

## **2025 Advent Devotional**

Advent is a period of preparation leading to the blessed celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus. Each week, a different theme is emphasized: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

We invite you to use this devotion during this time of expectation to prepare your heart for the celebration of Christmas Day. Engage in prayer, reflection, and spiritual preparation. Set up your own Advent wreath and light a candle each week in observation of the tradition of Advent.



# HOPE

### **Week One – HOPE**

“One of the principal rules of religion is to lose no occasion of serving God. And since he is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve him in our neighbor, which he receives as if done to himself in person, standing visibly before us.” John Wesley

### **November 30 – Romans 15:13**

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Who around you needs to experience hope, peace, joy, and love this season?

As we enter the Advent season, our hearts turn toward the future—anchored in the certainty of God's promises and the coming of the Messiah. Advent is more than waiting; it is waiting with expectation. It is trusting with confidence that God's plan is unfolding, even when we cannot see every detail. It is the culmination of the anticipation because Christ has come, and Christ will come again.

How can you take that excitement and share it? The God of hope does not give us a shallow optimism; He fills us with joy and peace that overflow into every corner of our lives. This hope is not something we manufacture, but it is a gift, powered by the Holy Spirit. When we trust Jesus fully, our hearts become reservoirs of hope that spill over into the lives of others.

**Prayer:**

God Most High, thank You for never forgetting the needs of Your people. Fill us with Your Spirit so that our hope overflows. Teach us to trust You fully and to walk in the peace and joy that only You can give. Amen.

**December 1 – Isaiah 40:31**

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”

Where do you see refuge when life feels overwhelming? Driving along the winding hills of the back roads, my eyes catch a sudden movement. High above, an eagle rests regally on her nest—a silent guardian, a steadfast protector of the innocent. Her chicks, nestled safely beneath her wings, know nothing of the storms beyond their sanctuary.

So it is with us. Life's winds may howl, and storms may rage, but under the shelter of God's wings, we find peace. His truth lights our path and teaches us humility. In Jesus, we place our hope, certain that his presence never fades. He is our refuge, our strength, and our promise that we are never alone.

God invites us to rest in God's presence, to trust in God's protection, and to live with the confidence that God's love never fails.

**Prayer:**

Eternal God, thank You for being our shelter and strength. Teach us to trust You fully, to rest in Your promises, and to walk in humility as Your truth guides us. Amen.

**December 2 – Proverbs 4:20-22**

“My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.

How can you take in more of God’s Word this week? God’s Word is like a vitamin for our souls—sometimes hard to swallow, but always good for us. Just as vitamins strengthen our bodies with extra nutrients, Scripture strengthens our spirits. The more we read and meditate on God’s Word, the more resilient we become against the pressures and temptations of life. His truth nourishes us, bringing spiritual health and vitality that flows into every part of our being.

When we keep his words close—within our hearts—they become life-giving. They shape our thoughts, guide our decisions, and empower us to show God’s love to the world. In a culture filled with noise and distraction, choosing to listen to God’s voice is an act of faith that leads to peace and strength. What spiritual “vitamin” do you need most today—hope, peace, wisdom, or courage? Open scripture and find sustenance for your day.

**Prayer:**

Almighty God, You bring strength to Your people; You are our hope and shield. Help us to treasure Your Word, to keep it close to our hearts, and to live by its truth. Nourish our souls so that we may reflect Your love to the world. Amen.

**December 3 – 2 Corinthians 12:9**

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

How can you invite God’s grace to transform weaknesses that you feel into strength?

The Apostle Paul understood something profound: life without Christ is marked by striving and insufficiency, but life with Christ is anchored in grace. Paul recognized his own limitations—his inability to reconcile himself to God—and yet, in that weakness, he discovered the strength of Christ. God’s grace is not a backup plan; it is the foundation of our faith. It covers our gaps, restores our relationship with God, and empowers us through the Holy Spirit.

We, like Paul, are atoned for by God’s grace through Jesus. Our weaknesses are not liabilities—they are opportunities for God’s power to shine. When we stop pretending to be strong on our own, we make room for Christ’s strength to rest on us. Through Jesus, we can do all things—not because of our ability, but because of his sufficiency.

**Prayer:**

Lord, may Your unfailing love be with us as we put our hope in You. Teach us to embrace our

weakness as a place where Your power is revealed. Help us to trust Your grace and walk in the strength that only You provide. Amen.

