

# The Names of Jesus

JOURNEY OF REFLECTION AND JOURNAL

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### INTRODUCTION

As we approach the Advent season, we continue a time-honoured tradition that invites us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. Advent is a time of anticipation and reflection, a time to rekindle the spirit of hope, peace, joy and love. It is a beautiful reminder of Christ's birth and the promise of His return. Our "Journey of Reflection" is an Advent reader and journal. It will guide you through the weeks leading up to Christmas, providing a source of inspiration and personal reflection. Within these pages you will find a daily selection of scripture, a

short reflection and a challenge that will help you grow in your faith journey. We offer you this opportunity to chronicle your own thoughts and experiences. We hope this will serve as a record of your spiritual growth this Advent season. You will also find a link to listen to a song each week that will enrich your journey of reflection on the names of Jesus. The songs for Weeks 2 and 3 were recorded by Rachelle Luk, a Christian music artist who recently joined our CBOQ staff as Administrative Assistant for Communications and Events.

## Week One

### MY MESSIAH IS IMMANUEL

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

### BIBLE VERSE

#### MATTHEW 1:22-23 NIV

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

### REFLECTION

In Matthew 1:22-23, we are informed of the miraculous birth of Jesus through the prophecy from Isaiah and the theological wonder that Jesus is God. After describing His genealogy and the miracles and angelic dreams, Matthew rather plainly states the incredible, historical, wondrous fact that Jesus was born. His name shall be called Immanuel. What happens next leads us to

our challenge for the day: "and Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son; and he called His name Jesus." Here, we see that Joseph went beyond what God commanded by keeping Mary a virgin until she gave birth. The text does not tell us why he did this, but could it be that Joseph saw this as an act of worship, to honour the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary?

### CHALLENGE

When has an angel of the Lord spoken to you? What was being asked of you? Today, as you start your Advent journal, make note of those times when you have been given divine guidance. Did you do only what you were asked, or, like Joseph, did you go beyond what was commanded of you? What was the additional act of worship in honour of Him? As you start your journey through Advent, what additional act of worship will you commit to today?

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

## BIBLE VERSE

### ISAIAH 7:14 NIV

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

## REFLECTION

This verse holds deep significance as it foretells the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The idea of a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a son is a miraculous and divine occurrence. The birth of Jesus was no ordinary event. It was a fulfillment of prophecy, demonstrating God's power and faithfulness. Immanuel means "God with us". The birth of Jesus signifies that God chose to be with humanity. This verse can also be seen as a sign of hope. It reminds us that God's promises are true.

## CHALLENGE

Reflect on how God's presence is with you in your daily life. Journal your thoughts and experiences of God's guidance, comfort and faithfulness. Share the message of Isaiah 7:14 with someone today. Explain the significance of the prophecy and its fulfillment in Jesus. Write down in your journal how that went. Did you feel you were spreading the hope and joy of Advent?

# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

## BIBLE VERSE

### ISAIAH 8:8 NIV

And sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Immanuel.

## REFLECTION

This passage contains a vivid description of a powerful force sweeping over the land. It concludes with the word "Immanuel", a reminder of God's presence that remains constant. Even in the face of challenges and uncertainty, God is with us. The imagery in this verse can be compared to life's storms and challenges. Difficulties can seem overwhelming but the name "Immanuel" is a powerful reminder that God is not far, He is present in our lives. God's faithfulness endures, even in the face of adversity.

## CHALLENGE

In your journal, write down a challenge or difficulty in your life today. Take a moment to pray for guidance and strength, and ask God to be present as you navigate this storm in your life. Now write down a "God with us" – Immanuel – moment. What was the situation where you had experienced God's presence? Reach out to someone today who may have a storm brewing in their life. Offer your support, be a representation of God's presence in their life. Take a moment to pray for them and thank God for His unchanging faithfulness.

