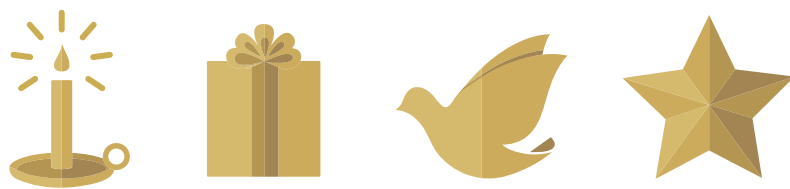


2021 CROSSROADS CHURCH
ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



LEAD PASTOR

Dr. Dave Vance

PASTORAL TEACHING TEAM

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Jesse Rider, Caleb Vance, Paul O'Brien

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible.

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CHRISTMAS AT CROSSROADS

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

The Advent season is a time of preparation and celebration for the believer and has been observed in some form since the 4th or 5th century A.D. The term in Latin means, “coming” or “arrival,” and calls the Church to remember the birth of Jesus, our Savior, who was foretold by the Old Testament prophets and foreshadowed throughout the entire Old Testament.

Popular expressions of Advent embrace a wreath with four candles (often representing Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy) with one being lit each Sunday leading up to Christmas. This symbolizes all that Christ brings and fulfills while also representing Jesus as the light of the world. Others have utilized a calendar with 24 little windows that open to Scriptures, poems, or stories to count down the days until Christmas. With each window that’s opened, the anticipation is heightened, reminding us of the anxious waiting of the people of God for their Savior to come.

Regardless of the tradition or expression, we rejoice and observe this Season every year to allow our hearts to be drawn back to a sense of awe and wonder. In awe that the Creator of the Universe would send His Son to seek and save the lost, to fulfill His promises, and show the fullness of His faithfulness. In wonder that the Son of God, clothed in all glory and majesty as a glorious King, would humble himself to be born as a babe. Astounded that the eternal One would take on flesh and become one of us. Amazed that the Exalted Lord would become a lowly servant. As we reflect on what Advent reveals about our gracious God, we are propelled to faithfully serve Him as we anxiously await His second coming!

OUR GOAL & HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Our hope for you is that you will take time to reflect on the One who was, who is, and who is to come again. We desire for you to engage with the materials in a way that draws your attention to the greatest gift and our greatest hope, Jesus Christ.

We suggest you begin your week with the devotional, maybe even read and consider it, the passage and discussion questions with your family or community group. You may even sing and/or reflect on the Christmas or Advent hymn. Then, throughout the week, with special attention on the theme discussed in the devotional, read the daily Scripture passages. Even if you know the Advent narrative well, do not rush through this season. We know this season is filled with busyness, get-togethers, parties, and the like, so take this time to soak in the beauty that Advent brings. There is always something new to discover about our Savior and his birth as we dive into the Scriptures.



WEEK 1 HOPE

NOV. 29 - DEC. 4

By Dr. Dave Vance

DEVOTIONAL

1 PETER 1:8-12 • *“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”*

ROMANS 8:24-25 • *“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”*

Christmas is a time for both expectation and anticipation. From the glow of charming decorations and memorable moments to unforgettable meals and desired gifts, Christmas beautifully connects our expectations with our anticipation. But to truly grasp the bond between the two, we must ask the questions, “What is it that I am expecting?” and “How long until I see its fulfillment?” At Christmas, a child often expects a gift they desire. As the days get closer, their anticipation continues to build until that gift is opened. But what if that same child shared a hopeful expectation of a Christmas gift on January 1? They now have an entire year of anticipation to endure. The length of time left until this desire is possibly fulfilled can seem painful, and apathy can begin to set in. There are also instances when what we are expecting is painful. In these moments, anticipation appears as anxiety or worry. Both of these realities give us a small glimpse into the experience God’s people in the Old Testament had in awaiting of the arrival of the promised Messiah.

