



ADVENT

GUIDE

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F O R W A R D

Most of us look forward to the Christmas season. We enjoy it and all the festivities it brings. But if we're honest, it's easy to get lost in all the fanfare. While many who grew up in the church are acquainted with the season of Advent, not many of us are particularly great at entering into the purpose of this season. Part of living in God's world in His way is adopting a slower pace of life that we may intentionally take in the truths of God and live oriented around them.

Advent, meaning "the arrival of Christ," offers us the opportunity to step into both the hope and longing of the Israelites of the Old Testament. As they anticipated the coming Messiah, they waited eagerly for the One who would make the world right again. The first advent is marked by Christ's arrival through His birth, life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ made a way to bring sinners to God. On this side of the cross, we, like the Israelites, await His return with hope and longing. When Christ comes again, He will fully and finally redeem His children and restore order to the broken world.

Our prayer is that we would be a people that place our hope wholly on Christ the Messiah. As we prepare to enter the season of Advent on November 27, we remember and consider that God keeps His promises. He sees, cares and enters into a broken world to extend His love and rescue His children. This guide is intended to help you center your heart and mind on the advent of Christ and respond to His love with worship. Each week we will consider what marks the life of a Christian living between the first and second advents of Jesus.

WEEK 1
GRACE



SCRIPTURE READING

JOHN 1:1–5 (ESV)

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 1:14–18 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In many ways, Christmas is ordinary. Now, don't get me wrong — it is my favorite holiday. The traditions, seasonal food, gifts and lights are magical. But we know what will happen: the candlelit service on Christmas Eve, the order we will open presents on Christmas morning, and what we will fix for our special Christmas dinner. We even know how that dinner is supposed to taste. Christmas normally goes to plan.

We also know the "reason for the season" — the birth of Jesus, lying in a trough, surrounded by farm animals, His parents and an angel or two. Most of us will set up that scene on our mantles or a bookshelf, plastic manger right where it ordinarily sits. But our nativity scenes, gentle and mild as they are, tell an unusual story. God the Son was born, largely unnoticed. For most Israelites, the night of His birth was an ordinary night.

If you were a god, how would you present yourself to the world? Probably not in a barn. Probably not as a vulnerable infant to a people who had displayed a habit of rejecting you and killing your prophets. Even for those who knew Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, this is not what you would have expected.

You would know the stories of when God made Himself known. On Mt. Sinai, He descended in a cloud of gloom and fire, His holy presence so unapproachable that even the animals who touched the mountain He rested upon died. When God made His presence known to Elijah and the false prophets of Baal, a pillar of fire descended from heaven. When He approached Job, He came on the winds of a tempest.

But in Bethlehem, He comes as a...baby? This is new.

In Job's tempest, we see God's justice and wrath toward all evil...and evildoers. The story of Israel is one of rebellion, of sidling up next to idols and false prophets when God felt too far away. As God dictated His law to Moses, weren't His rebellious people dancing around an idol of their own recent creation? They — and we — were guilty of sin, deserving of God's justice. For who among us can claim to be blameless, even of our own moral codes?

Yes, God is holy and a holy God cannot intermingle with sin. But Yahweh is also a God of patience and forgiveness. His love for His people is boundless, so much so that He made a way for them, sinners and enemies, to enter His presence. And it started with a baby. His son.

He did not come in wrath but in peace, to show wholly underserved and unexpected kindness, not just to Israel, but to us all. The judgment of our rebellion was placed on Him so that we could, as Hebrews puts it, boldly approach Him. We have not come to fire and gloom, but grace upon grace.

And in the depth of winter, a season of gloom and darkness, a light shines. Carolers sing, not of judgment, but promising comfort and joy. God has made Himself known to us in the most unlikely of ways. And "we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another" (John 1:16 NET). That is anything but ordinary.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Consider our ordinary Christmas traditions: gift-giving, celebratory meals, etc. In what ways do our Christmas traditions point us to Jesus?

