



Unstoppable **CHRISTMAS**

**GOD'S LOVE FOR US
DESPITE ALL
OBSTACLES**

an advent
devotion guide

AN ADVENT DEVOTION GUIDE

UNSTOPPABLE CHRISTMAS

God's LOVE for us
is UNSTOPPABLE
despite all obstacles.



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A Note from Pastor Tim

Regular devotions and prayers are catalysts for life-change. They inspire questions and invite conversations that you may not ordinarily have throughout your day. By connecting with God's Word and His truths, our faith is strengthened. As a result, we are inspired to love people the way Jesus loves them.

Advent is the perfect time to begin setting time aside for regular devotions. The season begins with anticipation and waiting for something great and wonderful to happen. It then ends with an invitation to sit in silence until the angels sing, shepherds rejoice, and the star appears to mark the arrival of Jesus - the Savior of the world, born in a manger.

What would happen if we genuinely sat with and embraced everything Advent has to give us?

Would we be filled with wonder?

Would it stop us from rushing through this season?

Would we grow in our conviction that God loves us - even when we try to stop it?

Here's the Point

God's love for us is unstoppable despite all obstacles.

We can choose to stop for a few moments each day to anticipate, wait, and sit with the God who has chosen to live among us and in us through His Son, Jesus, and through His Holy Spirit who chooses to live in our hearts.

Perhaps then, along with angels and archangels, Zechariah and Elizabeth, John, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, and all the company of heaven, we can more deeply experience Jesus living in and through us in a whole new way.

This guide contains weekly devotions, quotes, music suggestions, and prayers to use however you wish throughout the week. And the content aligns with our Unstoppable Christmas message series, which serves as a launching point, each week.

I pray that you and those who share this season experience the unstoppable and perhaps unexpected hope, love, joy, and peace that can only be found in Jesus.

Let's begin our journey together.

Love you.

Tim Bayer
Lead Pastor

Week 1: Hope

November 27 - December 3

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.*

Genesis 3:15

WEEK 1

Music

While there is no shortage of Christmas songs to listen to this season, we encourage you to make room for the suggested pieces in this devotion guide.

They have been prayerfully chosen to enrich both your Sunday morning worship experience throughout our Advent message series and your ongoing life of worship between gathering together.

***The aim and end of all music should be none other
than God's glory and the soul's refreshment.***

J.S. Bach

O Come O Come Emmanuel - For King and Country
Hope Has Come (Behold Him) - Red Rocks Worship
The Hope of Christmas - Matthew West

All songs are available on Spotify at
go.oslc.com/adventsongs

WEEK 1

Prayers

**Pray for people seeking hope today
and that they may find true
and enduring hope in Jesus.**

Throughout this Advent season, you may consider challenging yourself to pray differently.

If you're comfortable praying silently, begin praying out loud.

If you feel confident praying out loud, try keeping a journal where you write your prayers down and regularly review them to see God's faithfulness at work.

By stretching ourselves and trying new ways to pray, we experience God in new and fresh ways.

If you have kids, invite them to pray with you differently. Remember, we learn from each other.

***Prayer is not asking.
Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God,
at His disposition, and listening to His voice
in the depth of our hearts.***

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

**Lord Jesus,
master of both the light and the darkness,
Send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do
and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in many ways
long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness
yet seeking the light.
To you, we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.**

Henri J.M. Nouwen

My Prayers



WEEK 1

Devotion

***The angel said to him:
"Do not be afraid, Zechariah;
your prayer has been heard.
Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son;
you are to call him John.
Luke 1:13***

Advent reminds us that Jesus trusts us with his stuff.

Advent begins with two people losing hope of ever having a child. Their biological clocks had expired. On top of it all, for Zechariah, the priestly-Levitical line was going to end with him. It seemed to be the end for Zechariah and Elizabeth.