Throughout the Old Testament, God was clear on His expectations. Repeatedly, God spoke through His prophets to His people about the promise of the coming Messiah and even provided them signs to watch for in order to recognize the Savior's coming. God revealed that the Messiah would be born within the line of David (Isaiah 9:6-7), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). He would be a Man of Sorrows—crushed, despised, and rejected—justifying many through what He suffered (Isaiah 53). The promised Deliverer would be a light overcoming darkness (Isaiah 9:2), a Preacher of Good News to the poor (Isaiah 61) and a King who would reign forever (Jeremiah 23:5-6). With every new promise given, the expectation was made clearer, and anticipation built.

But with every passing year, one can imagine the questions rising, “God, when will Messiah come?” “Why are you taking so long?” For centuries, the people of God were left watching, waiting, and longing for their long-expected Savior. For some it led to apathy, and for others

it led to anxiety. For many it became an endless search for an answer. They longed to see their expectations and anticipation reach fulfillment.

The same questions that plagued God's people before the Messiah's birth continue to pursue us. "I expect God to work, but why can't I see His hand?" "Why does it feel like I am constantly waiting for an answer, but cannot hear him? Where is He?" But the birth of Jesus reminds us that waiting is our hope. A constant pursuit of God is our answer. God did fulfill His promises to his people long ago, and he will do the same for us. Christmas is our reminder that our expectations become promises and our anticipations become hope-filled realities. God has come. Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of our waiting. He is what they sought...He is what we hoped!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that you are expecting this Christmas season? As we get closer to Christmas, how is your anticipation building? Describe the connection between expectation and anticipation.
2. Can you name some of the promises of the Messiah's coming in the Old Testament? Of all the promises, which one would have excited you the most? Why?
3. What happens to anticipation when we wait? Why is waiting so hard for us? In what ways are you waiting right now? In what ways are we still waiting on God's plan to be fulfilled?
4. Peter says that God's prophets searched for the salvation of Christ (1 Peter 1:8-12). But their searching only revealed that the good news they proclaimed was for us. How should the good news of Christmas cause our hope to rise? How should hope in Christ answer our expectations and raise our anticipation?

SONG

“I Will Wait For You (Psalm 130)”

By Shane and Shane

ACTIVITIES

FAMILY ACTIVITY • Play an Advent version of hide and seek. Take something of great value that can be shared by the entire family. Hide it in a place that makes it difficult to find. After it is found, share the item with everyone, and describe how God’s people sought the coming Messiah but didn’t get to see Him, so that we could know Him.

ADULT ACTIVITY • The next time you are waiting for something, take a moment to thank God for hope in your waiting. If available, ask someone waiting with you how you can pray for them.

PRAYER

Pray that you would have greater awareness of
the hope you have in Christ.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

Monday: Isaiah 9:6-7

Tuesday: Isaiah 11:1-10

Wednesday: Luke 2:25-32

Thursday: Romans 8:18-30

Friday: 1 Peter 1:3-12

Saturday: James 5:7-11



WEEK 2 LOVE

DECEMBER 6-11

By Pastor Jesse Rider &
Pastor Caleb Vance

DEVOTIONAL

1 JOHN 4:7-21 • *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have*

confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

When thinking through the many emotions that we all feel and experience during the Christmas season, one that stands out is love.

One doesn't have to look far to find love or depictions of love during the Holidays. One of the most popular channels on television, and especially so leading up to Christmas, is the Hallmark channel. The Hallmark Channel is known for creating and publishing a limitless supply of family-friendly, cliché, heart warming, romantic drama-coms that celebrate the feelings of the Christmas season and the budding romances that often ensue underneath

the mistletoe. The amazing thing about the movies featured on the Hallmark Channel is that the majority of viewers either adore the heart warming chick-flicks or they are nauseated by the false promises of love during the Christmas season. No matter where you land on the quality of Hallmark Movies, the presence of these movies is a clear example of the love that is associated with the Christmas season.