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

## BIBLE VERSE

### ISAIAH 9:6 NIV

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

## REFLECTION

The centrepiece of all the Christmas prophecies, Isaiah 9:6, was written nearly six hundred years before Jesus's birth. Isaiah promised it would be a miraculous event, unlike any the world had ever known, and the details Isaiah gave were fulfilled precisely by Jesus. It is the most familiar of all the Old Testament prophecies about the birth of Christ. Handel included it as one of the great choruses of his Messiah oratorio. Chances are you either sing it or hear it several times every Christmas season. Consider the rich truths in this one short verse and the attributes given to this extraordinary child. To the Jewish nation, Isaiah's prophecy was news of a coming King. To the unsuspecting world, the prophecy promised a Saviour, God incarnate, whose coming would dramatically and forever alter human history.

## CHALLENGE

Write in your journal about an area, relationship, situation, etc. in your life where there is a need for peace and harmony. How can you be God's instrument to bring peace and harmony? List three ways you could be a peacemaker in that situation. Now pray that Jesus, your Wonderful Counselor, will guide you to fulfill God's will.

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

## BIBLE VERSE

### LUKE 1: 26-38 NIV

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

## REFLECTION

This passage captures the moment when the angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce to her that she will give birth to the Messiah, Jesus. Think about Mary in that moment. She responds to the angel with humility and the utmost example of faith in God's plan. Reflect on this passage for a minute as you consider Mary's obedience, faith, and willingness to embrace God's plan. This is a reminder to us all to trust in God's promises and submit to His will.

## CHALLENGE

Today in your journal, challenge yourself to be like Mary. Write down ways that you can align your own life with God's purpose. Trust in His guidance even though the path forward may be filled with uncertainty and questions. What can you do to improve upon how you trusted Him in the past? Pray for the miraculous and transformative work of God in your life. Like Mary, say to God: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

## BIBLE VERSE

### 1 SAMUEL 2:7 NIV

The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

## REFLECTION

This verse from Samuel reminds us that the Lord directs changes in our lives. Difficulties in life typically arise from change and transformation. Pause and think about what you've experienced or are expecting during this Advent.

## CHALLENGE

Have confidence in your Messiah, Immanuel, who is there with you through all change and challenge. Develop yourself spiritually and personally during such times, understanding that change might be difficult, but that it can lead to a closer relationship with God. Welcome the changes in your life with an open heart and the expectation to learn more about your faith and journey with Immanuel. In your journal, jot down a couple of areas where God's 'reversal of fortune' has been evident in your life. What is a gift He has bestowed upon you in these reversals of fortune?

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

## BIBLE VERSE

### GALATIANS 6:9 NIV

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

## REFLECTION

With the first week of Advent concluding, the theme “My Messiah is Immanuel” calls us to persevere in doing good. Galatians 6:9 reminds us that our persistence in what we do will be worth it. Just as Mary and Joseph never failed in their journey, we should not fail to do good and serve each other. We are, therefore, inspired to believe in our faith and practices, for we know that our Messiah is Immanuel - He is always with us.

## CHALLENGE

In all your endeavors at this Advent time, persevere in doing good, even when it is difficult. Remember that your Messiah is Immanuel – God with us. Believe in the presence of God, who dispenses strength and directs you through life’s obstacles. As you embrace this season, may the spirit of compassion, kindness, and love go with you, acknowledging that your actions can be a light in the world. Where is your compassion needed most? In your journal, identify an action to deliver compassion and go seek out opportunities to show kindness. At the end of your day, your journal page will be waiting for you to document the results of your acts of kindness. God is in each one; pray with gratitude that He provided you with opportunities to give the gifts of compassion and kindness to others.



SCAN FOR 

*“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”*

At the end of each week, we invite you to listen to a song that helps you to bask in the beauty of our Messiah. This week we reflected on the amazing truth that our Messiah is Immanuel – God with us. He has come, He is come, He is coming.

As you listen to “O Come O Come Emmanuel”, receive again the gift of Christ’s presence with you.

