



ADVENT
Journal

2023

The heart behind this journal

Christmas 2023 is here! This season provides different meanings, emotions, and thoughts for each of us and our contexts. As a church, we are using the rhythms of Advent to prepare our hearts for King Jesus and to rediscover the best gifts God has given us through His son. With the arrival of Jesus, we now have the fulfilled promises of God's everlasting gifts of hope, love, joy, and peace. Not only do we have the opportunities to receive these gifts, but we are able to respond with these gifts in a life centered on the the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My heart is that this journal will help bring these truths to the forefront of the Christmas season as we find and rediscover the true gifts of Christmas and live brightly as life-giving disciples of Jesus.

This journal is filled with Scripture, prayer points, activities, and guiding questions that will help you and your household focus on Jesus in a season of distraction and busyness that seems all too common.

- Flip through the pages to get a feel for what's inside.
- Use it on your own, with other members of your family, or a home group of friends.
- Use every part or just pick and choose the parts that work in your context.

I am praying for you as we all prepare our hearts to focus on Jesus this Christmas season. May He shine brightly in all of our hearts and homes this year.

In Christ,

Pastor Cooper

Christmas at Harvest Foursquare

Christmas Eve on SUNDAY MORNING December 24th

We will be hosting two Christmas Eve services at Harvest Foursquare church on Sunday December 24th at **8:30am** and **10:30am**. Livestream of the 8:30am service will be available on Youtube.

What to expect:

Our 60 minute gathering will include some traditional carols, a Christmas message, family story time, and a candle lighting to light the Christ candle. Kids will remain in service but some “busy kits” and kids gifts will be provided as they enter. Coffee, hot cocoa, and a Christmas breakfast treat will be provided as well.

Sunday December 31st:

Sunday the 31st (New Years Eve Day), we will not be hosting any in-person gatherings at Harvest Foursquare. We want to encourage you to continue to respond and “give out” the hope, love, joy, and peace of Jesus by being relational with those in your context. You can have people over for brunch on that Sunday and either have an impromptu bible study, worship session, or watch a service from so many other great churches in our local area. I want to give our people who serve our local church week in and week out, a Sunday off to be with family and take time to refresh. A few ideas can also be a time to reflect on the past year or to start praying about a word and theme that God might be leading you in this upcoming season of 2024.

We will be continuing our normal 8:30am and 10:30am Sunday gatherings on January 7th 2024 as we come into a season of 21 days of prayer and fasting starting Monday Jan 8th.

How to use this journal:

This journal contains four weeks of readings, devotionals, and activities that correspond with the four major words and themes of Advent; hope, love, joy, and peace. This journal does not have daily readings or daily activities. Each week has the same simple layout so you and your household can decide when and how to do the readings and activities to prepare your hearts this season. We like to keep ours at our kitchen table where we gather most so we don't forget and can include in our normal meal time rhythm. Be intentional when you do this on your own, or with the people in your household. Find a rhythm that works and stick with it, if you miss some things during a particular week that is ok, it's about our heart's preparation, not completing every task.

Lighting of Advent candles:

An important feature that we are choosing to do as a church body is the lighting of the Advent candles. This journal is centered around each week's particular candle and the word that the candle represents. Need some advent candles? We will have candles and an Advent wreath at the church to pick-up for your household as you start your advent journals.

You will light each week's specific candle, and as the week's progress, you will add the next candle to your candle lighting routine. The candle lighting is best done when you are together with your household at dinner, or together with the Harvest church family during our livestream. Each week's title page will include a reminder of what candle to light, as well as a special prayer to recite everytime you light the candles. Feel free to light the candle as much or little as you want, each candle has about a 7 hour burn time.

Candle order:

Week 1: Hope - Purple Prophet's Candle

- Representing the hope of the coming Messiah

Week 2: Love - Purple Bethlehem Candle (light week 1 and 2)

- Representing that love came down from Heaven in the form of a baby

Week 3: Joy - Pink Shepherd's Candle (light week 1, 2, and 3)

- Representing the joy of the Saviour's birth first heard by the shepherds

Week 4: Peace - Purple Angel's Candle (light week 1, 2, 3, and 4)

- Representing that there is now peace on Earth

Connection point:

Each week's readings will include a connection point that is designed for family discussions with kids of all ages, or with others in your life or home.