We can be quick to make excuses for why God should not show us grace. We are too broken. We just can't get our act together. But in Christ, God moves toward sinners to heal, forgive, comfort and revive. What hesitancies do you have to move toward God? In what ways do you need His grace today?

As Christians, God calls us to be messengers and even ministers of His grace. Who do you know that needs someone to show them godly grace? How might God be creating space for you to share His story of grace with the people in your sphere of influence?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

TIME: CREATE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

Christmas is not about presents, Christmas lights or even spending time with your family. Christmas is about remembering and celebrating a promise God made to His children. In the beginning, everything was perfect and good, but it didn't stay that way. All that was right in the world was broken by sin. Because of sin, we are all born separated from God. Sin is the reason that things are hard, bad and sad. But because God is gracious and merciful, He promised to send a Savior. Advent is a season of remembering that when things were at their worst, God made a promise to fix it, but God's people would have to wait (and wait and wait and wait) for the Promised Savior to come.

- 1 What are your favorite things to do as a family to celebrate Christmas? Which remind you that Jesus came to save sinners? Are there any that do not?
- 2 God's people waited for many, many years for the Promised Savior to come, and at just the right time, **Jesus came to save sinners**. Today, God's children wait for Jesus to come back for the last time, when He will make everything new. What can God's children do while we wait for Jesus to return?
- 3 What are things that you can do to help you remember God's promises? How can you remind others of God's promises?

MOMENT: CAPTURE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS

Give hints about one or two of the Christmas gifts that your child(ren) will receive this Christmas. Hide clues around your house or hide items that help them to guess what it is that they may be receiving. Tell them that all throughout the Bible, God gave hints to His children about the Promised Savior. He told them what family He would come from, where He would be born and how He would come. But even with these clues, He didn't come how anyone expected.

PRAY: TALK TO GOD

Pray a prayer of praise — tell God how good He is. *God, we praise you that you are merciful and gracious! You do not give Your children the punishment they deserve. We did nothing to deserve Your love or grace, and yet You made a promise and kept Your promise to save sinners from sin!*



WEEK 2

WORSHIP

SCRIPTURE READING

LUKE 1:46–55 (ESV)

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

1 PETER 1:8 (ESV)

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

God has a habit of making promises. With each “I will,” he paves the path to a whole new world where joy, abundance, security, peace and life only ever go on and on. But sometimes these promises can feel like dreams of sugar plums dancing in the heads of God’s people. How could they ever really come to pass? It would take a revolution.

As a young Jewish girl, Mary heard the story of promise — one day good news would come to God’s people, they would be vindicated, a king would come from their ranks and the new world order would be established. Just wait, they told her, the righter of wrongs has not forgotten us.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, there was no doubting God had remembered His promises. In her body the Son of God — heir to David’s throne — would grow, and His birth would bring the inauguration of a new kingdom. Yes, that kingdom. The one of perfection that goes on and on. The promise had been carried through the branches of Israel’s family tree, and now Mary would carry the fulfillment in her womb.

Immediately, Mary wraps her life around God’s unfolding promises saying, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And it was.

As Mary contemplated the news of her pregnancy, she knew the revolution that generations anticipated was dawning. Indeed, the hope of billions was bound up with a baby soon to be swaddled and lying in a manger. Miraculous news doesn’t lend itself to secrecy. When Mary arrived at Elizabeth’s house, the awe of it all came flooding out. And Mary sang.

Her song thundered the victorious story of God! The arrogant of the world were no match for the Son of God. Every tyrant would be toppled, and the proud awaited a humbling by His hand. The King’s might was only matched by His mercy. Under His reign the forgotten would find themselves revered, the empty filled, the reverent rewarded. The melody of Mary’s song announced the righting of an upside-down world because God is faithful to His promise. The rhythm declared that righteousness and justice would occupy the throne forever because God is holy.