One day, when Zechariah was in the temple offering sacrifices, the angel Gabriel appeared to him next to the altar. It was a terrifying experience, except the news was that hope was not lost. Their prayers had been heard, Zechariah and Elizabeth were going to have a son, and they were to call him John.

Zechariah thought that this news was too good to be true. But it was true! God had chosen to trust two hopeless people with a child. And, not just any child - the one who was going to prepare the way for the Hope of the World, Jesus, the rescuer.

This is good news for those who have lost hope and cannot trust themselves because they've messed up too many times. We might not have doubted God like Zechariah, but we've sinned in other ways through our thoughts, words, and actions.

And yet, Jesus chooses to give His hope to us so that we can extend His hope toward others. The life you have is because Jesus decided to give it to you. Everything you have is because Jesus chose to give it to you. So, your life and stuff are to be managed well so that you don't get what you want, but that Jesus gets what He wants - every last person to have the hope only He can give.

What can you do to be people who give away hope?

One way is that you can be good and generous. Perhaps it sounds like saying, "please" and "thank you". It may feel like love flowing through our every action (1 Corinthians 16:14). Or, it could look like giving cash to somebody you don't know so that they can have gifts this Christmas. And while extraordinary goodness and generosity may seem risky - it is no more dangerous than Jesus being born, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and inviting us to participate in His mission and kingdom.

It reminds me of when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. People say, "save us because nobody else will," and "love us because nobody else does." But, like Zechariah, they're hopeless. And we can be God's messenger and giver of hope because Jesus trusts us with his stuff - His love, His forgiveness, His promises, His presence, as well as our cash and possessions.

So, let's take the stuff God has given us this Advent and get busy being hopeful to others.

WEEK 1

Reflection

For Individuals and Couples

If you're starting with personal or family devotions, you can consider using any of these prompts to guide your experience.

- **What did the music, prayers, scripture passage, and/or devotion make you think about?**
 - **How did they make you feel?**
 - **What do they make you want to do more or less of?**
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For Families with Young Children

While you can use any of the above prompts to guide a family devotion experience, you may also consider using this simple pattern to make Advent "extra special" for you and your child(ren).