### **December 4 – Matthew 12:21**

“In his name the nations will put their hope.”

How can you share the hope of Jesus with someone today?

Names carry meaning. Perhaps yours was chosen to honor a loved one or to reflect the hopes your parents had for you. In Scripture, names often reveal character and purpose. Jesus is called *Immanuel*—“God with us.” This name is more than a title; it is a promise fulfilled. God came in the flesh to dwell among his creation, humbling himself so that we might know his love. When praying with someone and invoking the name of Jesus, there is power behind that prayer.

When we call upon the name of Jesus, we cling to that promise. His name is hope for every nation, every heart, and every circumstance. In a world searching for peace and meaning, Jesus’ name stands as an anchor—steady, strong, and unchanging. Advent reminds us that this hope is not distant; it is here with us, and Jesus makes God personal.

#### **Prayer:**

Lord of All, we praise You for Your gift of salvation. Thank You for sending Jesus—Immanuel—to dwell among us. Help us to trust in Jesus’ name and to live as bearers of hope in a world that longs for Your presence. Amen.

### **December 5 – Isaiah 41:10**

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

What fear do you need to surrender to God today?

When we lean into Jesus’ Word and his promises, fear gives way to faith, and weakness becomes strength. Just as God cares for the details of nature—the colors of the leaves, the flight of the birds—He cares for every detail of our lives. How can you remind yourself that his hand is holding you?

Hope in Jesus is more than a feeling—it is the assurance that we are never alone. He is the Good Shepherd who leads us to green pastures and quiet waters, even when life feels uncertain. Fear loses its grip when we remember this truth: God promises to strengthen and uphold us. His righteous right hand is not only powerful, but it is also personal, reaching out to steady us when we stumble.

**Prayer:**

Creator, we look around and praise You for the way You pay attention to the details of nature. Thank you for caring for us even more. Strengthen us when we feel weak and help us to trust Your presence and promises. Amen.

**December 6 – Hebrews 10:23**

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

What does it look like for you to “hold unswervingly” to hope this week?

Balancing on one leg for any length of time is difficult—your body shifts and wobbles, searching for stability. But when you have something solid to hold on to, you can stand firm without faltering. Our spiritual lives are much the same. Without an anchor, we sway under the weight of uncertainty and fear. But when we cling to Christ—the cornerstone—we find strength and steadiness.

Hope in Jesus is not wishful thinking; it is confidence in the One who keeps his promises. As we grow in our relationship with God, we build a spiritual structure that supports us through every storm. His faithfulness is the handrail we grip when life feels shaky. Let us hold on tightly, unswervingly, because the One we trust will never let go.

**Prayer:**

Glorious One, help us to cling to Your promises and stand firm in the hope that never fails. Amen.



# PEACE

## **Week Two – PEACE**

“The church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.” John Wesley.

### **December 7 – Jeremiah 33:6**

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.”

How can you intentionally fix your eyes on Jesus today?

Peter walked on water because his eyes were fixed on Jesus. The moment his gaze shifted to the wind and waves, fear overtook him, and he began to sink. Our lives often mirror that moment—when we focus on the chaos around us, anxiety rises, and peace slips away. But when we keep our attention on Christ, we find the healing and restoration our souls long for.

This season, let your heart rest in the promise of Jeremiah 33:6. God brings health and healing, not just to bodies but to broken spirits. He offers abundant peace and security in a world that feels fragile. Jesus has overcome the world; in Jesus, we find the strength to stand and the courage to hope. Even when we look away for a moment, Christ is by our side, ready for us to turn towards him and find our peace and security in him.

### **Prayer:**

Strong and Mighty One, You have overcome the world; help us to seek Your peace. Heal our hearts, restore our hope, and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source of life and strength. Amen.

## **December 8 – John 16:33**

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Where do you need to experience Christ’s peace today?

Life is full of battles—against fear, temptation, and uncertainty. But Jesus reminds us that the ultimate battle is already won. We do not have to struggle endlessly against sin or despair because Christ has overcome the world. His victory is our peace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to endure and to live with confidence, even when trouble surrounds us.

Peace does not come from the absence of problems; it comes from the presence of Jesus. When we take heart and trust in God, we find courage to face each day knowing that nothing can separate us from his love or undo his triumph. The battle is won!

### **Prayer:**

Savior, You bless all who turn from evil and do good. Thank You for delivering those who believe. Help us to rest in Your victory and live as people of peace and courage. Amen.