# Week Two

MY MESSIAH IS A MAN OF SORROWS

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

### BIBLE VERSE

#### ISAIAH 53:1-6 NIV

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

### REFLECTION

Jesus Christ was a man who suffered and was familiar with pain. He endured the rejection and affliction described here by the prophet Isaiah. My Messiah bears many names, and one of them is “Man of Sorrows”. He was God incarnate, and instead of shielding Himself from the brokenness of the world, He suffered with us and for us. It was His sacrificial gift that gave us peace and healing, and through His suffering He showed us the depth of His love.

### CHALLENGE

How can the truth “My Messiah is a Man of Sorrows” bring comfort to you and others today? If you are experiencing sorrow, take time with your journal to receive Christ’s comfort. The suffering of Jesus also moves us to think about the suffering of others. During this Christmas season, look for chances to express the love of Christ to those who are suffering. In word or deed, endeavour to become an instrument of God’s peace for those who most need it. Record your thoughts in your journal.

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

### BIBLE VERSE

#### PSALM 130 NIV

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

### REFLECTION

The hope of Psalm 130 is an Advent kind of hope. The psalmist is hoping, waiting, aching to experience God’s forgiveness and redemption. In the season of Advent, we remember how God’s people once yearned for a Saviour who would restore their nation. We also get in touch with our own need for forgiveness and renewal. Though our situations are quite different from that of the writer of Psalm 130, we also put our hope in the Lord and long for Him. We, too, need Him to put our lives back together. We, too, need to experience the new life He alone can give. Psalm 130 helps us prepare for a rich celebration of the birth of the Saviour, who will indeed bring God’s forgiveness and redemption to the world, including you and me.

### CHALLENGE

Today in your journal, take some time to reflect on the reality of God’s forgiveness through Christ. How do you respond to the fact that God forgives all your sin? How does this truth help you to fear the Lord; that is, to revere Him and humbly worship Him? Like the Psalmist, cry out to God for mercy as you write your prayer of hope for you, your neighbours in Christ, and the world.



# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

## BIBLE VERSE

### MATTHEW 5:3-10 NIV

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

## REFLECTION

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10 portray what is unique about our Messiah, demonstrating a willingness to accept the “messiness” of human life. These verses remind us that it is the humble, sorrowful, starving, and scorned who are blessed. They change the way we perceive blessings and remind us to look for our Messiah in the daily messes of our lives.

## CHALLENGE

Today, challenge yourself to accept that life is messy and there are hidden blessings everywhere. Ask Jesus to help you find Him in the daily messes of your life. Then, invite Him to show His character to others through you, by enabling you to be kinder, more compassionate, and more peaceful, especially to those going through difficult moments. Aim to embody the spirit of the Beatitudes, sharing Christ’s message of hope and blessing. In your journal, think of ways to make this part of your everyday living.

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13

## BIBLE VERSE

### JOHN 11:21-37 NIV

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

## REFLECTION

In this poignant scene in John 11, we see Jesus grieving at the tomb of Lazarus. Here, our Messiah, the Man of Sorrows, weeps openly. Even though He is about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He still expresses His sorrow with tears, sharing in the sadness of His friends, Mary and Martha. We are reminded that Jesus mourns with those who mourn. In the midst of their loss and bereavement, Mary and Martha demonstrate their faith in Christ, who is the resurrection and the life (John 14:6), and they experience the gift of His presence and hope.

## CHALLENGE

Today in your journal, write down what the gift of eternal life means to you. During this Advent time, intentionally offer to share the burden with those who are mourning. Express Christ’s love by providing them with a comforting presence, be a shoulder to cry on, and someone to listen. If you are grieving in this season, imagine Jesus weeping with you, right beside you. Reflect on the tears of Christ and receive the gift of His presence.