Additional activities:

At the end of each week are additional activities that you can do as a household or by yourself during this Christmas season. These are designed to bring more impact during your Advent readings as we focus on Jesus and others.

Tree of Giving:

This year at Harvest, we are hosting a tree of giving in the back of our sanctuary space. We are a church that gives generously because God has given us life. So in response we will have opportunities to give out the hope, love, joy, and peace of Christmas through some practical felt needs here in our local community. We have partnered with LOVE INC, Gethsemane Ministries, and Care Net. There will be specific "ornaments" on the tree to take home and take action with. An example would be "Buy 1 box of size 4 diapers for Care Net." You would take that ornament, and then you would provide for that need and give it to the ministry directly as listed on the ornament.

To learn more about these faith based non-profits go to Harvest4sq.org and click on our MISSIONS page.

**“Advent Candle lighting demonstration”
Cheney Faith Center**

*video is from 2020, uses a different prayer

This is a quick youtube video to explain the process of lighting the candles, as well as an example in how to incorporate the candle lighting in your Advent rhythms.

Scan the QR code or type in the youtube

Fun Facts about St. Nicholas

Santa, Jolly old St. Nick, is he real?

Our context and culture wants to sell things, especially during a season of giving and receiving. So the marketing of a Saint from Ancient Turkey isn't as appealing as a jolly plump man flying around the night sky with reindeer. Is Santa real? No, but the person of St. Nick is, and his legacy is not made up, his good faith and good works are remembered still to this day.

St. Nicholas was a bishop of an ancient Greek town called Myra, in present-day Turkey. He attended the first Council of Nicaea to help ratify and cement the truth of scripture among the early believers. He is also rumored to have punched Arius, a heretic, in the face because Arius was denying the deity of Jesus. He was born around March 15, 270 and died on December 6, 343.

St. Nicholas always had a love for the poor and would work for their benefit. The story goes that there was a poor man in town with no money for a dowry for his daughters. No dowry meant no marriage, which would have left his daughters to be sold into a life of servitude. Late one night, St. Nicholas dropped a bag of money down the chimney of the family home, thus allowing the daughters a dowry.

Most famously, he is the real-life historical figure from whom we get Santa Claus. His generosity inspired the "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf" - Santa meaning Saint and Claus is short for Nicholas.

It's fun to play along with the imaginative parts of Christmas, but it always comes down to a grounding of our true hearts' motivation for Christmas. We give because God first gave us life, and true life through the gift of His son Jesus on Christmas. St. Nick reminds us to carry a heart of generosity for the people in our life, to be a witness of the good things of Jesus, and that the greatest gift ever given is salvation through the Good News of Jesus.

Week 1
November 26 - December 2

HOPE

A prayer to read aloud when lighting your candles.

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice of love each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us and reminding us of your peace.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom come.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence for you are where we place our hope.

We are your people, walking in darkness, seeking the light, awaiting your arrival.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" AMEN.

Candle:
The Purple Prophet's Candle

Sermon notes

Watch past sermons on Youtube, search Harvest Foursquare Church.

Date:

Speaker:

Big takeaway:

Key verses:

Big idea for this week

Biblical hope is based on a person, not circumstances.

Biblical hope is different than optimism. Optimism chooses to see the good in any situation, like seeing a cup at half capacity as half full, not half empty. (Or when the Vikings are down by 14 points in the 4th quarter, I'm still thinking that they can pull it together and score two touchdowns despite the evidence that they can't block an edge rusher to save their life.)

Hope chooses in spite of any evidence that things will get better, God's character is what we count on, and what God has done in the past he can do in the future. It is a choice to wait for God to bring about a future as surprising as a crucified man rising from the dead.

There is a tension that we live in, which reflects the tension that the prophets of the Old Testament lived in. A tension of knowing God's character, but seeing a reality that is different. But we know who wins, Jesus. **Hope is based on Jesus, nothing else.** Jesus is the source of true biblical hope, which praise be to God, is bigger than our circumstances.

