful. The promised Saviour has come who is present and who will come again. It is a time for celebration.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.” The text from Isaiah brings images of joy that overflows in a desert culture. Imagine flowing water and luscious greenery. This was blessing, prosperity, provision and joy. Isaiah takes the images to the extreme, where a desert is converted to a river bed with overgrown river plants.

This is about joy, a renewed joy that is overflowing. Isaiah’s invitation is to strengthen feeble hands, and steady knees that give way and give encouraging words to the fearful-hearted.

Through this, we see that joy is shared, given, extended, and communal. Joy is not complete until it flows out from one to the other. Think to any moment that sparks great joy in your life. You had to share that news with someone. It is always extended. Joy is never complete until it is passed on. And this is all about joy, a renewed joy that is overflowing.

Matthew’s gospel doesn’t seem to be inspired with joy. John the Baptist is languishing in prison and doubt creeps in. His disciples ask, “Are you the one? Or is it someone else?”

This is where joy comes in. The response was, “Look around and see for yourself.” The faint, the weak, the broken are receiving healing, comfort and the result, joy.

Open your eyes and see the reign of God breaking in here and there. Listen for the sound of laughter and hope, of excitement and dancing. Experience the overflowing joy.

Can you bring this message of joy to your community, neighborhood, to your families and friends? As we look for joy, it does not mean we ignore the wrongs in the world, but it is an invitation to pay attention to what is right, what God is doing.

The sign that God’s reign is breaking in his rule and reign is in the world; in your neighborhood, your office, online and offline, in your community, and in your congregation.

Tell others what you see and hear as you proclaim the presence of God. This is about joy, a renewed joy that is overflowing.

## Children's Moment

 Watch Video

### Transcript

#### *Bubbling Joy*

If you think of the word 'joyful', what season do you think of? Christmas? I totally agree! Christmas is a really joyful time. What is joy? And is it different from happiness? Well, let's take a look.

What's something that makes you happy? Well, maybe it's a sunny day playing outside with friends or birthday parties or vacations. All these things are really happy things. Now, is happiness with you all the time? Let's consider this sunny day, and how it makes you so happy. Well, what happens if a storm blows in and you have to leave all of your outside fun and go inside? Does the happiness fade away? Happiness is wonderful. And it is something that can come and go.

Now, let's think about joy. Joy is very similar looking to happiness on the outside, but nothing can take it away. We have joy because we have a relationship with Jesus, Even when times are hard. Our happiness may be gone, but we still have joy knowing that Jesus is our forever friend.

And here's another really cool thing about joy. It is so easy to share. Take a look at my table here. I have two really ordinary things; just baking soda and vinegar. On their own, they don't really do anything. But when they come together, like when we become forever friends with Jesus, look what happens. Look at it bubble and fizz over!

It's just like our joy. It bubbles up in us and it bubbles over. We can share our bubbling joy with God through praise and prayer. And we can share it with others by sharing our God sightings and the reason for our joy. We can share it by serving others.

Today is the day that we light a candle for joy—the joy that a baby brings—Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us! In your God sightings this week, look for joy in action. And in your chat times with God, chat with him about joy and sharing that joy that can't help but bubble up and out.



# Candle lighting + Prayer Resource

**Reader One:**

As life goes on we find that we can become weary, slow, and overburdened. Sometimes the preparations and busyness of Christmas overwhelms us and we get lost in the doing and the planning and the running. Furthermore, we lose the purpose, and the sense of why. Why do we do all of this? Why is this necessary? The answer is simple: for the joy of it. We forget the joy when we get caught up in our to-do lists. We forget the joy when we lose sight of the purpose.

**Reader Two:**

Matthew tells us that when John asked if Jesus was the one to come, Jesus responded by saying look around you. Our call in this Advent season is to look around us and to see that Jesus is already at work amongst us and to celebrate his presence with joy.

**Reader One:**

We light the candles of peace and hope and joy to light our way as we Renew Advent.