With her song, Mary took her place among those who met the work of God’s hand with a hymn of praise: Miriam, Moses, Deborah, Barak, Hannah and David. The legacy of worship Mary continued she also extends to us.

The hopes of the world weren’t wasted on the baby in the manger. When we look back at the first advent, we delight in the might and mercy of God in the child of Mary’s womb. As a man, He would give His flawless life as a ransom for our fissured and fractured one — offering us access to the promised, remade world the moment He took His life up again in victory over every evil thing. What response could possibly encapsulate the thrill of our hope? Worship. “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

For now, Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, directing history toward the new world order. Yes, that kingdom. The one of perfection that goes on and on. As we wait for His return, we wrap our life around the unfolding promises of God and join in the legacy of worship. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Mary praised God for specific aspects of the kingdom that would come through this child. What specific aspects of God's new world order leave you awestruck?

Worship is made up of more than the songs we sing, it defines the way we revere and respond to God in our life. What besides singing indicate that you prize God?

Music has a way of amplifying the expression of our thoughts and feelings. Which Christmas song or hymn amplifies your expression of love for God and all He does in the world? What does it do to your heart and mind to listen to and sing that particular song?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

TIME: CREATE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

God perfectly kept His promise to send a Savior! Jesus came to earth from heaven, born as a baby, to save sinners! How should we respond to this perfectly kept promise? Worship! Worship is the right response to the goodness of God. God is loving – He gives what is best, and He gave what was best when He sent Jesus to save sinners. Those who believe in Jesus, the promised Savior, are adopted into God's family. God takes their old heart that is sick with sin and gives them a new heart that loves and trusts Jesus, a heart that worships God by showing, honoring and enjoying God as most valuable.

- 1 What are ways that we can worship God?
- 2 What attributes of God make you want to respond in worship?
- 3 What is your favorite Christmas song to celebrate and worship Jesus?

MOMENT: CAPTURE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS

This week spend time talking about and worshiping God as often as possible. We can worship God many different ways. We worship through singing, reading the Bible, praying and even through responding the way Jesus does in our homes. This week worship as a family — dance around the house to Christmas songs, read the Jesus Storybook Bible and point out the attributes of God as often as you can. Name the different ways that you worship God all week long.

PRAY: TALK TO GOD

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving — thank God for what He does and gives. *God, we thank you that you sent Jesus to save sinners! We thank you that you give us songs and your Word to help us know you, love you and worship you. Thank you that you are good and fill our hearts with joy as we sing about Jesus!*

WEEK 3

LOVE



SCRIPTURE READING

EXODUS 34:6–7 (ESV)

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

PSALM 13:5 (ESV)

But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation

JOHN 13:31–35 (ESV)

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

JOHN 15:12–17 (ESV)

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

Sufjan Stevens "Songs for Christmas" album is the soundtrack of our home in December. It's the welcome sign that Advent has begun. Christmas music goes beyond the walls of our home. As we wander through the places we work, shop and dine, we notice familiar melodies playing for the world to hear. Songs like "O Holy Night" and "Joy to the World" seem to have permission to preach. If we slow down enough to listen to the lyrics, one thing is sure: our lives will be interrupted by the story of the love of God.

The love of God is a song that has been playing from eternity past. God's love is as eternal as He is. It exists within Himself to perfection and moves outward toward all that He made, especially His people. The Bible is a story of the love of God in action throughout history.

The story of the Scripture declares that God's love has been moving toward His people long before Christ was born. The Old Testament is story after story of God meeting His people with His love. This is how He met Adam and Eve in the garden, Abraham in Ur, Joseph in Egypt, Rahab in Jericho and Ruth in Bethlehem.

It's no wonder one of the chief ways God describes Himself is as "abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6-7). That little Hebrew word *hesed* is loaded with significance. It means His faithful, loyal, unfailing love. God's *hesed* love is more like a decision than a feeling. It's less like a noun and more like a verb. God's love is active and moves toward His people. The Jesus Storybook Bible describes God's *hesed* love as His "never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love."