Think about the time that Jesus was born into. Roman occupation, Jewish revolts, infant massacre, religious oppression, and no new words from God. It was probably easy to despair, lost hope was reoccurring problem. Instead of changing the circumstances, God sends the person of Jesus to demonstrate and be the hope that the world truly needs. The world does not need a better leader, better economy, better taxes, better jobs, better policies (though all those are nice and helpful), they don't offer true hope. Each one of those categories can change in an instant. **What doesn't change is Jesus.** Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).

This Christmas season remember our source of hope is not wrapped up in a box with a pretty bow, it was wrapped up in strips of cloth with the purpose to save us from our sins. Our hope is in Jesus, and our challenge is to place our hope in Him

Memory Verse:

Psalm 33:20-22 (NLT)

We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone.

Receive Hope

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: John 9:1-41

How does this reading point us to Jesus as our hope?

In John 9:25, the man that was healed shared that he was blind but now can see. How did this physical hope lead to his spiritual hope?

Connection Point

Can you remember a time when you hoped for something and then saw that hope fulfilled? Or did the hope of Jesus come through a different way than what you thought?

Respond with Hope

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Psalm 33:1-22

How does this reading lead us to respond?

What key verses in this Psalm remind us that our hope is not found in the things of the world, but only in God? How can you respond to a life situation with this truth?

Connection Point

Make a list of things, circumstances, and events your family or friends are hoping for and hang it on the fridge. Pray over this list everyday during this advent season. Write Jesus is our hope at the top. Submit our hope to the source of hope.

Group reading

With your household, small group, or whomever, read the section of scripture aloud. After reading aloud, discuss a few main points from the reading as well as answer the questions listed below.

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

How did Joseph alter his hope?

What promise did God communicate to Joseph as a source of hope? How did this hope fulfill prophecy spoken hundreds of years before? (hint: Isaiah 7:14)

Additional activities to consider

- **Setup a nativity in your dining room or wherever you eat most meals, but do not place baby Jesus in the manger yet (store him away for a few more weeks).** Place the wise men in another room far away from the manger. Put the shepherds in still another room. When you see the empty manger, ponder the hopes and expectations Jesus embodies.
- Take some time to decorate your advent wreath. You can add Christmas decorations, greenery, or other items that remind you of the hope, love, joy, and peace Jesus brings.
- Brainstorm people with whom you can share hope, like the mail carrier, garbage truck driver, or neighbors. What are some specific ways you can share hope with each of these people?
- **Rather than hoping for a certain gift this year, would you consider some of the ornaments from the Harvest Tree of Giving.** What items can you provide for and be a blessing for the men, women, and children that are in need in our local area. Have a honest discussion about your christmas budget and how to leverage what God has given you to be a blessing to others.

Week 2
December 3 - December 9

LOVE

A prayer to read aloud when lighting your candles.

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice of love each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us and reminding us of your peace.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom come.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence for you are where we place our hope.

We are your people, walking in darkness, seeking the light, awaiting your arrival.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" AMEN.

Candle:
The Purple Bethlehem Candle

Sermon notes

Watch past sermons on Youtube, search Harvest Foursquare Church.

Date:

Speaker:

Big takeaway:

Key verses:

Big idea for this week

Biblical love is based on the person of Jesus and the heart of God, not our current relational status or feelings.

Memory Verse:

Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Love in our culture can be lost in translation of our own selfish wants and needs, or based on the adage “what’s in it for me.” We might think we love without condition, but more often than not our form of love has some attachments to it.

This doesn’t mean a person can’t show unconditional love in the relationships they partake in, but the overall message of love can be found to be transactional. You do this, then I will love you, or I love you so you can do this.

God shows us a model that blows our whole understanding of love out of the water. God so loved the world that **HE GAVE** us His son Jesus. God looked down and saw his creation, us, all of us, and his first thought was “I want them back.” God’s heart is that no one would perish, no one would be lost or separated from Him. So even though His creation was against Him, He sent His son to die for us so we could be restored back to Him. This was the perfect act of true, everlasting love.