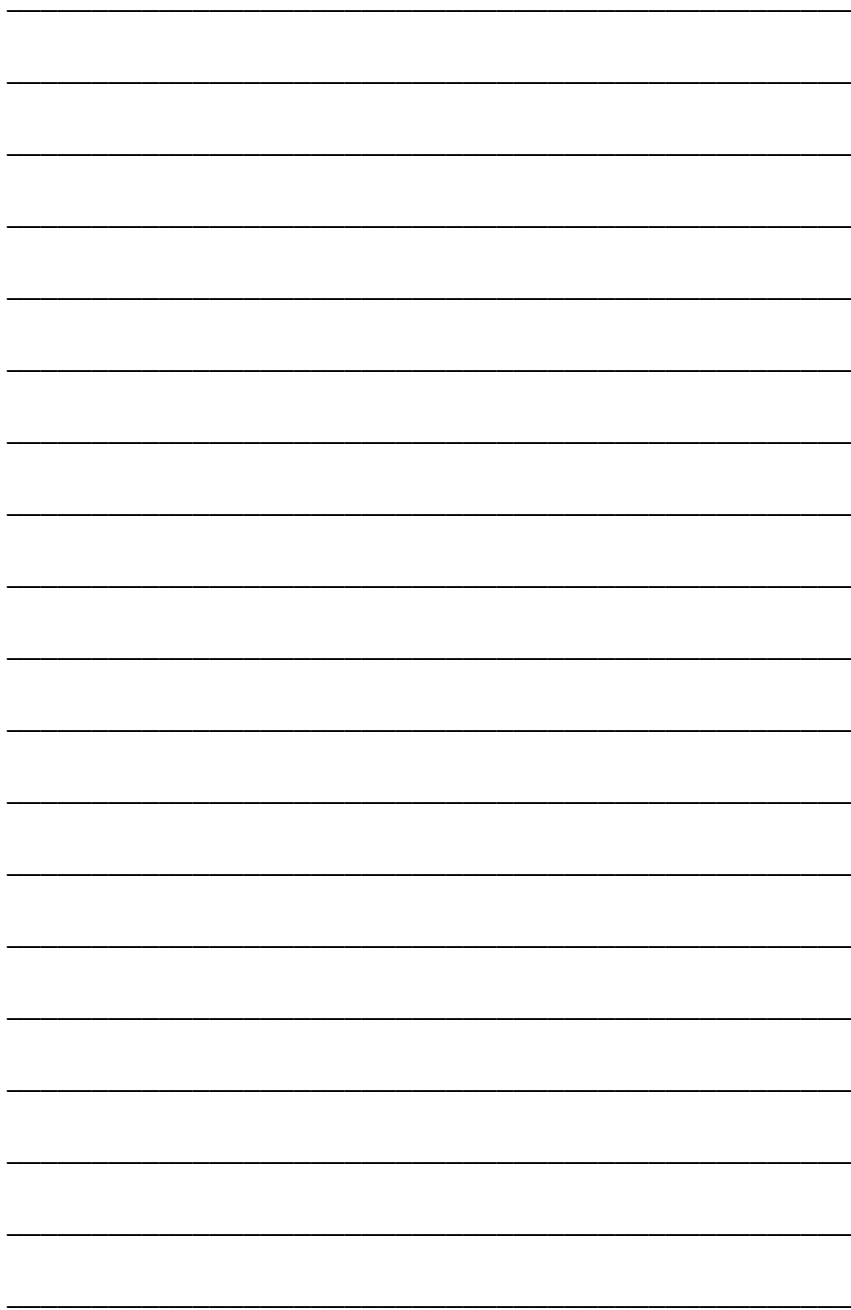
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 - **Pray the Lord's Prayer together (and maybe encourage your child(ren) to lead it).**
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Journal



Week 2: Love

December 4 - 10

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

*And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Isaiah 11:1-2

WEEK 2

Music

While there is no shortage of Christmas songs to listen to this season, we encourage you to make room for the suggested pieces in this devotion guide.

They have been prayerfully chosen to enrich both your Sunday morning worship experience throughout our Advent message series and your ongoing life of worship between gathering together.

***God, with His grace,
is always present
where there is devotional music.***
J.S. Bach's note on 2 Chronicles 5:13

This Is Love - Paul Baloche and Kathryn Scott
Of The Father's Love Begotten - Out Of Darkness
What Child Is This? - Chris Tomlin and All Sons and Daughters

*All songs are available on Spotify at
go.oslc.com/adventsongs*

WEEK 2

Prayers

**Pray for people seeking love today
and that they may find complete
and everlasting love in Jesus.**

Throughout this Advent season, you may consider challenging yourself to pray differently.

If you're comfortable praying silently, begin praying out loud.

If you feel confident praying out loud, try keeping a journal where you write your prayers down and regularly review them to see God's faithfulness at work.

By stretching ourselves and trying new ways to pray, we experience God in new and fresh ways.

If you have kids, invite them to pray with you differently. Remember, we learn from each other.

***Prayer is how we work out of the comfortable but
cramped world of self and into the spacious world of God.***

Eugene Peterson

**God of Love,
Your Son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.
He is a sign of your love.
Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent,
As we wait and prepare for his coming.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.**

Author Unknown

My Prayers

WEEK 2

Devotion

***You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from high
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.***

Luke 1:76-79

If you know the story of the prophet, John the Baptizer, the world seems to be in such a mess.

All John wants is a merry Christmas. Instead, he finds himself exhausted, overwhelmed, and alone. John lives by himself in the wilderness. His Christmas dinner is locusts and wild honey. And the only person who will visit him on this holiday is the voice of God.