In the story of the nativity, God's love settles in a new, definitive way. It has come down to earth in the person of Christ. God has undeniably moved toward this weary world.

From beginning to end, Jesus' earthly life was marked by the steadfast love of God. From His humble birth, to His ministry, to His death on the cross, Christ moved toward sinners, determined to give them the greatest gift of all: Himself.

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" Romans 5:8

God moved toward us at our worst: selfish sinners insisting on living in God's world our own way. And yet, because of his "great love for us" He extends mercy and grace (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Author Michael Card defines *hesed* like this: When the person from whom I have a right to expect nothing gives me everything.

The God that we have the right to receive nothing from has given us everything in Christ. He gives the believer salvation, the Holy Spirit, peace, joy, purpose, everything for life and godliness, and the list could go on. God's *hesed* love has moved toward us.

This love isn't only meant to move toward us, but also through us.

The song of God's love plays on through His people. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus says that the greatest commandment is to love God and love others. One of the last conversations that Jesus had with His disciples centered on extending love. In John 13-15, He repeats again and again "Love one another." With the help of the Holy Spirit, we move toward others with the love of God.

May we wonder at the steadfast love of God.
May we receive it in Christ our King.
May we love one another with the strength God supplies so that His song echoes even louder throughout the earth.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

God's love is part of His character. Where do you see the love of God on display in the Old Testament? How are you comforted knowing that God has been in the business of extending His love from the beginning of time?

The Gospels tell the story of the earthly life of Christ. How is God's (hesed) love evident in the way He lived? Give an example.

God's steadfast love is different than our modern constructs of love. Do you tend to think of love as a feeling or a decision or both? Why might aligning our thinking with God's definition of love be helpful for living in step with the gospel?

God's love moves toward us and through us. How can you be a conduit of heavenly love? Think of at least one person in your life that needs to experience the love of God. What step might you take to show God's love to that person?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

TIME: CREATE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

God is loving – He always does what is best. The very best thing He did for us was to send His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Because of sin, we deserve nothing, but because of Jesus, sinners are given everything. This is the very best gift and the very best news! The greatest gift we could ever receive is the gift of knowing, loving, trusting and obeying Jesus. God tells His children to love others the way that they have been loved.

- 1 What is the greatest present you have ever received? Why did you love it so much?
- 2 Why is Jesus the best gift sinners can receive?
- 3 If you could choose to have all of your favorite things, but not Jesus, or Jesus and none of your favorite things, what would you choose? Why?

MOMENT: CAPTURE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS

"God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God's children love others in the same way that God first loved them. God gave everything He had, even His own life, to a people who deserved absolutely nothing. This week, practice loving others with this radical kind of love. How might you show others God's love without spending any money? Think of several different ways that you can show love to others, and make a plan to do at least one of those things this week.

PRAY: TALK TO GOD

Pray a prayer of request – ask God to do or give something! *God I ask you to help me love you and love others the way you first loved us. Help me to see others as more valuable than myself and to love them with your love – a "never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love, even when it's hard."*



WEEK 4

PEACE

SCRIPTURE READING

ISAIAH 9:6–7 (ESV)

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.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

JOHN 14:27 (ESV)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

JOHN 20:19 (ESV)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

JOHN 20:26 (ESV)

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

My home is fun and really loud, due mostly to my four boys. They love life and get a lot of joy out of being silly and singing at the top of their lungs. If you waited in my home for just a few minutes, you would hear at least one of my sons, if not all four, singing. And more often than not, you would also hear my wife's voice among the chorus, which always makes me smile. If you don't hear singing, you might hear laughter or crying or sometimes a mix of both. And on very rare occasions, when everyone is away or asleep, the house is quiet and my heart feels at peace. Sadly, this feeling lasts for about five minutes and then anxious thoughts, worry or fear creep in and dismantle my hope for peace.