## **December 9 – Luke 7:50**

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

What step of faith can you take this week to draw closer to Jesus?

Faith is powerful. The woman who reached for Jesus’ garment believed that even the smallest touch could bring healing. She risked ridicule and rejection, yet her faith moved her to act. Jesus saw more than her outward gesture—He saw her heart, her trust, and her hope. And in response, He gave her peace.

This season, what are you struggling with? Where do you need healing—physically, emotionally, or spiritually? Reach out to Jesus, even if it feels like all you can grasp is the fringe of his robe. Make your requests known, and trust that Christ will meet you with grace and peace. His presence is enough, and his power is still at work today.

### **Prayer:**

Deliverer, You are faithful and listen to Your people. Thank You for meeting us in our need and responding with mercy. Help us to trust You fully and to live in the peace You promise. Amen.

## **December 10 – Luke 10:5-6**

“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.”

How can you intentionally bring peace into your home, workplace, or community this week?

Peace is more than a greeting—it is a gift. Jesus sent his disciples with a simple yet profound instruction: speak peace wherever you go. In a world filled with noise and tension, peace becomes a testimony of God’s presence. When we proclaim peace, we reflect the heart of Christ, who came to reconcile and restore.

This season, choose to be a person of peace. Let your words and actions shine with the warmth and love of Jesus. Offer peace as a gift that continues—through kindness, forgiveness, and grace. When we live this way, we add to the goodness of the season and point others to the Prince of Peace.

### **Prayer:**

God of Light, may those who love You be secure and share the light that flows within—even on the darkest of days. Help us to be bearers of peace and reflect Your love wherever we go. Amen.

## **December 11 – Romans 5:1**

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How does knowing you have peace with God change the way you approach challenges today?

The moment we recognize who Jesus is and believe in him, something incredible happens—we are justified. This means we are declared righteous before God, not because of what we’ve done, but because of what Christ has done for us. The result? A deep and abiding peace with God.

This peace is more than a feeling; it is a reality that shapes how we live. It gives us confidence to face the troubles of the day with boldness, knowing that our salvation is secure and God is by our side. When life feels uncertain, remember this truth: you are justified, you are loved, and you are never alone.

### **Prayer:**

God, our Shepherd, You guide us in the ways of peace and teach us to pay attention to the details of Your grace. Help us to rest in the assurance of our salvation and to live boldly in Your love. Amen.

## **December 12 – Philippians 4:7**

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Where do you need his guarding presence most?

An eagle soars gracefully across the sky and lands on the highest branch where its nest rests. As a protective guard, it brings warmth and safety to the eaglets nestled in the sticks, mud, and fluff. They do not worry about what lies below or if the wind blows—they have peace under the shelter of their parents’ wings.

This is the picture Paul paints of God’s peace—a peace that guards us, surrounds us, and holds us steady when life feels uncertain. It is not a peace we can manufacture or fully comprehend; it is a gift from God through Christ Jesus. When the world is weary, and storms rage, his peace remains immovable, like the eagle watching over its young.

### **Prayer:**

God of Grace, Your peace brings joy because You comfort us and protect us. Even when the world around us is weary, You are immovable. Help us to trust Your presence and live in the shelter of Your peace. Amen.

## **December 13 - John 14:27**

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

What do you need to let God control in exchange for peace?

The peace Jesus offers is unlike anything the world can provide. It is not temporary or dependent on circumstances, it is deep, lasting, and rooted in his presence. God knows your heart, your struggles, and your desires, but He longs for a relationship with you. God invites you to bring your specific requests —your hurts, needs, hopes, and questions—and release them into God’s hands. Let God share your load.

When we surrender our burdens, we make room for His peace to fill us. Even when the answer to our prayers is “not yet,” his peace remains steady, guarding our hearts against fear and anxiety. This season, choose to trust God’s timing and rest in God’s promise: you are never alone.

### **Prayer:**

Righteous One, Your peace brings delight even when the answer to our request is not yet. Help us to trust You fully, to lay down our worries, and to walk in the calm assurance of Your presence. Amen.



## **Week Three – JOY**

“The word of God says, everyone who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God. Experience, or inward consciousness, tells me that I have the fruit of the Spirit. And hence I rationally conclude, therefore I am a child of God.” John Wesley.

### **December 14 – John 17:13**

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”

How can you find delight like a child today?