John feels the stress of the season. Not only does he have the pressure of being sent by God to be a truth-teller and a foreteller of the Messiah, he now has a sermon, "repent and be baptized because the kingdom of God is here." Not necessarily a popular Christmas carol.

Bad news, John - you might get coal in your stocking.

But, here's the truth: The wages of sin are death. And this truth can ruin our Christmas unless something changes.

And yet, something happens when Jesus is born. Heart change happens.

Jesus breaks the silence of hundreds of years. And, it's John the Baptizer who gets to tell everybody about it.

The only thing worse than silence is false silence. If you want dysfunction, pain, and suffering to stick around, don't say anything that's on your mind.

Perhaps things today have gotten so bad that we want to ignore them in silence. But the bad things can't go away because evil is real and powerful.

So, in the middle of this dark truth, the light of God's love - Jesus Christ, is the truth people have always wanted.

Forgiveness. A fresh start. Something new. True and complete love has come to us in the person of Jesus.

For John, Jesus is born and something happens. And so, does something happen to us and our world today, too?

Yes.

The same Jesus who will lay in the manger and on the cross touches your lips with the bread and wine in communion so that your sins can never hurt you again unless you steal them back.

Our lives are changed and we are filled with Jesus' love.

And love inspires us to love more. Love energizes our spirits to do good. Love motivates us to be generous. Be honest. Be merciful. Be content.

That sure looks like a merry Christmas to me.

I guess that's why we can know that we can have a very merry Christmas with the prophet, John the Baptizer.

Love comes in Jesus and we can know beyond a doubt that we are loved each time we receive communion, remember that we are baptized and loved children of God, demonstrate kindness and goodness to others, and read the Bible and pray.

And that's why we can have a very merry Christmas.

WEEK 2

Reflection

For Individuals and Couples

If you're starting with personal or family devotions, you can consider using any of these prompts to guide your experience.

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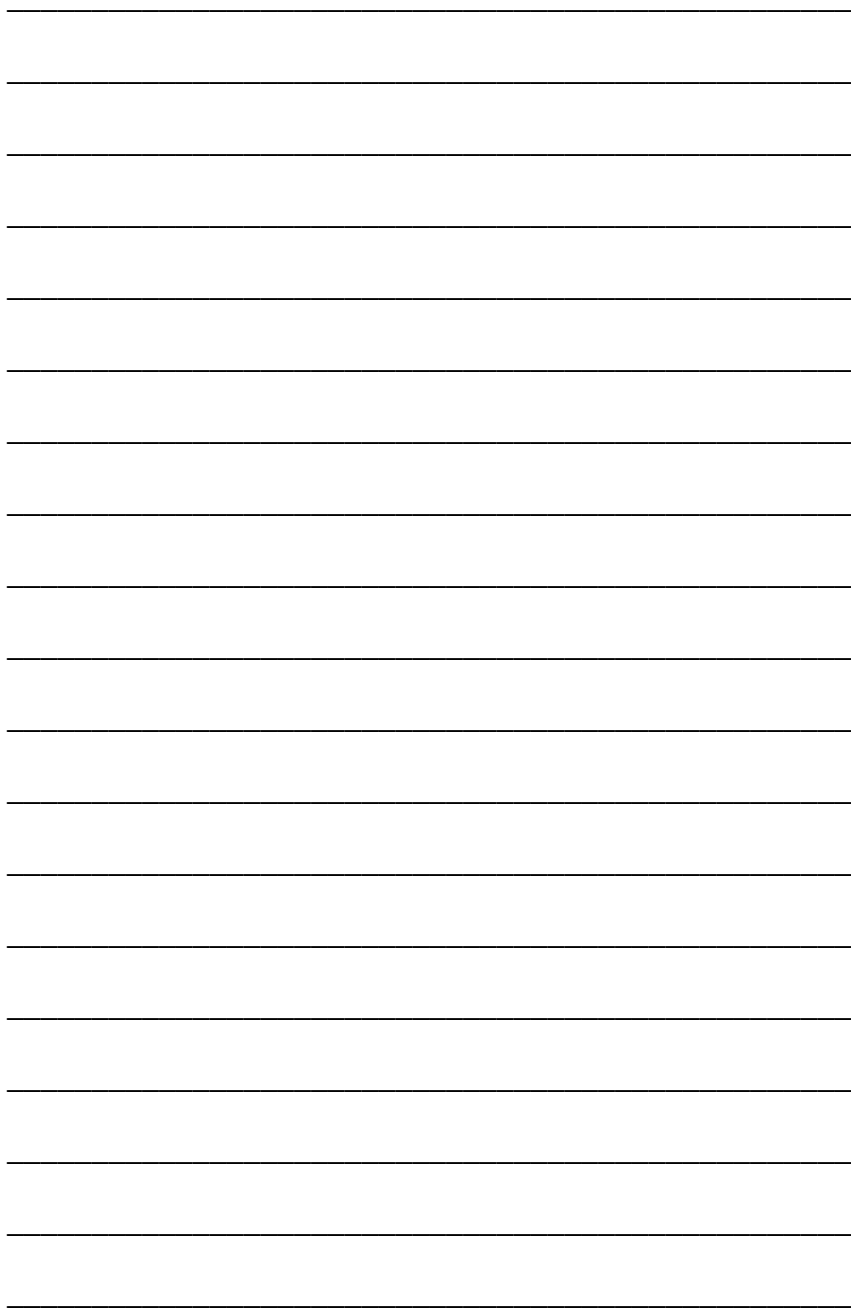
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 - **Pray the Lord's Prayer together (and maybe encourage your child(ren) to lead it).**
-