The fact that we closely associate the feeling of love with Christmas should not come as a surprise, as true Love is at the forefront of the life of Jesus and serves as the ultimate reason for His arrival on earth as a baby. Love constitutes the heartbeat of the manger scene, the God of the Universe becoming a human, and not in a kingly manner, but as a baby in an animal's feeding trough. The Christmas story is filled with the never-ending love of the Creator, Who desired for His people to know Him and have a relationship with Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you think of love, what image comes to mind? Do you think of a story, movie, or a person? Why?
2. What is it about love that makes it so popular during the Christmas season? If you are someone that is drawn to “Hallmark”-style movies, what about them do you enjoy? If you are someone that doesn't like them, why is that?
3. What is the significance of God's love in the Christmas story and life of Jesus? What are examples of this?
4. How does the love of God seen in the Christmas story motivate you to live in this season? In all seasons?
5. What does it look like to love someone well?

SONG

“Glorious Day”

By Casting Crowns

ACTIVITIES

Write a note to someone that needs to hear how much they are loved. This can be a relative, friend, neighbor, or maybe someone you desire to be closer with. Let them know that they are loved, not only by you, but by the God of the universe.

PRAYER

Pray that God would equip you with love during this season, and throughout all seasons—that you would be able to love in a way that models His love for you. Pray that God would use you to demonstrate your love for others and that your life would be exemplary of the love of Christ.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

Monday: John 15:12-17

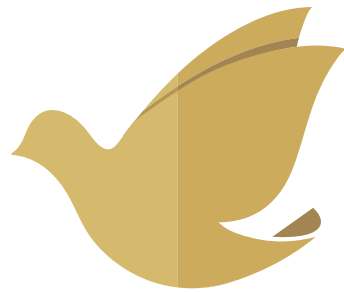
Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 13

Wednesday: John 3:16-21

Thursday: 1 John 4

Friday: Colossians 3:12-17

Saturday: Philippians 2:1-11



WEEK 3 PEACE

DECEMBER 13-18

By Pastor Chris Standridge
& Pastor Josh Kocher

DEVOTIONAL

LUKE 2:14 • *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

“Peace on earth, good will to men.” These words resound in our ears every December as we reflect the Advent of the Christ and the return of our Savior. Christmas is the holy holiday that reminds us that only through Christ can we have peace in this world. The Prince of Peace was born to give us what we desperately crave. In a world divided with battle lines being drawn on nearly every issue, peace is what we pursue, yet it eludes us. As our world rages against one another, I’m reminded of a poem written nearly two centuries ago by a man grieved by personal loss and his country engaged in a Civil War, a nation divided by North and South.

“‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said.” Those melancholy words were penned on Christmas Day by the poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Longfellow was a widower whose wife tragically died from burn wounds when her dress caught

on fire as Henry attempted and failed to extinguish it. Longfellow was a single father of 6 children when his oldest son, Charles, enlisted in President Lincoln's Union army to fight in the Civil War. On November 27, 1863, three years after his wife died, Charles was shot through the shoulder in the battle. In the grief over the loss of his wife, the news of his son being wounded in battle, and feeling the effects of an extended Civil War, Longfellow was in a place of despair. The circumstances surrounding him left Longfellow feeling that "there is no peace on earth" because the "hate is strong that mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men."

These words read almost prophetic 158 years later as we survey our world. The nations rage, hate is strong, right fails and wrong prevails, and we lack peace. But, amid Longfellow's despair while nursing his son back to health, hope rang louder in his ears the louder the church bells chimed. The bells on Christmas day reassured him that "God is not dead, nor does He sleep. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, good will to men."