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

## BIBLE VERSE

### JOHN 1:1-9 NIV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

## REFLECTION

This passage points to two contrasting realities in our world: darkness and light. Darkness is real, and we too often experience this reality, on every scale, whether personal or global. The Bible acknowledges the presence of evil in the world. But it is not the only reality – light is real, and it is here, living and breathing in the person of Jesus Christ. Look back over John 1:1-9 and count the number of times the words “darkness” and “light” appear. We live in a world where there is both light and darkness, but my Messiah, the Light of the World, shines in the darkness, and will never be overcome.

## CHALLENGE

Today, reflect on the reality of darkness and light in your world. How do you experience the darkness, and how do you experience the light of Christ? Thank Him for His victory over darkness. Then ask Jesus to guide you in a specific action you can take today that will share His light with someone else.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

## BIBLE VERSES

### JOHN 16:33 NIV

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

## MATTHEW 14:13-21 NIV

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

“Bring them here to me,” he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

## REFLECTION

John 16:33 reminds us that the Messiah conquered the universe, thus giving hope and mastering the world’s challenges and darkness. The account of Jesus feeding the five thousand in Matthew 14 illustrates His unlimited compassion and His capability to give abundantly, even during scarcity. Note that Jesus was grieving the death of John the Baptist when this story begins. Like us, this Man of Sorrows experienced “trouble in this world”. After taking time alone to mourn, He demonstrated God’s power through the miraculous feeding of the hungry crowds. My Messiah, a Man of Sorrows, is also the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who has overcome everything.

## CHALLENGE

Like the disciples with their five loaves and two fish, we sometimes feel that what we have to offer is not enough, especially in the face of enormous need. Today, believe your Messiah has already overcome the whole world. Remember that you are a limited person in relationship with a limitless God. What is Jesus asking you to offer to Him in this Advent season, so He can multiply it? Record this in your journal and rejoice that He has overcome the world.



# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

## BIBLE VERSE

### HEBREWS 12:1-3 NIV

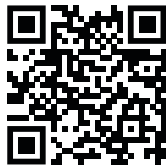
Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

## REFLECTION

This passage in Hebrews reminds us that where we put our focus matters. The best fuel for perseverance through the tasks and challenges of life is to fix our eyes on Jesus. When we set our eyes on Him, we will not grow weary and lose heart. Jesus Himself persevered through unimaginable hardship and suffering. My Messiah, Man of Sorrows, was able to endure the cross because He focused on “the joy set before Him”. It was joy. He fixed His eyes on the joy of accomplishing salvation for the world, the joy of fulfilling the Father’s perfect will, the joy of being in relationship with you and me.

## CHALLENGE

As you run your race of faith, where have you put your focus? Reflect on how you can fix your eyes on Jesus, your Saviour, who endured suffering while fixing His eyes on the joy set before Him. This Christmas, endeavour to enjoy your walk with Jesus, and to share that same joy with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.



SCAN FOR



*“Come, though you have nothing  
Come, He is the offering  
Come, see what your God has done  
Christ is born  
Christ is born  
Christ is born for you”*

Whether you are full of faith or running on empty, our Messiah, the Man of Sorrows, welcomes you in this season. This song is a declaration that Christ was born for the broken, the weary, and the weak. Christ was born for you.

# Week Three

MY MESSIAH IS THE PRINCE OF PEACE

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

### BIBLE VERSE

#### MATTHEW 2:9-12 NIV

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

### REFLECTION

We are drawn into the story of the Magi who locate baby Jesus, destined to be the Prince of Peace, through a guiding star. They offer precious gifts and joyfully bow down in worship. The story convincingly shows that our Messiah – the Prince of Peace – brings immeasurable joy into our lives. Take a moment to contemplate this scene; it dawns on us that we need to continue seeking the light of Jesus for our own Advent journey just as the Magi followed the star. This reminds us that real joy is received in the presence of the Prince of Peace.

