

# Simply Christmas



A GUIDE TO ADVENT



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## How to Use this Devotional

Advent is the long observed tradition of preparation, expectation, and longing for Christmas.

The Latin word *adventus* or advent means “coming” or “arrival.” Each year we celebrate Jesus coming to earth as a baby, we focus on how He has come into our lives and changed us in the present, and we look forward to Him coming again in the future.

This devotional has been created to enhance your celebration and anticipation of Christ in your life. We encourage you to bring this book to church with you on Sunday mornings. Each week of Advent is broken down into the Sunday Sermon Notes, a special time to recognize Advent at home and questions to contemplate throughout the week. May you find Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in abundance this Christmas.

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.

## Sermon Notes

### Hope's Journey

Sunday, November 26, 2023

1. Hope Promised

*(Genesis 12:3) (Genesis 28:15) (Isaiah 7:14) (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7)*

2. Hope Delivered

*(John 1:1-5) (John 3:16-21)*

3. Hope for Today

*(John 1:4-5) (Psalm 139:7-12) (Romans 8:38-39)*

What are you genuinely **hoping** for in this season of life?

*(Romans 5:5)*



## Advent at Home

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

– John 1:1-5

One night this week, set aside time to celebrate Advent at home.

- **Light the Hope Candle:**

A traditional Advent Wreath has three purple candles, one pink candle and one white candle. On this first Sunday in Advent, light a purple candle, signifying HOPE. (Or simply light any available candle you may have at home.)

- **Prayer for Lighting the First Candle - Hope:**

“Loving God, as we light the first Advent candle of hope, we ask for your presence to fill our hearts and homes. May the hope of Christ’s coming bring light to our darkness and renew our spirits. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

- **Listen:**

Open the Crossroads Spotify Playlist using the QR code on page 8 and listen to “When I Think Upon Christmas.”

- **Consider:**

In what areas of your life do you need God’s hope?

## Reflections

This time of year can stir up overwhelming emotions, yet God's Word says we can trust Him to fulfill His promises. Take some time this week answering these questions as you search for the hope God has promised.

1. The word "Hope" implies waiting. Sometimes we wait with excited expectation. At other times we wait with a desperate trust that God will answer. How is hope in God different from being optimistic?
2. It is so easy to get so caught up in the chaos of the holidays that we lose sight of the very reason we celebrate. How can intentionally observing Advent this year prepare and quiet your heart for a more meaningful Christmas?
3. Biblical hope isn't wishing for better circumstances. It is waiting and expecting for God Himself to show up right in the middle of your "junk." When has God shown up in your life - against all odds? How does that change your perspective on hope going forward?



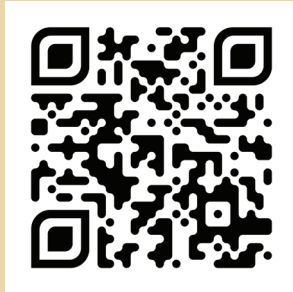




## *Crossroads Christmas* **Spotify Playlist**

Crossroads Fellowship Worship has put together a collection of Christmas worship songs for you to enjoy throughout the Advent season.

Scan the QR code to access the playlist and enjoy the sounds of Christmas:



“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 2:11-14

## Sermon Notes

### Jesus, Our Everlasting Peace

Sunday, December 3, 2023

*(Luke 2:11-14) (Isaiah 9:6)*

1. Jesus: Our Anchor in the Storm  
*(1 Corinthians 14:33) (2 Thessalonians 3:16)*
  
2. A Peace Unlike Any Other  
*(John 14:27) (Ephesians 2:13-14) (Luke 19:41-42)*
  
3. Reconciliation and Peace with God  
*(Romans 5:1) (Ephesians 2:14-18)*



## Advent at Home

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

– Isaiah 9:6

One night this week, set aside time to celebrate Advent at home.

- **Light the Peace Candle:**

On this second Sunday in Advent, light the Hope candle, then light a purple candle, signifying PEACE. (Or simply light any available candles you may have at home.)

- **Prayer for Lighting the Second Candle - Peace:**

“God of peace, as we light the second Advent candle of peace, may your peace fill our hearts and our world. Help us to be peacemakers in our relationships and communities. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

- **Listen:**

Play “Peace Has Come” on the Crossroads Spotify playlist.

- **Consider:**

In a world filled with brokenness, fighting, desperation and tragedy, is this message still true? How can God’s peace change how you view your burdens?

## Reflections

As you go through the hustle and bustle of this week, take some time to think over these questions either on your own or with friends and family.

1. Jesus offers us a peace that transcends fear, worry, trouble, sorrow and chaos, but Satan loves to confuse and distract us from this truth. What things are happening in your life this month that are edging out the peace of Jesus?
2. How does worldly peace differ from the peace Jesus provides?
3. How much of your own sense of peace is related to circumstances, relationships or inner calm instead of the Lord?
4. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. How can you live in the abiding peace Jesus gives? How does that peace feel?