Journal



Week 3: Joy

December 11 - 17

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

Isaiah 9:2

WEEK 3

Music

While there is no shortage of Christmas songs to listen to this season, we encourage you to make room for the suggested pieces in this devotion guide.

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To sing is to pray twice.

St. Augustine

Joy To The World (Unspeakable Joy) - Chris Tomlin

Joyful Joyful - Casting Crowns

Hark The Herald Angels Sing - Pentatonix

*All songs are available on Spotify at
go.oslc.com/adventsongs*

WEEK 3

Prayers

**Pray for people who are seeking joy today
and that they may find unspeakable joy in Jesus.**

Throughout this Advent season, you may consider challenging yourself to pray differently.

If you're comfortable praying silently, begin praying out loud.

If you feel confident praying out loud, try keeping a journal where you write your prayers down and regularly review them to see God's faithfulness at work.

By stretching ourselves and trying new ways to pray, we experience God in new and fresh ways.

If you have kids, invite them to pray with you differently. Remember, we learn from each other.

***Prayer is not bringing your list
and asking God to sign on the bottom.
Prayer is handing God a blank sheet
you have already signed
and trusting him to fill it out as he sees fit.***

Paul David Tripp

*Joyous light of heavenly glory,
loving glow of God's face,
you who sing creation's story,
shine on every land and race.
Now, as evening falls around us,
we shall raise our songs to you,
God of daybreak, God of shadows,
come and light our hearts anew.*

Marty Haugen

My Prayers



WEEK 3

Devotion

***"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 pride 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 his offspring forever."
Luke 1:46-55***

You might have noticed that the world needs more joy.

Perhaps you do, too.

Mary's song tells us that God loves us, and we can love Him back. We listen to what He has to say. We follow Him and do what He does.

If we want to go our way, God will not force us to follow Him.

But, if you allow yourself to be loved as Mary does, you will find yourself filled with joy.

If we let Jesus take away our sins, we will walk with a little more swagger in our steps because we're lighter and free.

If we learn to love ourselves as much as Jesus loves us and let ourselves and everyone we know have a fresh start - then unspeakable joy will go beyond emotion and become a way of living.

That's the crazy, joy-filled life of Jesus.

God gives this love to Mary like He gives it to us.