### CHALLENGE

In this holy Advent season, aspire to spread joy while embracing the joy of the Prince of Peace. Just as the Magi offered their gifts to Jesus, think of how you can bring happiness into another person's life. Small ways might include acts of kindness or simply being generous in compassionate moments. In this regard, be an instrument of joy, lighting up the lives of those around you and consequently reflecting the Messiah's joyful presence. In your journal today reflect on what joy means to you. What does joy look like to you and how can you bring joy to others this Christmas season?

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 18

### BIBLE VERSE:

#### MATTHEW 2:13-15 NIV

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

### REFLECTION

The Gospel of Matthew gives us an opportunity to realize once again the gravity and importance of Jesus's birth. It is the story of the birth of one King and the violent opposition of another. Soon after the familiar Christmas stories of the baby Jesus's birth come stories of genocide and massacre — further reminders that Christ was born into a fallen and broken world. It is important to remember during the joy and celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus, that these events brought out some of the worst in humankind, and it was only through Christ's birth that our sins were ultimately washed away. What a gift!

### CHALLENGE

Our world today is suffering; the worst of humankind can be seen all around us. Today in your journal, write down one event in the world where the worst of humankind is being exemplified. Pray over that event and write a personal commitment to continue to take time in prayer to the Prince of Peace about this situation.

# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19

## BIBLE VERSE

### PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5 NIV

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

## REFLECTION

The third week of Advent is traditionally about lighting the Shepherd's Candle, the Candle of Joy. These verses are calling readers to "rejoice" for "indeed the Lord is near." In other words, this week celebrates the joy of Christ's coming to earth. During a time where depression is at an all-time high and people seem to be in the most despair, the Shepherd's Candle offers a bright light during a dark time. During the middle of the night, the darkest time, the shepherds encountered angels that brought them news of great joy. Little did the shepherds know what was awaiting – the baby and the plans Herod was spinning. The light of the Shepherd's Candle dims, but the baby they were rushing to see was the Light of the World; the light shines for all eternity.

## CHALLENGE

In your journal, draw a candle with a flame. Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the Light of the World that came to earth as a baby. Challenge yourself today to let His light shine out of you (Matthew 5:16). At the end of your day, come back to your journal and write about your experiences. Were you a light?

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

## BIBLE VERSE

### PSALM 51:12 NIV

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

## REFLECTION

The third week of Advent gives us the opportunity to prepare a sense of holy anticipation in our hearts for the celebration Jesus's birth, as well as for His promised second coming. Think of how those shepherds went from fear to joy. We can study the Scriptures as a reminder of the ways God has been faithful to us through the fulfillment of prophecy, and find joy and hope in the promises of God that are laid out in His Word.

## CHALLENGE

Would you be described as joyful? In your journal today, take a look inward and focus on steps you can take to be joyful. If you have lost that joy, ask the Lord to restore the joy of His salvation in you. Think of someone you consider joyful: how do they manifest that joy? How can you manifest joyfulness to others?

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

## BIBLE VERSE

### MATTHEW 3:1-6 NIV

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 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.'"

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. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

## REFLECTION

John the Baptist's announcement in the wilderness concerning Jesus Christ is as relevant now as it was then. To this day, his call for repentance, proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, is still alive. John prepared the way for Christ; let his call remind you that your heart must be ready to receive the Messiah. This means self-examination and repentance so that your heart can be a home for the Prince of Peace.

## CHALLENGE

Take some time today for confession and repentance. Boldly acknowledge your flaws and imperfections before God, praying about them in solitude. Pray for His forgiveness. Invite the Saviour to come into your heart and transform you. Create space where you can experience Christ's reconciliation and sense in your heart that you are at peace with God.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

## BIBLE VERSE

### ISAIAH 65:18 NIV

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

## REFLECTION

As the coming of Jesus, our Saviour, draws nearer, our joy builds with our anticipation of His birth. In Isaiah 65, God speaks again about His unwavering intention to create a new heaven and a new earth, promising that the former things will be forgotten. Then He instructs us always to rejoice in what He will create. Because of all this, we can cultivate joyful anticipation, looking with hope toward the times ahead.