Have you ever watched in wonder as fluffy flakes of snow drift from a gray Michigan sky? Joy bubbles up when children stretch out their tongues to catch the frozen bits, giggling and dancing in delight. In those moments, we glimpse the fullness of God’s joy—a joy that Jesus prayed would fill his followers.

Look closely at a snowflake. Its intricate design dazzles for an instant before melting away. Yet in that fleeting beauty, we see a tiny fleck of God’s creative touch. His joy is like that—

unexpected, pure, and breathtaking. It reminds us that even in a weary world, Christ's joy is ours to embrace. Let it bubble up in your soul today and share it freely.

**Prayer:**

Our Shield, we sing and dance for joy because You spread Your protection over Your people. Fill us with the full measure of Your joy, and help us to reflect Your light in every season. Amen.

**December 15 – Luke 1:14-15a**

“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.”

When was the last time you rejoiced?

How do you feel when you open a gift and discover it's exactly what you hoped for? Joy bursts forth in smiles and words of gratitude. That's the kind of joy God promised through the birth of Jesus—the ultimate gift, the fulfillment of centuries of longing. Jesus came to reconcile us to God, to restore what was broken, and to secure our eternity with God.

This season, let your heart rejoice in the gift of Christ. His birth is not just a historical event; it is a present reality that brings unending joy to all who believe. When we embrace this gift, we experience peace, hope, and love that overflow into every part of life.

**Prayer:**

Our Provider, Your precepts bring all who believe unending joy. Thank You for the gift of Jesus—our Savior and our hope. Help us to live in gratitude and share the joy of his birth with others. Amen.

**December 16 - Luke 10:21**

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.”

How can you share the joy of Christ's love with someone this week in a simple, childlike way?

Have you ever played “*I spy with my little eye*” with a child? At first, the hidden object seems impossible to find—until you know what to look for. Then it becomes obvious. In the same way, being in a relationship with Jesus opens our eyes to the hidden truths of God's Kingdom. What seems complicated to the world is made simple enough for a child: love God and love others.

Yet, even today, the truth of Jesus remains hidden to many. This season, let's share the joy of Christ's love with everyone we meet. Just as Jesus rejoiced in what the Father revealed, we can rejoice in the privilege of making God's love known—through kindness, words of hope, and acts

of grace.

**Prayer:**

Prince of Peace, we shout for joy over Your victory and lift banners in Your name. Help us to live with childlike faith and share Your love freely with those around us. Amen.

**December 17 – Mark 4:16**

“Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.”

How can you deepen your roots in God’s Word this week so your joy remains strong even in hard times?

The Word of God is Jesus—living, active, and powerful. When we hear God’s words, they bring light to our path and hope to our hearts. Scripture is like a lamp for our feet, guiding us through life’s uncertainties. But Jesus reminds us that joy in hearing the Word must be rooted deeply, not just a fleeting feeling. If our faith remains shallow, trials can cause us to stumble.

As we grow in Christ, God’s Word shapes our character into the likeness of God. It clarifies God’s expectations and strengthens us to live faithfully. Let’s not only receive the Word with joy but also nurture it daily—through prayer, study, and obedience—so that it bears lasting fruit.

**Prayer:**

King of Kings, we rejoice in Your strength. You have turned our wailing into dancing. Help us to hold fast to Your Word and let it transform our hearts for Your glory. Amen.

**December 18 - Luke 19:37**

“When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.”

What miracle—big or small—can you thank God for today? How can you share that testimony with someone else?

Will you recognize a miracle when you encounter it? Too often, we overlook God’s work in our lives, attributing blessings to science, technology, or coincidence—forgetting that the very ability to reason and create comes from God. The disciples praised God loudly because they saw his power firsthand. Their joy was rooted in gratitude for what God had done.

This Advent season, let’s open our eyes to the miracles around us. They may not always look like parting seas or raising the dead—they might be a restored relationship, an answered prayer, or

the quiet strength to endure a hard day. Look for God's fingerprints in the details and give God the glory.

**Prayer:**

O God, my God and delight, we praise You with music for You bring healing to our very souls. Help us to see Your power at work and to rejoice in Your goodness every day. Amen.

**December 19 – Isaiah 12:3**

“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

How can you refresh your soul in Christ this week?

A well is a source of life—water that sustains, refreshes, and restores. In the same way, salvation through Jesus is our spiritual well, overflowing with living water. When we draw from Jesus, we find joy that runs deeper than circumstances. This joy is not fleeting; it is rooted in the eternal promise of God's grace.