He speaks words of joy into our fear. His hope-filled promises replace our hopeless thinking. And, His loving kindness leaves us skipping forward to love others with the kindness we've been given.

Loving ourselves like we're already loved by God is the way we find joy.

It might not be what we expect. But, it is what we need.

WEEK 3

Reflection

For Individuals and Couples

If you're starting with personal or family devotions, you can consider using any of these prompts to guide your experience.

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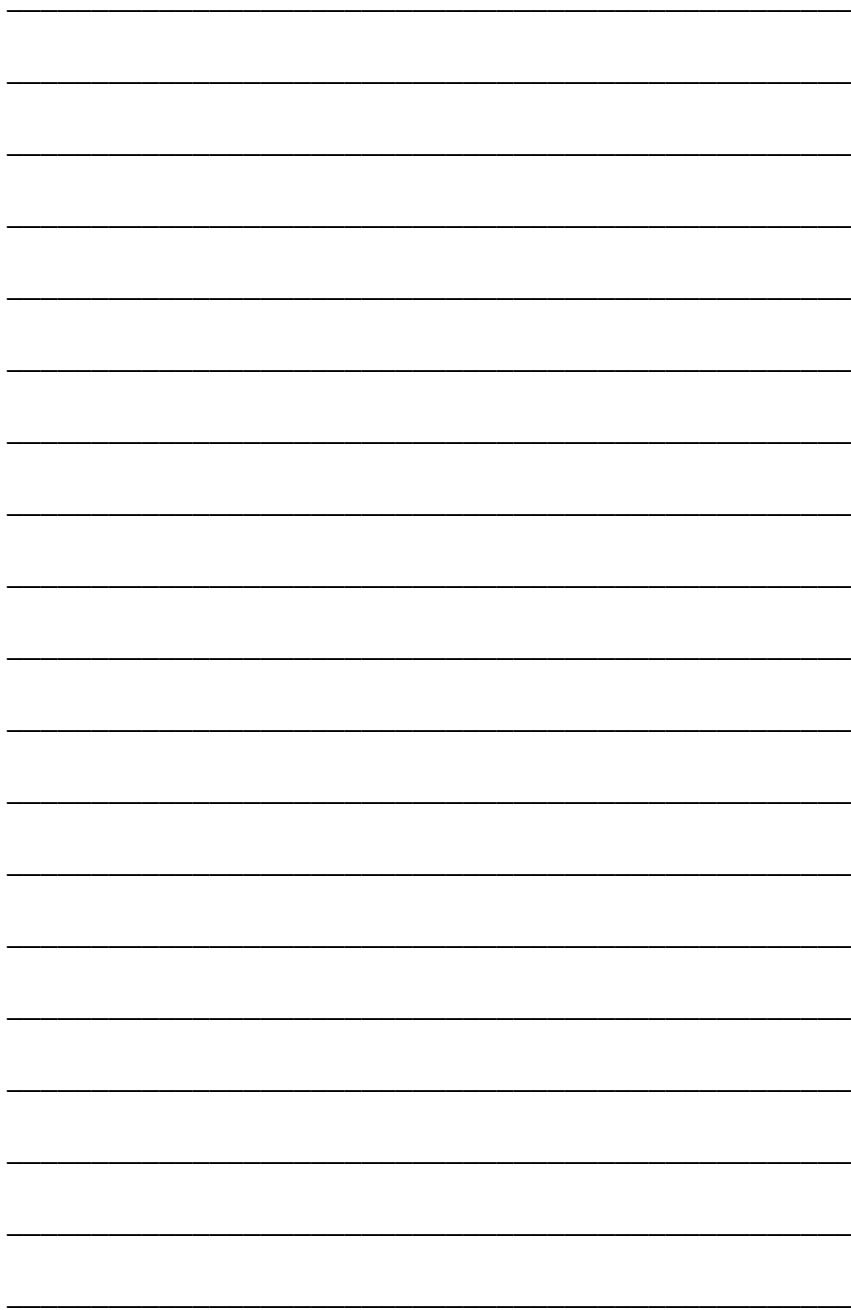
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 - **Pray the Lord's Prayer together (and maybe encourage your child(ren) to lead it).**
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Journal



Week 4: Peace

December 18 -24

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways,
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.*

Hebrews 1:1-2a

WEEK 4

Music

While there is no shortage of Christmas songs to listen to this season, we encourage you to make room for the suggested pieces in this devotion guide.