*(Light three candles on the wreath.)*

**Reader Two:**

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, that God may teach us the ways of peace and hope and joy.



**Prayer of Joy**

God of Joy,  
 you saved us from the oppression of sin  
 And given us freedom of grace  
 And given us peace in our relationship with you  
 and others  
 And given us hope for the beyond.  
 Because of this we have JOY.  
 Joy for what you have done and continue to do  
 Joy in sharing with others what you have done  
 and continue to do  
 We make our prayer through  
 Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

**Intercession**

Brothers and sisters,  
 as we joyfully await the glorious coming of the  
 Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church,  
 our community, and the world.

We pray in intercession for joy:

- Joy for the weary
- Joy for the broken
- Joy for the hurting
- Joy for the desperate

God of joy and exultation,  
 you strengthen what is weak;  
 and give hope to those who live in fear.  
 Look upon our needs this day.  
 Make us grateful for the good news of salvation  
 Make us faithful in our service to you  
 Fill us with joy overflowing  
 until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 who lives for ever and ever. Amen.

## Contemplative Practice

### Speak:

"Jesus said, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them'" (Matt. 11:4-5).

### Read:

Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 1:46-55, and Matthew 11:2-11

### Reflect

When have you seen the promise of joy in difficult times?

How do you share with others the joy you find in Jesus?

Do I demonstrate to others the joy of my salvation?

### Engage:

Read James 5:7-10.

How are you willing to be patient and wait for joy today?

How will you serve others as you wait?

### Pray:

Gracious God, we seek you everywhere with expectant eyes that invite us to see joy in the world today. Help me to exemplify the joy of my salvation to those who need Christ. Amen.

## Benediction

Be people of Joy.

Let joy liven your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet.

Share the joy of seeing Christ at work in others.

Share the joy by remembering Christ's work in you.

Share the joy by praying for our world.

As you go out into the world, share joy, hope and peace with those you meet.

Amen.



## WEEK 4: *Renew* **LOVE**

### Scripture Readings (NIV)

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#### Isaiah 7:10-16

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.”

13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, 16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

#### Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,  
shine forth 2 before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Awaken your might;  
come and save us.

3 Restore us, O God;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

4 How long, Lord God Almighty,  
will your anger smolder  
against the prayers of your people?

5 You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.

6 You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,  
and our enemies mock us.

7 Restore us, God Almighty;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,  
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

18 Then we will not turn away from you;  
revive us, and we will call on your name.

19 Restore us, Lord God Almighty;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.





**Romans 1:1-7**

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 1:18-25**

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

# Devotional

▶ Watch Video



## Transcript

### *Full Extent of God's Love*

This is the last week of Advent. You know, I still find Advent exciting because it brings me back to my childhood. You see, as a child, Advent was my favorite season. Let me tell you why.

At the end of November or early December, I would be pleasantly surprised to see the Advent wreath at the front of the church when I would step inside. I became excited inside and outside to know that there were only four Sunday's to wait until Christmas.

Back then, I saw Advent as a countdown, and in some ways, I think it still is. For we build the anticipation of the miracle of Christmas by reflecting upon the long wait Israel had before the Saviour arrived. We read the old prophecies and consider the patience and the wisdom of God as he slowly but surely revealed what his love was all about.

But Advent is more than looking back to a past event. It continues to be a countdown, but one looking forward. It's easy to forget that Advent is also a waiting for the return of Jesus, when the work of God will be completed and all the prophecies and revelations will be accomplished.

When we look at expecting parents, we know that gestation has to take time because many unseen things happen during these nine months, and some are seen as a mother's belly grows.

Advent reminds us that God is still at work in our midst, working in unseen ways, but also at times, in very visible ways.

Through the Holy Spirit, God still teaches us, and he continues to reveal his love to us in powerful ways. All this waiting reminds me of the words of Peter in his second letter when he said, "The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, he is patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but he wants everyone to repent."

The early church leaders had good foresight when they instituted Advent, I think. While it reminds us of the events that led to the first Christmas, reflecting on God's powerful love for us, it also helps us to anticipate that something greater is coming. Jesus will come back, and all the rejoicing that there will be when we are together with him, experiencing the full extent of his love.