What is peace? Was it peace that I was actually feeling in my home or just the absence of noise? Is peace merely the addition or absence of something in our lives? We seek it in things like solitude, sleep or a relationship. We search for it by swiping endlessly on our phone or sweeping our problems under a rug. We look for it in the absence of something like war, anxiety or pain.

We find our answer in the last hours of Jesus' life. John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

The word peace here is the Hebrew word *Shalom*. It is the complete fulfillment or wholeness that comes when one experiences the presence and pleasure of God. Tim Keller defines it as "the webbing together of God and man with all creation to create universal flourishing and wholeness."

Peace is not an object — it's a person. Peace is not absence — it's presence.

The peace that Jesus gives doesn't depend on our circumstances, nor eradicate anxiety, worry or fear, but gives us the ability to endure and makes us feel protected even in the face of tragedy.

It's the kind of peace that "surpasses all understanding, [and] will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7), giving us a hope and assurance that the world cannot give.

It's the kind of peace Horatio Spafford had. In 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed most of his real estate investments along the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1873, a physician counseled the Spaffords to take a vacation for the family's wellbeing. They decided to visit England where their good friend, Dwight L. Moody, was preaching at the time. Spafford's wife, Anna, and their four daughters — Maggie, Tanetta, Annie and Bessie — boarded a ship for England while Horatio, detained due to business, stayed behind with the intention of following his family a few days later.

On November 22, 1873, the ship carrying Horatio's family was struck by another ship, sinking it in twelve minutes. Two hundred and twenty-six lives were lost, including the Spafford's four daughters. After hours of floating in the turbulent waters, Anna was rescued. Arriving in Wales, she cabled her husband with the message, "Saved alone." Receiving the horrifying news, Spafford left immediately to join his wife. He asked the captain of the ship he was sailing on to let him know when they approached the area where his family's ship went down. When they reached that spot, Spafford went down into his cabin, and near the scene of his daughter's tragic deaths, penned the words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well with my soul

The Spaffords eventually met up with Dwight Moody. "It is well," Spafford told him quietly, "the will of God be done."

Peace wasn't a thing to Horatio Spafford, but a person. It was the presence of Christ with him.

May the peace of Christ be with you in this season and every season.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What kind of peace is Jesus offering to His disciples in John 14:27? Is it different from the peace He offers to us today?

What kind of peace does the world offer us? How is the peace that Horatio Spafford had different from the peace the world offers us?

What ways have you sought peace outside of Jesus and found it empty?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

TIME: CREATE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

In the beginning there was perfect peace, and Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God. When sin entered the world, that perfect peace was broken and replaced with chaos. Everything that was right was now wrong. There was sickness, sadness and even death. But God sent a person, who is perfect peace and perfectly sinless, to bring peace back to earth once and for all. Today, God's people are still waiting for Jesus to return again to right all that was made wrong. Until that day, God's children trust that Jesus is with them. He is their hope and peace in the chaos of this sinful earth.

- 1 Talk about the things that are hard, hurtful and wrong in your life. What caused these hard, hurtful and wrong things?
- 2 Who fixes these things? How?
- 3 While we wait for Jesus to return, how can God's children find peace and comfort when things are scary?

MOMENT: CAPTURE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS

Jesus defeated the punishment and power of sin on the cross, and one day He will return and defeat the presence of sin, making all things new. While God's children wait for Jesus to return, they can find peace and comfort by spending time in God's Word, remembering His promises and turning to Him in prayer. This week, decorate a poster that says "Peace" on it and hang it up somewhere central in your home. Let that poster remind you to turn to the Lord for peace when life feels hard, bad or scary. Thank God out loud for the peace He brings every time you feel it.