“Peace on earth, good will to men.” Those are not just words that angelic heralds proclaimed to shepherds two millennia ago. They’re words of hope revealed to us today in our desperation. In a world in pursuit of peace, it can be found! It came to us as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes; a baby born into a world of unrest. Jesus is the Prince of Peace the warring world awaited. Peace has come and Peace is coming again. And when He does, all the wrong shall fail and right prevail with peace on earth, good will to men.

Have you found yourself in a place of despair? Does it seem that wrong prevails all around you? Do you toil in a season of turmoil? Do you lack peace in your heart? If so, search no further than the Prince of Peace, a Savior born on Christmas day, who is Christ the Lord.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the different things people mean when they use the phrase, “Peace on earth” at Christmastime? (Luke 2:14)
2. What are the consequences of a world that is lacking peace?
3. How much of your own sense of peace is related to circumstances, relationships, or inner calm instead of the Lord?
4. What kind of peace do you think the world is seeking most? How does it differ from the peace that Jesus gives? (John 14:27)
5. How does God change a person’s life so that they have peace with God (Romans 5:1, 8-10, Eph. 2:14-18), the peace of God (Colossians 3:15, Eph. 4:1-3), and peace on earth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 2:10-14, Colossians 1:15-20), even amidst the chaos of the world around us? Use the passages listed to dig deeper into the peace of God.

6. What steps can you (or your family) take this Christmas to rest in the Prince of Peace and let peace of Christ rule in your heart?
(Colossians 3:15)

SONG

“Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”

By Kings (MHM)

ACTIVITIES

FAMILY ACTIVITY • Understanding Peace

You'll need crayons, colored pencils, sheets of paper and a Bible.

Ask each person to draw what they think “peace” looks like, or something that reminds them of peace? And why?

Then, read the following texts and ask everyone to answer whether it sounds peaceful or not, and why?

Genesis 2:1-9

Psalms 69:1-5

2 Corinthians 11:23b-28

Revelation 21:1-4

GROUP ACTIVITY • List, as a group, numerous signs of peace that you could display towards others and then discuss how Jesus has shown us these signs. Plan a time and way in which you can show these signs to your neighbors, family members and co-workers. Pray that God would give you opportunities to share the peace of Jesus with them.

PRAYER

Father, we thank you that in your deep love for us and commitment to your promises that you sent your Son, Jesus to redeem us, love us, and save us. We also thank you, Father, that you have made Jesus our peace, that we can understand true peace, true well-being, true wholeness because of Jesus' faithfulness and sacrifice on the cross. Guard our hearts and minds with peace in this season and strengthen us through the Spirit to be agents of peace to all those around us.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

Monday: [Jeremiah 33:14-16](#)

Tuesday: [Isaiah 53:4-5](#)

Wednesday: [John 14:27](#)

Thursday: [Romans 5:1-2](#)

Friday: [Ephesians 2:13-18](#)

Saturday: [Revelation 21:1-4](#)



WEEK 4 JOY

DECEMBER 20-25

By Pastor Mike Mahek &
Pastor Paul O'Brien

DEVOTIONAL

MATTHEW 2:1-11 • *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word,

that I too may come and worship him.’ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

A group of wise men who we can reasonably assume were Gentiles traveled to find “The King of the Jews.” They encountered Herod, who ironically was “a dreadful king of the Jews”, but even he himself knew they were searching for the Messiah. Herod was unaware of the scripture announcing the location of the Messiah’s birth but asked the chief priests and scribes about that prophecy. They quoted Micah 5, announcing that the birthplace was Bethlehem, but none of these religious leaders pursued it beyond giving that answer. The Messiah, their Savior, was born in the city of

David, yet not one of them sought to see if this was really true. King Herod released them, misleading them with a promise to go and worship the Messiah upon their return, while in reality planning to destroy Him.

But the only ones from this passage who got to see the child Messiah were the foreigners, the Gentiles. Even from birth, Jesus was the Savior of the world, and not just Savior to the Jews. And how did these wise men react?