May your patience for that day be renewed as you ponder upon the love your father in heaven has for you.

# Children's Moment

 **Watch Video**

## Transcript

### *The Greatest Gift*

I wonder who likes gifts? Do you like gifts? Yeah, I love gifts. That's why I love this time of year. We are almost at a day where we get lots of gifts.

You know what? What if I gave you a gift? But you just took that gift and put it aside and didn't open it? Is that really a gift?

No.

Why not?

*You actually have to open it.*

That's true.

It's not much of a gift if you just take it and put it aside, isn't it?

Yeah.

Now, what if I gave you a gift and then I pulled out a receipt and said, "Okay, you owe me \$23.47." Is that a gift?

No.

Why not?

*Because you're telling them that's how much it pays to get the gift.*

That's right.

A gift is free, isn't it? Well, you know what? I am so excited for the day that's coming that we have all kinds of gifts. But you know what? The gift that we are celebrating is the gift of God's love to us in Jesus.

Christmas is all about the greatest gift ever given: Jesus. And it's a gift that's free. But it's a gift that we have to receive and open up.

Now, how do we open up Jesus? That sounds a little silly, doesn't it? Strange.

*We pray to Him?*

We could pray to Him. Yes.

The gift of Jesus is a gift that's free. It doesn't cost us anything at all. God won't send you a receipt, but it's a gift that if we receive it, we learn how to open up the gift of God's love everyday.

*We can pray to him!*

And we can pray to him, too. That's right.

So this Christmas, as you receive a gift, we can remember the greatest gift is God's love to us.



# Candle lighting + Prayer Resource

**Reader One:**

The season for watching and waiting is over. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. This is the light of the world, and nothing cannot extinguish it.

**Reader Two:**

We light these candles. Because we have seen a light and we believe increasing that light does make a difference in the world around us. We light these candles because we want to be people of the light, who know a God who loved the world so much, this God chose to be born in a manger in the midst of the darkness. We light these candles as a sign of the light of the world that is coming into our darkness, and we sing with joy.

**Reader One:**

We light the candles of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love. And we light the light of Love as the sign of Christ's presence among us, no matter how dark it may seem.

*(Light four candles on the wreath.)*

**Reader Two:**

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth let there be Love.



**Prayer of Love**

God of love

Thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, your greatest gift of love to your people.

Open my heart to receive your love.

Overflow my heart with your love, so I may pour it out into the world.

Help me to love others as you have loved me

Even those who are not easy to love.

May I ever walk in your love and show the world

I am your disciple by the love I show to others.

Amen.

**Intercession**

Brothers and sisters,

as we joyfully await the glorious coming of the Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church, our community, and the world.

We pray in intercession for those who need to experience the love of Christ:

Family who do not know God's love

Friends who do not know God's love

Neighbours who do not know God's love

Colleagues, co-workers, classmates who

do not know God's love

God of Love,

You have given us a sign of your love through the gift of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who was promised from ages past.

We offer our prayers for your world, confident of your care and love for all creation.

Amen.

## Contemplative Practice

### Speak:

"A child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

### Read:

Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2:1-20

### Reflect

Where in your community do you see signs that Christ is changing the world?

Where would you like to see more signs of change?

Who is God asking to help be a change agent for the world?

### Engage:

What will you do today to share God with others?

### Pray:

Gracious God, we seek you everywhere with expectant eyes that invite us to see all the people that you are calling us to love today. We praise you, O God, for the King of Kings! Amen.

## Benediction

Be a people of love

Let love live in your heart and share the love of Christ with all you meet.

Share love by loving those you see regularly. Love your community.

Share love by loving those you do not know. Love others.

Share love by praying for our world.

As you go out into the world, share love, joy, hope and peace with those you meet.

Amen.



5 International Blvd.  
Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3  
(416) 622-8600  
cboq@baptist.ca  
baptist.ca | @cboq

