




ADVENT

Introduction

CHRISTMAS 2024




The Christmas season can be a paradox. Amid the twinkling lights and joyful carols, life often reveals its complexities. We face unmet expectations, unanticipated challenges, or the ache of waiting. Our series, *Unwrapped*, reminds us that the first Christmas didn't unfold as anyone expected. Yet it forever changed the world. Through this guide, we invite you to journey with us toward uncovering the deeper life God intends for you, beneath the layers of distraction, disappointment, or doubt.

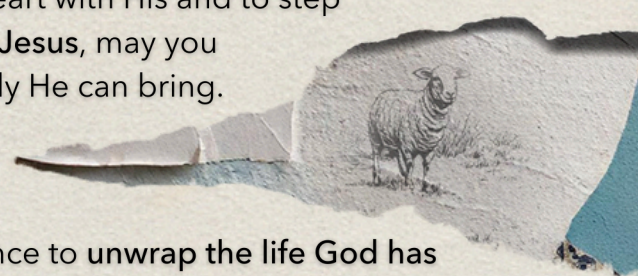



Each week, **we will pause** to focus on a central theme of Advent: Hope, Joy, Love, Peace, and Worship. These reflections are designed not just to help you hear the Christmas story but to live it, walking in trust like Zechariah, in surrender like Mary, and in awe like the shepherds.

As you engage with these scriptures, reflections, and prayers, our hope is that you will lean into the unexpected ways God shows up in your story. You will find encouragement to expose false expectations, release control, and embrace the deeper meaning and joy found in Christ.



Let this season not just be a celebration of Jesus' birth. Let it also be an opportunity for spiritual formation, a time to realign your heart with His and to step into the unshakable hope He offers. **By fixing your eyes on Jesus**, may you discover the freedom, transformation, and purpose that only He can bring.



This guide is more than an Advent tradition. It is a chance to **unwrap the life God has always intended for you to live**. Let's lean in together and encounter Jesus afresh this Christmas.




ADVENT

Hope

WEEK 1 - DECEMBER 1ST


TRUST IN GOD'S PROMISES

"But the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. ...He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'" – Luke 1:13-17 (NIV)

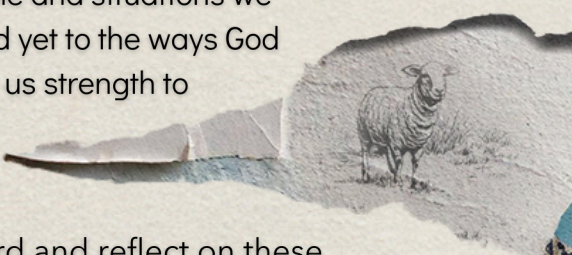


EXPOSE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is confidence in the character of God and the certainty that His promises never fail. Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for years, enduring doubt and pain as their prayers for a child went unanswered. When God finally answered, it wasn't just for them. It was for the world. God's hope reaches far beyond our expectations and touches the lives of others. The delays we face aren't denials but opportunities for God to work in ways we never imagined.



God often works in the unseen, in seasons of waiting, and through people and situations we least expect. This Advent, let's shift our focus from what hasn't happened yet to the ways God is already moving. Hope doesn't remove the pain of waiting, but it gives us strength to endure because we trust in God's ultimate good.



REFLECT

In this time of worship, let's take a moment to pause before the Lord and reflect on these questions:

- ✦ What dreams or prayers feel delayed or unanswered in your life?
- ✦ Where do you need to trust God's unexpected plan?
- ✦ How might God be inviting you to place your hope in Him during this season?

PRAY

Lord, we bring our waiting hearts to You. Teach us to trust in Your timing and rest in Your promises. You are the God who makes a way when there seems to be none, who brings life out of barren places. Help us to surrender our expectations and embrace the hope You offer, a hope that never disappoints. Fill us with the confidence that You are working, even now, to fulfill Your good purposes in our lives and in this world. In Jesus' name, amen.



ADVENT

Joy

WEEK 2 - DECEMBER 8TH



MAKE A COMMITMENT

"And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.'" —Luke 1:46-50 (NIV)



SURRENDER BRINGS JOY

Joy doesn't mean the absence of challenges; it means finding God's presence in the midst of them. Mary's joy was rooted in her willingness to say "yes" to God's plan, even though it disrupted her expectations. Imagine her uncertainty. What would people say? How would she navigate this new reality? Yet, her response was one of praise.

When we make a commitment to trust God, joy flows from knowing we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Mary teaches us that true joy isn't found in comfort or ease but in surrender to a God who sees us, loves us, and calls us to participate in His story. This Advent, let's seek the joy that comes from fully committing our hearts to God's plan.

REFLECT

In this time of worship, let's take a moment to pause before the Lord and reflect on these questions:

- ✦ What areas of your life are you hesitant to surrender to God?
- ✦ How has God been calling you to trust Him in ways that feel uncomfortable?
- ✦ Where can you step out in faith, knowing that joy follows surrender?