They rejoiced. They rejoiced exceedingly. They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Notice the triple emphasis, rejoiced, exceedingly, great. This is the introduction of the Messiah into the world as described by the apostle Matthew. He doesn't want his readers to miss it. They rejoiced with triple intensity.

This joy is the same joy we experience when Christ redeems us and calls us into His family. We rejoice exceedingly with great joy! In addition to naming Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, Micah also describes the Christ as the One from of old, the One who is the Ancient of Days. This Messiah is God Himself,

who comes to shepherd His people. He is the One who protects, provides, and cares for His sheep.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do we recognize the Messiah? Do we seek Him out? Do we rejoice exceedingly with great joy? The truth of who Jesus is and His purpose on Earth are no less significant now as that day in Bethlehem. Let us continue to be intentional about spending time in the days and weeks ahead seeking our Savior.
2. How are we going to cultivate and share the joy of the Lord? Let's be sure to take time to worship Him and submit to Him as King and Lord of our lives and live rejoicing in exceedingly great joy.

SONG

“Joy to the World ”

By For King and Country

ACTIVITIES

FAMILY ACTIVITY • “Snowball” Target Practice

Gather a few pieces of paper and make a target on one of them and wad up the rest to make “snowballs.”

Take turns throwing the “snowballs” at the target. When someone hits the target they get to ask a question.

Discuss:

1. What is your favorite thing to do when it snows?
2. Do you prefer warmer or cooler weather?
3. What is your favorite Christmas dessert?
4. What’s one of your favorite Christmas memories?
5. Why do we talk about joy at Christmastime?

6. What's the difference between enjoying something and having joy?
7. Can you think of a song or Bible verse that mentions joy?
8. Can you think of ways Jesus brought joy to people in the Bible?
9. Can you think of times Jesus had joy even when bad things happened to him?
10. How can knowing Jesus help you have joy when bad things happen to you?
11. Is it possible to feel sadness and joy at the same time?

GROUP ACTIVITY • “Joy” Drawing

Draw two pictures, one of a person who has joy and one who needs joy.

Write a description of each of the people you drew. Rather than creating specific circumstances, focus on emotions and how the Gospel could impact each.

Discuss:

1. Which of the two people are you most like?
2. How can knowing Jesus be a source of joy for you?

3. Find a story in a Gospel where someone found joy in Christ. Share it.

Each day this week find an opportunity to be like the joyful person you described. Also, each day seek out an opportunity to bring joy to someone who might need it. You can be a blessing to them!

PRAYER

Lord, as we celebrate your humility in becoming part of humanity, we celebrate with joy. You came to earth out of great love and grace. You fulfilled Your promises to past generations, and in doing so, rescued us and called us Your own. May depths of great joy spring up in us because of our knowing You. May this joy overflow in our lives in many ways so that the lost see us and seek You. And may all glory be Yours today, and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

Monday: Psalm 34:1-6

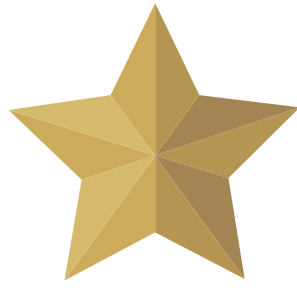
Tuesday: Micah 5:2-5

Wednesday: Isaiah 9:2-5

Thursday: Luke 2:8-14

Friday: Romans 15:8-13

Saturday: Psalm 95:1-7



CHRISTMAS AT CROSSROADS

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! All Christmas Services will be held at our Crossroads Park Avenue Campus.

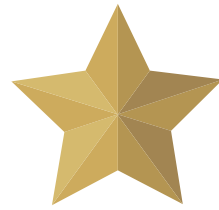
DECEMBER 22, 23 & 24

5PM + 7PM

PARK AVENUE CAMPUS

1188 Park Ave W Mansfield, OH 44906

*Kids' Ministry will be available for
Newborn - 5th Grade for the 5pm Christmas Services only.*



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