Notice, It was not a transaction of love, it was a re-definition of love. It showed the world that God’s form of love is based on Him, the creator of Heaven and Earth, giving His Son, Jesus, for the sins of the world. His love did not require us to become perfect, clean our act up, or make sure we have been employed for 5 years with a 401K. Nope his love was freely given, without condition. His love is agape, it transcends our known definitions and is universal for all.

Romans 8:38-39 sums it up perfectly:

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This Christmas, be reminded that Jesus came to embody the heart and love of God. Jesus is the definition of love lived out in real life. We are called to receive that love and respond with love towards God and His created people.

Receive Love

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Col 1:15-23

How does this reading point us to Jesus?

Why is the coming of God in the physical form of Jesus important to understand God's love for His creation?

Read Romans 5:6-11 // Romans 10:9-10

What hope do these verses bring? What action does it require of us?

Connection Point

Have there been recent situations where you have been unloving? Talk or journal about what you could have done that would have been loving instead. Ask God for the opportunity to do better next time.

Respond with Love

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

How do we respond with a life of Love?

What does it look like to love God and love our neighbor as ourself? How do you plan to live this out?

Connection Point

What is one of the most loving acts someone has done for you? Thank Jesus for that person and ask for an opportunity to show love in return. Write them a letter or tell them about how that made you feel and why you appreciate and love them.

Group reading

With your household, small group, or whomever, read the section of scripture aloud. After reading aloud, discuss a few main points from the reading as well as answer the questions listed below.

Scripture: Luke 2:21-35

How does this reading remind us of God's Love?

What components of Simeon's words help us in our waiting for Jesus to come again?

Additional activities to consider

- Write a love note to someone today telling them how much God loves them. Deliver it with a smile.
- Take a look at your nativity scene. Add the animals and move your shepherds and the wise men closer to the manger, but still not in the same room. Reflect on what preparations the wise men must have needed in order to make such a long journey to visit Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Support a local restaurant and show love to a friend at the same time: order delivery to your neighbor's house for dinner. Make sure to be a messenger of love by including a kind word or bonus tip to the restaurant, driver, and your neighbor.
- Do someone else's chores as an act of love for them.
- Set an extra place setting for Jesus at dinner one night this week. Discuss what it would be like to have dinner with Jesus. What would you say to Him if he were sitting with you tonight?
- **Continue to be proactive in showing love through the partnering with our Harvest Tree of Giving.** Pick one of the ornaments to show practical love through the felt needs that each of these non-profits have listed.
- **Next Sunday December 10th, is Christmas Dress-up Day.** Reminder to have some fun, display some Joy, and enjoy the company of the church family as we take time to laugh, praise the Lord, and have a little fun. Dress-up in your favorite Christmas sweater, add some ornaments and lights to your clothes, or throw some tinsel in your hair. Have fun and let's be joyful!!

Week 3
December 10 - December 16

JOY

A prayer to read aloud when lighting your candles.

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice of love each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us and reminding us of your peace.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom come.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence for you are where we place our hope.

We are your people, walking in darkness, seeking the light, awaiting your arrival.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" AMEN.

Candle:
The Pink Shepherd's Candle

Sermon notes

Watch past sermons on Youtube, search Harvest Foursquare Church.

Date:

Speaker:

Big takeaway:

Key verses:

Big idea for this week

Biblical Joy is based on the person of Jesus, not achievements, circumstances, or feelings.

Memory Verse:

John 16:22 (NLT)

So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.

Do you remember the old Sunday school song *Joy Joy Joy*?

It goes “ I’ve got the Joy Joy Joy Joy, down in my heart.. WHERE? Down in my heart...

WHERE? Down in my heart!” Well, further into the song there is a verse that says:

And if the Devil doesn’t like it he can sit on a tack! Ouch! Sit on a tack! Ouch! Sit on a tack!

I don’t know when this verse was added, but I like it. I like it because it reminds us that the Joy we have in our salvation cannot be taken away. The Devil wants to steal our joy, in fact, John 10:10 says that the enemy has come to rob steal, kill, and destroy, and the main way is to rob us of our joy.