PRAY

Lord, thank You for being mindful of us, even in our humble and imperfect state. Help us to respond to Your call with the same courage and joy as Mary. Teach us to surrender our fears and follow You wholeheartedly. Let Your joy fill our hearts as we commit to Your purpose, knowing that Your plans are always good. We glorify Your name and trust in Your mercy. In Jesus' name, amen.




ADVENT

Love

WEEK 3 - DECEMBER 15TH


FIND YOUR HELP

"But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor 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.'" – Luke 1:30-33 (NIV)



GOD'S LOVE SENDS HELP

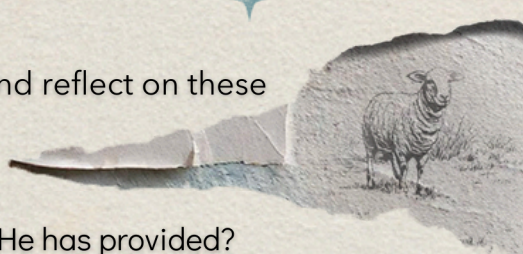
Love takes action, and God's love shows up in the form of help. When Mary received the overwhelming news of her divine assignment, God provided reassurance: "Do not be afraid." He didn't just give her a task. He gave her His presence, His promise, and eventually, people like Elizabeth to walk alongside her.



God's love doesn't leave us to figure things out on our own. He sends us His Spirit, His Word, and His people. Whatever you're facing today, you are not alone. Let this Advent season remind you of the help God has already placed in your life and the ways He will continue to provide.

REFLECT

In this time of worship, let's take a moment to pause before the Lord and reflect on these questions:

- ✦ Where do you feel overwhelmed or in need of help?
 - ✦ How has God shown His love for you through the people and resources He has provided?
 - ✦ Who might God be calling you to reach out to for support or to support in love?
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PRAY

Lord, thank You for being a present help in times of trouble. Thank You for the love that pursues us and never leaves us alone. Open our eyes to see the help You are sending, and soften our hearts to receive it. Help us also to be agents of Your love, bringing hope and support to others in their time of need. We trust in Your faithful provision. In Jesus' name, amen.



ADVENT

Peace

WEEK 4 - DECEMBER 22TH

FOLLOW THE SPIRIT

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.'" – Luke 2:25-32 (NIV)

⦿ THE SPIRIT LEADS TO PEACE

Peace is not about the absence of chaos but the presence of God's Spirit guiding us through it. Simeon lived in a time of political unrest and spiritual longing, yet he walked in peace because he trusted God's promise and followed the Spirit's lead. When the Spirit moved him to go to the temple, Simeon obeyed, and in that moment, he held the Prince of Peace in his arms.

Peace comes from being in step with the Spirit. Sometimes that means waiting patiently, as Simeon did, trusting that God will fulfill what He has spoken. Other times it means moving quickly when the Spirit nudges, even if it disrupts our plans. This Advent, as we prepare our hearts for Christmas, let's invite the Spirit to lead us into deeper peace, even in uncertain times.

♥ REFLECT

In this time of worship, let's take a moment to pause before the Lord and reflect on these questions:

- ✦ Are there areas in your life where you are waiting on God's promises?
- ✦ How can you invite the Holy Spirit to guide your decisions and responses this week?
- ✦ What steps can you take to walk in peace, even when life feels unsettled?



PRAY

Holy Spirit, thank You for being our guide and our comforter. Teach us to trust Your leading, even when the path is unclear. Give us the courage to wait patiently on Your promises and the boldness to act when You prompt us to move. Fill our hearts with the peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace rooted in Your presence. May we, like Simeon, encounter the Prince of Peace and be transformed by Him. In Jesus' name, amen.



ADVENT

Worship

CHRISTMAS EVE

GIVE THANKS TO GOD

"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." –Luke 2:17-20 (NIV)



⦿ RESPOND WITH GRATITUDE AND AWE

Worship flows naturally when we encounter the greatness of God. The shepherds, after witnessing the miracle of Jesus' birth, couldn't keep silent. They glorified and praised God for everything they had seen and heard. Mary, too, responded with worship, but hers was quieter. She treasured and pondered in her heart the wonder of God's work.

Worship is not one-size-fits-all for every moment. Whether it's loud and jubilant like the shepherds or reflective and intimate like Mary, it's about turning our hearts toward God in awe and gratitude. This Christmas Eve, let's pause to worship Jesus, the one who came to dwell among us, save us, and invite us into His eternal family.



♥ REFLECT

In this sacred moment, on the eve of our Lord's coming, let's pause before the Lord and reflect on these questions

- ✦ How has God shown His faithfulness in your life this year?
- ✦ What specific blessings or moments of His presence can you give thanks for?
- ✦ How can you make worship a more integral part of your daily life?



PRAY

Lord Jesus, we worship You today as our Savior, our King, and our Emmanuel...God with us. Thank You for leaving heaven to come near to us, for bringing hope, peace, love, and joy into our broken world. Teach us to treasure Your presence, as Mary did, and to boldly proclaim Your goodness, as the shepherds did. May our lives be a continual offering of praise and thanksgiving to You. In Your holy name, amen.