These things I have spoken to  
you, that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be full.

John 15:11

You make known to me the path  
of life; in your presence there is  
fullness of joy; at your right hand  
are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11

*The centerpiece  
of this season is  
Jesus.*



## Sermon Notes

### Good News of Great Joy

Sunday, December 10, 2023

*(Galatians 5:22) (Luke 2:8-11)*

1. Overcoming Fear with the Good News  
*(2 Timothy 1:6-7) (Ephesians 3:20) (Matthew 1:23)*  
*(Titus 2:11-12)*
  
2. The Depths of JOY in the Good News  
*(Psalm 30:5) (John 15:11) (Psalm 16:11) (John 16:22)*  
*(Nehemiah 8:10) (Luke 15:7) (Hebrews 12:2) (Psalm 51:12)*

Where does true JOY resonate in your life?



## Advent at Home

*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.*

– Luke 2:8-11

One night this week, set aside time to celebrate Advent at home.

- **Light the Joy Candle:**

On the third Sunday in Advent, light the Hope and Peace candles, then light the pink candle, signifying JOY.

- **Prayer for Lighting the Third Candle - Joy:**

“Gracious God, as we light the third Advent candle of joy, may the joy of your salvation fill us with gladness. Help us to share this joy with others, especially those in need. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

- **Listen:**

Play “Joy to the World” on the Crossroads Spotify playlist.

- **Consider:**

Have you noticed the increasing light emitted as you light an additional candle each week? When you consider Jesus is the Light of the World, in what ways does He dispel darkness? How does He bring Joy to the world?

## Reflections

The angels shared the Good News of Jesus' arrival to shepherds in a field. Shepherds were poor, lower class people in their society - yet they were the first to receive the Good News!

1. Why do you think God chose the shepherds to be the first to hear of the birth of the Savior? How does this encourage you?
2. Happiness and joy are often confused, but they are not the same thing. Explain the differences between the two. What is true joy?
3. Reflect on Psalm 16:11 and John 15:11. Discuss a time when you deeply felt God's presence. How did this lead you to feeling a profound sense of joy?
4. There is strength in choosing joy, especially when you choose to trust God's presence and light in the midst of darkness. Read Isaiah 9:2 out loud and talk about where you feel like you may be "walking in darkness."





# Christmas <sup>at</sup> Crossroads

It is almost Christmas! Can you feel the excitement and anticipation in the air? We invite you to celebrate the Good News and hope of Christmas with us at one of our many Candlelight Christmas Eve Services.

## **Millbrook Campus Services**

Saturday, December 23 - 5pm

Sunday, December 24 - 9:15am and 11am

*Millbrook Campus Worship Center*

Deaf Community Fellowship (DCF)

Sunday, December 24 - 11am, *Room 737*

## **Wake Forest Campus Services**

Saturday, December 23 - 5pm

Sunday, December 24 - 9:15am, 11am and 1pm

*Wake Forest Campus Worship Center*

## **Online Campus Livestream**

Sunday, December 24 - 9:15 and 11am

For additional details, visit [crossroads.org/christmas](https://crossroads.org/christmas).

## Sermon Notes

### The Season of Anticipation and Transformation

Sunday, December 17, 2023

*(1 John 4:7-12)*

1. To Know God is to Know LOVE

*(1 John 4:7-8)*

2. The Greatest LOVE on Display

*(1 John 4:9-10)*

3. God's LOVE in Us and Through Us for the World to See

*(1 John 4:11-12)*



## Advent at Home

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

– 1 John 4:7–8

One night this week, set aside time to celebrate Advent at home.

- **Light the Love Candle:**

On this fourth Sunday in Advent, light the purple candle, signifying LOVE. Next week, on Christmas Eve, you will also light the white “Christ” candle.

- **Prayer for Lighting the Fourth Candle - Love:**

“Heavenly Father, as we light the fourth Advent candle of love, may your love inspire us to love one another as you have loved us. Let your love guide our actions and words. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

- **Listen:**

Play “Behold” on the Crossroads Spotify playlist.

- **Consider:**

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” - 1 John 4:11. How can you love others better this week?

## Reflections

The word “love” is overused and its meaning diluted. Yet the search for true love is so often the center of songs, movies, books, discussions and dreams.

1. Why do you think our culture is so “love” obsessed?
2. Love in Advent isn’t about feeling that “it’s the most wonderful time of the year.” It’s recognizing that God loves us through the incredible free gift of His Son, Jesus. Without Christ, we could never be worthy of divine love. How has His love changed you? How has it changed the way you live your day to day life?
3. Where do you need more of God’s love this holiday season? Who is He calling you to share His love with over the next month?









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