Jesus brings Joy because Jesus brings salvation. Jesus doesn’t bring happiness, he brings a deeper reality that we have been forgiven, redeemed, and given hope that we are forever His!

In Luke 2, When the angels shared the message of good news that brings great joy, It wasn’t, “Hey shepherds, you just got a promotion, you don’t need to work anymore in the fields, you got a desk job with benefits and a pension!” No the message was:

“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

The shepherds who were taking care of sheep to be used for the ceremonial cleansing of sins at the temple were just notified that the promised messiah, the savior of all people had been born. The wait is over, the world is saved, no need for ceremonial lambs, because the lamb of God is now here to be the atonement for all our sins!

In reality, this was news that they were going to be theoretically out of a job. Since the messiah has come to be the sacrifice for our sins, the sheep were no longer needed. But the bigger reality was that they would be saved from their sins. That is Goodnews!

Our joy is deep within our heart because we are saved. The enemy wants to take it, but he can’t, he can go sit on a tack! Our joy is deeper than our circumstances, feelings, or lack of happiness. Our lives have been altered both physically and spiritually by the Gospel of Jesus. This is true joy, and true joy cannot be taken away.

Receive Joy

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: John 17:1-26

This is a long prayer of Jesus to His disciples. What are three components that stand out? What words does Jesus use to remind us of our Joy in Him?

How does this prayer help you receive joy amidst circumstances that are not joyful?

Connection Point

How did you do being joyful today? When did circumstances rob you of your joy? Were you able to live in joy or share joy? Pray for joy in everything you do.

Respond with Joy

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Psalm 32

How does this reading point us to Jesus?

What did David do in verses 3-5, which made him able to rejoice in verse 11? Jot down any points of personal application in your life.

Connection Point

Can you recall a time when you were lacking joy? How did you feel during this time? What is something in your life you need to eliminate in order for joy to persevere? Ask God to show you what is not joyful in your life and take a step to remove it; it may be a time to confess a sin and ask for God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Group reading

With your household, small group, or whomever, read the section of scripture aloud. After reading aloud, discuss a few main points from the reading as well as answer the questions listed below

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

How does this reading point us to Jesus?
What did the shepherds **receive** from this news?

In what way did the Shepherds **respond** to the goodnews that brings great joy? What would your response be?

Additional activities to consider

- Make some hot cocoa and go for a car ride around Shelton to look at Christmas lights. Count how many times you find the word JOY on your drive.
- Gather the family or some friends and make some Christmas cookies. Turn on some Christmas music and sing while you decorate. What a joyful way to celebrate Jesus' birth!
- **Move the shepherds of your nativity to the manger scene.** Take some time to imagine what joy they must have felt when the angels came to them in the fields singing. Show your family what your face would look like if angels came singing to you!
- Go sledding with your family! (You might have to pray for snow to make this one happen!)
- Google a fun Christmas craft to do with friends and family.
- Do you know someone who needs joy right now? Is there something you can do to bring them joy? DO IT!

Week 4
December 17 - December 25

PEACE

A prayer to read aloud when lighting your candles.

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice of love each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us and reminding us of your peace.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom come.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence for you are where we place our hope.

We are your people, walking in darkness, seeking the light, awaiting your arrival.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" AMEN.

Candle:
The Purple Angel's Candle

Sermon notes

Watch past sermons on Youtube, search Harvest Foursquare Church.

Date:

Speaker:

Big takeaway:

Key verses:

Big idea for this week

Biblical peace is based on the person of Jesus, not what the world can or cannot give.

Memory Verse:

Phil 4:6-7 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

During Christmas, there are a lot of interesting commercials that entice and tell a story that the consumer relates to in hopes of buying a product. One of the more interesting ones is a car commercial where there is a ton of hustle and bustle in the house with Christmas festivities, and the main character is flustered, so they go out to their brand-new BMW to sit in peace. Basically, the message is that a brand new car payment with high interest will bring temporary peace from a temporary circumstance. Your peace is worth the price of a new BMW.