They have been prayerfully chosen to enrich both your Sunday morning worship experience throughout our Advent message series and your ongoing life of worship between gathering together.

***I play the notes as they are written,
but it is God who makes the music.***

J.S. Bach

O Holy Night (Love Shines Bright) - Paul Baloche and Kathryn Scott

Silent Night - Lauren Daigle

Away In A Manger (Forever Amen) - Phil Wickham

*All songs are available on Spotify at
go.oslc.com/adventsongs*

WEEK 4

Prayers

**Pray for people seeking peace today
and that they may find the peace
that surpasses their human understanding in Jesus.**

Throughout this Advent season, you may consider challenging yourself to pray differently.

If you're comfortable praying silently, begin praying out loud.

If you feel confident praying out loud, try keeping a journal where you write your prayers down and regularly review them to see God's faithfulness at work.

By stretching ourselves and trying new ways to pray, we experience God in new and fresh ways.

If you have kids, invite them to pray with you differently. Remember, we learn from each other.

***To be a Christian without prayer
is no more possible than
to be alive without breathing.***

Martin Luther

In peace, we pray to you...

For peace and salvation, we pray to you...

For peace between nations, peace between peoples...

For we who are gathered to worship and praise you...

For all of your servants who live out your Gospel...

For all those who govern that justice might guide them...

For all those who labor in service to others...

Grant weather that nourishes all of creation...

Keep watch on our loved ones and keep us from danger...

For all the beloved who rest in your mercy...

Help us, comfort us, all of our days.

***Great and merciful God,
Source and Ground of all goodness and life,
give your people the peace that passes all understanding
and the will to live your Gospel of mercy
and justice through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Marty Haugen

WEEK 4

Devotion

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

Matthew 2:13-15

God is love.

When it comes to love, more is better. So, God creates people to share that love.

The rest of history is the evil opposite - anything but love. Betrayal. Wandering. Less good - more bad. And going our way only leaves us in darkness.

Instead of peace, there is war. And all of the fighting and non-peace has left us hurt, harmed, beaten, and betrayed. Darkness. Unsatisfied.

That's what we see in Herod. Everyone around him hurts him. He feels outwitted by Magi from the East. His family ends up betraying him. So, with a dark heart and unsatisfied Spirit, his jealousy and pride lead him to lead a genocide.

War and unrest - tension and chaos are not causes but the rotten fruit of sin and evil.

And ironically, but perhaps divine, love is sent into the middle of war and unrest. We see hurt people with darkened hearts and unsatisfied spirits wrapped up in jealousy and pride and unjust murder.

Jesus is born and the entire world changes. In the middle of war, angels sing of peace. Tense moments of social unrest are met with shepherds who echo good news of great joy. And in a time of not having enough, the magi bring everything a young boy might want.

For those who relate to Taylor Swift's Anti-Hero, this is the answer to looking in the mirror and hating what you see. Jesus is the peace you've waited so long for, and he can be yours now and forever.

While Herod did not want anything to do with this peace, we can humble ourselves, set aside our pride and ego, and trade our darkened hearts for the light of Jesus.

We can surrender our unsatisfied spirits for the wholeness given to us in the healing and forgiveness of Jesus. And we can take every hurt and burden and place it on the cross with Jesus, who can take it all - and then some more.

It's only with Jesus - the love that God sent as a baby at Christmas- that we can find and receive the peace that surpasses our human understanding.