PRAY: TALK TO GOD

Pray a prayer of lament — talk to God about what feels hard, hurtful and wrong. *God we lament over sin. We hate that sin hurts our bodies, our hearts and others. We hate that our hearts are still sick with sin and that often we want sin more than we want you. We ask that Jesus would come soon to end the problem of sin once and for all and that He would make our hearts look more like His while we wait.*

CHRISTMAS EVE

SERVICE TIMES:

2 PM* | 3:30 PM* | 5 PM

We encourage you to invite your friends and family to our Christmas Eve services as we remember, light candles and celebrate the first advent of Jesus Christ.

* Kids Care will be available for Birth–K at the **2 & 3:30 pm services**. These services will also be livestreamed on our website.



A stylized, minimalist illustration in shades of gold and black. At the top center is a large, multi-pointed star within a circular frame, with numerous thin lines radiating outwards across the dark background, which is also sparsely decorated with small gold stars. Below this, a dark, rounded rectangular banner contains the text "CHRISTMAS DAY" in a white, serif, all-caps font. Underneath the banner, the scene depicts a nativity. On the left, a figure with a long beard and a head covering is shown in profile, gesturing towards the center. On the right, three figures, likely the Three Kings, are depicted. The first king holds a small, ornate vessel. The second king wears a crown. The third king is partially visible on the far right. In the center foreground, a manger is shown with a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. The entire composition is framed by a series of thin, intersecting lines that create a sense of depth and structure.

CHRISTMAS DAY

We will not have services on Christmas Day, but we have prepared a Christmas morning liturgy for you to walk through with your family or friends. Our prayer is that this will help create an intentional space for you to center your hearts around the gift of Jesus Christ's first arrival and the promise of His return.

A R R I V A L

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 2:10 (ESV)

Perhaps you find yourself in a particularly joyful season of abundant blessings, or maybe this time of year is a reminder of your specific suffering. Maybe the weight of a divided culture, difficult relationships, work that never seems to end, the highs and lows of caring for little ones, the unfulfilled hope of a child, or the death of a loved one weighs heavy on you. Or maybe you're celebrating a sweet season of life — a new marriage, a promotion, the birth of a child, or a reconciled relationship. Regardless of where you find yourself, Christmas morning is the perfect time to rest and reflect on the arrival of a wonderful, merciful Savior — a lowly King who graciously and humbly entered the world and bore the weight of its sins. Out of His abundant, steadfast and perfect love, He made a way for peace. May our response be worship of the One who arrived and will arrive again to restore His kingdom and be with His people forever.

CHRISTMAS DAY LITURGY

PREPARE: Take a moment to get your Bible and gather elements for communion.

READ: Read **Luke 2:8–20** aloud.

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. 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!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

WATCH: Scan the included QR code to watch a pre-recorded Christmas Day service.

- * We encourage you to sing the worship songs aloud and take communion with whomever you may be gathered with.

**WATCH
SERMON**

PRAYER: Thank God for the gift of Jesus.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

TIME: CREATE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME

Read “He’s Here!” and “A Dream of Heaven” from the Jesus Storybook Bible and talk about what it was like when Jesus came the first time and what it will be like when He comes again to make all things new. Answer the questions below for each story.

- 1 What did Jesus look like?
- 2 What was the world like?
- 3 How did God’s people respond?

MOMENT: CAPTURE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP MOMENTS

Christmas lights are meant to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. The Bible tells us that the sin in the world is darkness but Jesus is the light! Jesus shines His light into the darkness and overcomes all that is hard, bad and sad. Tonight, look at Christmas lights as a family and talk about how Jesus is the light. He is stronger than the darkness, and nothing can stop His power and love! One day, Jesus will return and darkness will be defeated forever.

PRAY: TALK TO GOD

Praise: Talk to God about how good He is. “God, You are...”

Thanksgiving: Thank God for what He does and gives. “God, I thank You for...”

Lament: Talk to God about what feels hard, hurtful or wrong. “God, I am sad about...”

Confession: Tell God the truth about your sin. “God, forgive me for... help me forgive...”

Request: Ask God to do or give something. “God, I ask You for..

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