When the angels came to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth, they spoke and sang of peace on earth. Not a temporary peace, but an eternal peace with God. Our hearts would finally be settled, at true Shalom, because we know who we are, where we belong, and who holds our future. It's more than a momentary lapse of loud noises and confusion, it's a life-altering repositioning of the eternal conflict of our flesh, with a new reality that we are forgiven, saved, and forever at peace with God.

Do you know this peace? Do you know Jesus, the Prince of Peace? Jesus came to earth to bring peace. Creating a path of restoration back to how we were created to be, at peace with God in relationship with Him.

This week's memory verse gives us direction in our access to peace, and it all starts with believing in Jesus. Say yes to Jesus and be reminded of our peace in Him.

A simple prayer to say yes to Jesus:

Lord I confess I am not at peace, I need your forgiveness and I repent of the times when I thought I could do it on my own. Jesus I believe you came to this earth to bring salvation, that you were born as a baby, grew up as a man, and gave your life for our forgiveness of sins. I believe you rose again and have conquered sin and death.

I confess you are Lord, and I believe in you.

Receive Peace

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Romans 5:1-2 // John 14:26-29

How does this reading point us to Jesus as our peace?

What does it mean to be at peace with God? Why is it important to be reminded that Jesus has brought peace on earth?

Connection Point

When was a time you didn't feel at peace? What were the circumstances? What helped you to restore peace back into your life? How can you share with others about the peace of Jesus, compared to the peace of the world?

Respond with Peace

Read the following scriptures for individual study or with your household.

Scripture: Romans 12:17-18 // 2 Cor 13:11 // 1 Pet 3:8-12

What should the response of a life-giving disciple of Jesus look like in terms of peace?

How can you take steps towards living more peaceful with others? What does this look like with others who don't live by the same morals or principles as you? How can we evaluate our own stress, hold it captive, and bring in a bigger perspective that Jesus is King and the Prince of Peace?

Connection Point

What are some ways you can pass the peace of Jesus on to others this Christmas? Pray for God's peaceful Spirit to be with you in all you do.

Christmas Eve

Christ Candle - Christmas Eve at home

At Church together on Christmas Eve we will light the final candle in the culmination of our Advent candle lightings. Take a moment to read through the Advent prayer and light every colored candle while taking a moment to reflect on each word that we have studied these past weeks.

Then take a moment to give thanks to God for sending His son and light the Christ candle (white). The Christ candle represents the light that Jesus brings to our world, as referred to in John chapter 1.

At Harvest Foursquare we usually sing "Silent Night" as we light candles during our Christmas Eve service. Sing out that song as you light the candle, or play a version of it through your music platform of choice. Then read through the Christmas story as recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 2.

Question to discuss:

How is God's peace different from the world's peace? Ask God to give you His peace and to show it to others.

Christmas Day

Read through John Chapter 1 as listed below in the NLT or use a translation of your choice.

Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

1 In the beginning the Word already existed.

*The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

*3 God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.*

*4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.*

*5 The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, 7 to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. 9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

16 From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

Take a moment today to light the Christ candle again on your Advent wreath. Take the other candles out of your wreath to symbolize that the wait is over, Emmanuel, God is with us through Jesus!

Additional activities to consider

- Memorize this week's memory verse. When you feel yourself growing impatient, anxious, or unsettled, allow God's word to bring your heart peace.
- Bring baby Jesus into your nativity scene on Christmas morning. Also add the angels to the scene. Spend a few minutes dwelling on the magnitude, awe, and wonder of Jesus, the best gift of all, coming to earth as a baby. Praise God!
- Go for a walk through your neighborhood and pray God's peace upon each house you pass.
- In the days following Christmas, bring the the 3 wisemen into the nativity scene, symbolizing them visiting Jesus after his birth. Pray that we would continue to feel the same awe they did when they met the King of Kings.
- Take a break from your screens, make some tea or cocoa, and sit near a window to watch the snow fall or whatever the weather is doing.
- One evening this week, turn off the lights and TV, light some candles, and have a family worship night singing your favorite Christmas hymns.
- Watch The Chosen Christmas Special on Youtube or through the Angel Studios app.
- Make a birthday cake for Jesus and celebrate his birth.



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