Jesus offers living water that quenches the thirst of our souls. In him, we discover peace, hope, and strength for every season. Just as a well never runs dry when cared for, our joy remains abundant when we continually return to Christ, the source of life.

**Prayer:**

Great King, beautiful is the whole earth. We clap our hands in celebration and cry out with joy for the water that quenches our thirst. Thank You for the gift of salvation and the living water that sustains us forever. Amen.

**December 20 – Luke 2:10**

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”

Are you ready for God's blessing?

News of a baby is always worth celebrating—but the birth announcement of Jesus was unlike any other. It lit up the night sky with glory brighter than the aurora borealis, accompanied by angelic songs of praise. This good news was first shared with shepherds—ordinary people who became extraordinary messengers of hope.

The message of Jesus' birth is still good news today. It reminds us that God's love reaches into the ordinary moments of life and transforms them with joy. This Advent season, let's pause to recognize the miracle of Christ's coming and share that joy with others.

**Prayer:**

Restorer, You grant willing hearts Your gift of salvation. You sustain us, and the message of Your birth is indeed good news. Help us to proclaim it boldly and live in its joy every day. Amen.



**Week Four -LOVE**

“Oh, let no man think his labor of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear.”  
John Wesley.

**December 21 – 1 Corinthians 13:13**

“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

How can you reflect God’s love in a tangible way this week?

Faith and hope are essential—they anchor us in God’s promises and give us confidence in what we cannot yet see. But love is the greatest because it is the very essence of who God is. Love is powerful, enduring, and transformative. It is the reason we exist and the reason Jesus came. Out of love, He humbled himself, put on flesh, and dwelt among us. Out of love, Jesus gave his life so that we might live.

As we celebrate Jesus' birth, we remember that this season is not just about lights and gifts—it is about the greatest gift of all: God's unfailing love. Let that love shape your words, actions, and relationships today.

**Prayer:**

God, our refuge, You deliver us and save us because of Your unfailing love; we are grateful. Help us to live in that love and share it freely with others. Amen.

**December 22 – Joel 2:13**

“Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.”

How can you make space for God's grace to work in you?

In ancient times, tearing garments was a sign of grief or repentance. But God calls us to something deeper—heart transformation. External gestures mean little if our hearts remain distant. If your heart tends to wander, you only need to turn toward God. When you do, He meets you where you are and guides you with love along the path of righteousness.

God's character is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love. He does not delight in punishment but in restoration. In this season of Advent, let's examine our hearts and return to him—not with empty rituals, but with genuine surrender. When we do, we experience his mercy and the joy of his presence.

**Prayer:**

The Lord examines the righteous; He loves justice, and the upright will see God's face. Gracious God, help us to return to You with whole hearts. Thank You for Your compassion and unfailing love. Amen.

**December 23 – Daniel 9:4**

“I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: “Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments.”

What is one specific way God has shown his faithfulness to you recently? How can you respond with gratitude today?

Even on the hardest days, Daniel did not waver in his faithfulness toward God. His prayer was rooted in trust—acknowledging God's greatness and covenant love. Daniel's example invites us to pause and reflect: Where does God rank in your daily life? Do you turn to Jesus first, or only when trouble comes?

Take time today to measure how God has provided for you—in big ways and small ways. From answering prayers to unexpected blessings, his faithfulness surrounds us. Then pause and give thanks to the One who is, was, and will always be. Gratitude strengthens faith and reminds us that God's promises never fail.

**Prayer:**

Wonderful Counselor, I trust in Your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in Your salvation. Thank You for Your covenant of love and for guiding me each day. Amen.



**CHRISTMAS EVE  
WORSHIP  
December 24**

**Children's Service | 11:00 a.m.**  
In-person & Online

**Traditional Carols & Candlelight**

IN-PERSON  
2:00pm | 7:00pm | 9:00pm | 11:00pm

ONLINE  
2:00pm | 7:00pm | 9:00pm

Birmingham First Services: 11 AM (Children's Service), 2 PM, 7 PM, 9 PM, 11 PM



# Celebrate the Joy of Christmas

Join us for Christmas Eve Worship

December 24

Online & In-person

2:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., & 6:00 p.m.

(2 p.m.: Nursery Care, 4 p.m.: Full Children's Programming, 6 p.m.: Families Worship Together)

Berkley First Services 2 PM, 4 PM, 6 PM