## CHALLENGE

Throughout this Advent season, we have been looking at messengers, messages, joyfulness and, yes, fear. In your journal, reflect on the many emotions that Advent delivers to you. With each emotion, search the Scriptures for the gift the Lord gives you, which could include the feeling itself.

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

## BIBLE VERSE

### ISAIAH 40:3 NIV

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

## REFLECTION

This verse describes a voice crying out in the wilderness, urging the preparation of a way for the Lord. There are messengers sent to prepare the way for the Lord, making a straight path into the desert. Advent is a season of anticipation and hope. Can you imagine the anticipation felt by the people of that time? We, too, can eagerly anticipate the presence of Christ in our lives every day.

## CHALLENGE

In your journal today, write down ways you can prepare your heart to welcome the presence of Christ. Write down some Bible verses that can help you prepare the way for the Lord. Embrace that spirit of anticipation and hope this Advent season. As you prepare for the Lord's coming, consider volunteering or donating to those who may be experiencing an absence of that hope and preparedness for the birth of Christ.

# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

## BIBLE VERSE

### LUKE 2:1-20 NIV

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

## REFLECTION

This Bible passage offers a powerful narrative that captures the essence of Advent and the message of peace brought by the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We are reminded of the humble and ordinary circumstances surrounding the arrival of the Messiah.

Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem serves as a reminder of obedience, even in challenging circumstances. They obediently followed the decree to register in their town, ultimately fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The birth of the Saviour in a lowly manger beautifully illustrates the humility and meekness of the Prince of Peace.

## CHALLENGE

As we reflect on this final passage of our Advent reader, we are challenged to embrace the message of the Prince of Peace in our lives. The birth of Jesus calls us to see and embody the peace that He offers. This peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of divine grace and reconciliation. In your journal, as the final entry this Advent season, write a reminder to find moments of stillness and reflection, allowing the peace of Christ to fill your heart. Next, write how you will practice humility and obedience in your daily life after the Advent season. Let us remind ourselves that God works through ordinary people in extraordinary ways. Finally, just as the shepherds shared the good news, write ways in which you will share the message of peace and hope, reaching out to those who need to experience the peace of Christ. This Advent, let us remember that our Messiah is the Prince of Peace. May His message of peace inspire and challenge us to be peacemakers in our own lives and in the world.



*“Truly He taught us to love one another  
His law is love and His gospel is peace”*

SCAN FOR 

Our Messiah, the Prince of Peace, is born, and the weary world rejoices! He is born, and in that moment, unbreakable hope arrives on earth, and promises of peace come to life. May His peace fill you as you listen to “O Holy Night”.

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## IN CONCLUSION

We are glad you are part of our CBOQ family. The Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec transcends being merely a religious institution—it is a living, breathing community united by a shared faith and a collective mission. Our work aims to radiate the light of Christ’s love, guiding individuals and communities toward spiritual growth, unity, and transformation.

As we continue to pen our story, we extend an open invitation for you to join us. Together, we can effect change, contribute to molding a world enriched with love and justice, and build a community where everyone basks in the warmth and grace of God’s love. Our narrative isn’t confined to us alone—it encapsulates each individual and church that’s an integral part of our dynamic community. It’s about you.

In alignment with our dedication to fostering vibrant faith communities, CBOQ offers a wealth of resources and services to support our churches and their leaders, including training opportunities, events, and more.

For those seeking opportunities to engage in transformative mission work, CBOQ provides avenues to translate faith into tangible actions. Our missional initiatives encompass a diverse range of activities that manifest God’s love in practical ways.

To encourage connection between our family of churches, we host events such as our annual CBOQ Assembly and CBOQ Sunday. Here, we gather together to share in our faith and work towards our collective growth. We invite you to explore the variety of resources and events that CBOQ offers.



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# Challenge Notes

ADVENT READER

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.