That's the only peace that will heal our hearts and transform chaos into calm.

WEEK 4

Reflection

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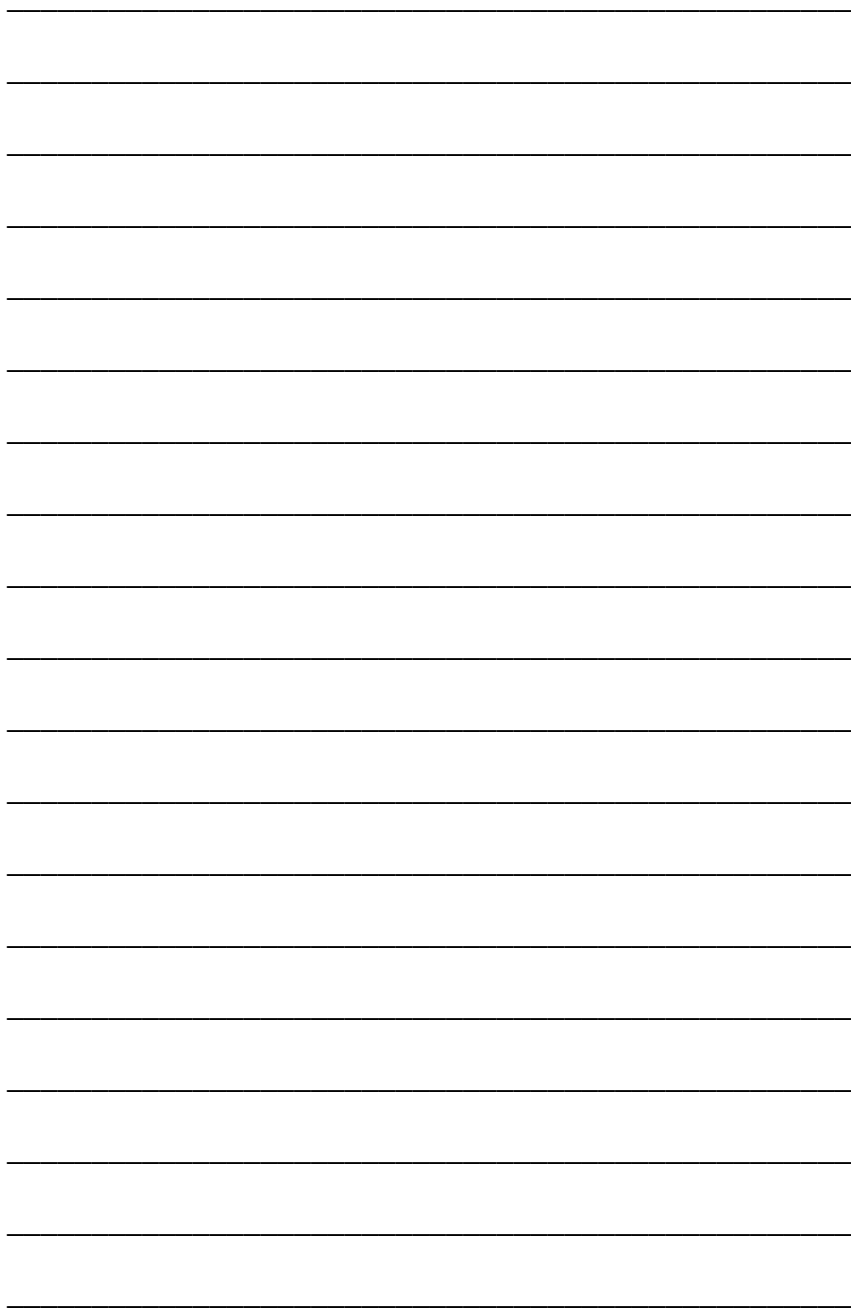
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Journal



Christmas Day

December 25

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be registered, each to his town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the village of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn Son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1-7

*"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your Word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."*

Luke 2:29-32
