

## Week 1 — Hope

### Read

Luke 1:5–7; 13; Mark 1:1

Optional reading: Psalm 130:5-7

Read as a family: Luke 1:5–7, 13

Advent doesn't start with celebration. It starts in the dark. Luke introduces us to a couple — Elizabeth and Zechariah — who are faithful, obedient, and still waiting. They've done what's right, and yet they carry deep disappointment. That tension is real: doing your best, trying to trust God, while something you long for still hasn't happened. Scripture doesn't hide that. It puts pain and God's presence right next to each other.

Advent hope isn't a motivational speech. It's not blind optimism. It's the quiet, steady belief that God is still moving — even when our lives feel stuck.

Mark's Gospel begins with, "The beginning of the good news..." Not the conclusion. Not the resolution. Just the beginning. And Advent teaches us to live right there — in the early, quiet moments when grace is taking root but hasn't fully grown. That's what hope looks like. It's less about getting the outcome we want and more about trusting that God is with us in the middle of the process.

The same God who remembered Elizabeth and Zechariah remembers you. He meets us right where the story feels unresolved — and starts turning the page.

So instead of rushing to fix things or pretending they don't hurt, we just name them. We bring those empty, waiting places into the light. And we let hope do what it does best — hold out just enough light to remind us that the darkness doesn't get the final say.

## Reflect

What part of my life feels stuck or unresolved right now?

What would it look like to bring that place honestly to God?

What would it look like to wait with God rather than wait for results?

## Pray

God of the dawn, meet me in my midnight.

Teach me to tell the truth about what hurts

and to trust that You already inhabit that place.

Write “beginning” over the chapters I have called “the end,”

and let Your steady Presence kindle hope in me —

not hype, not hurry, but holy expectation.

Amen.

## Family Devotional

Waiting is hard. Elizabeth and Zechariah had waited for a long time for something really important, and it hadn't happened yet. But God hadn't forgotten them. And even before they saw anything change, God was already working. That's what hope means—it's believing that God is still with us, even while we wait. When we light a candle, it reminds us that God's light shows up, even in the dark.

## Reflection For Families

What is something you're waiting for right now?

How can we remember that God is with us while we wait?

Can you think of a time when something good happened after a long wait?

## Week 2 — Peace

### Read

Luke 1:8–13; 30; Luke 3:4; Philippians 4:6–7

Optional reading: Psalm 46:10

Read as a family: Luke 1:8–13

Zechariah steps into the temple carrying all the weight of his worry — and God meets him there. The angel says, “Do not be afraid,” and it’s not a rebuke. It’s kindness. A reminder that God doesn’t wait for us to get it together before He shows up. Advent peace doesn’t come because we figured everything out. It comes because God draws near, right in the middle of our uncertainty, and reminds us that we’re still loved.

Peace in Scripture isn’t just about feeling calm. It’s not a vibe. It’s the deep-down assurance that God is with us, no matter what’s going on around us. And let’s be honest — life is noisy. Work, home, our thoughts, our phones... it’s all loud, and it all tells us to rush. But Advent slows the pace. It reminds us that God often speaks in the quiet. That He meets people in small, unremarkable moments — when we stop, breathe, and open our hearts.

Peace isn’t the absence of problems. It’s Jesus present in the middle of them. Paul even says peace can guard your heart and mind — not like a delicate mood you might lose, but like a strong presence that holds the door when everything else is trying to push in.

So we slow down. We stop trying to control the future with endless “what ifs.” And we say something simple and honest: “Here I am.” That’s when the fear starts to loosen its grip. That’s when the soul remembers — it’s safe. We are held in peace.

## Reflect

What noises (external or internal) most crowd out peace for me?

Can I recall a moment when I sensed God calming my fear?

What's one simple boundary I could set to make room for quiet this week?

## Pray

Prince of Peace, quiet my hurry and gather my scattered thoughts.

Stand watch over my heart and mind,

and let Your "Do not be afraid" settle deeper than my worry.

Make of me a small chapel where Your presence is welcomed,

and from that place, send me as a peacemaker into my home, my church, and my city. Amen.

## Family Devotional

Zechariah was doing his job when an angel suddenly appeared and told him not to be afraid. That would be hard to believe! But God knew what Zechariah needed. God gives us peace—not by removing all our problems, but by being with us in the middle of them. When we're scared or overwhelmed, we can remember: God is near, and He cares.

## Reflection For Families

What's something that makes you feel worried or nervous?

How do you feel when someone tells you, "Don't be afraid"?

How can we make space to be still and listen for God this week?

## Week 3 — Joy

### Read

Luke 1:26–38; 2:19; John 14:20

Optional reading: Habakkuk 3:17–18

Read as a family: Luke 1:26–38

Mary didn't ask for this. She wasn't planning on a divine interruption. But when it came, she said yes. And just like that, God planted something holy in the middle of her very normal life.

That's how Advent joy tends to grow—not loud and dramatic, but slow and steady. It takes root in the everyday stuff: the commute or the carpool, the grocery line, the group text, the work deadlines, the dishes in the sink. Whether you live alone or in a house full of noise, joy can still find its way in. Scripture tells us Mary “pondered” these things in her heart. That's often where joy begins—not with excitement, but with reflection. We hold onto what God has said until it starts to take shape inside us.

Joy isn't pretending everything's fine. It's not a denial of what's hard or confusing. It's a decision to trust that God is already at work—within us, around us, through us. Jesus told His friends they would come to understand that He was in the Father, and they were in Him, and He was in them. That's what joy really is: not a passing feeling, but a deeper kind of life—one we're invited to receive. A life where Christ is present with us, right here and right now.

So we pay attention. We look for signs of His goodness—moments of grace, unexpected kindness, things that shouldn't be overlooked. Joy doesn't erase pain. But it does speak back to it. And it reminds us that even now, in this moment, God is still working for good.

## Reflect

Is there a promise or hope from God I'm holding onto right now?

What steals my joy most quickly — and what practice restores it?

Where might God be doing something small and good that I haven't noticed yet?

## Pray

Father of mercies, awaken holy delight in what You are doing —  
seen and unseen.

Teach me to treasure Your words like Mary,  
to rehearse Your faithfulness, and to rejoice ahead of time.

Let the life of Christ rise within me until gratitude becomes my native language  
and generosity my reflex.

Amen.

## Family Devotional

When the angel told Mary that something big was going to happen, she didn't understand it all — but she trusted God. And she said yes. That's where joy starts: trusting that God is good, even when we don't know exactly how things will turn out. Joy can grow in normal, everyday moments — doing chores, talking with friends, laughing around the table — because God is there too.

## Reflection For Families

What's something small that made you happy today?

How can we remind each other of the good things God is doing?

What's one way we can bring joy to someone else this week?

## Week 4 — Love

### Read

Isaiah 40:3; Luke 2:10–14; 1 John 4:9–10; John 1:18

Optional reading: Revelation 3:20

Read as a family: Luke 2:10–14

Advent ends where it started: with God coming close. “This is love,” John writes—not that we loved God, but that He loved us. The story of Jesus isn’t about us working our way up to God; it’s about God stepping toward us. Crib. Cross. Risen Christ. All of it is love coming near.

And here’s the thing: He doesn’t love the cleaned-up version of you. He loves you as you are. Right now. That’s the kind of love that can actually change a person. The angels said this was good news for all people. Not just the spiritual, not just the strong — everyone. That’s the size of God’s heart. No one’s left out.

But love doesn’t just stay an idea. It makes space. Advent invites us to do the same — to slow down, to clear a little room in our schedules, in our thinking, in our conversations. Not just so we can feel something, but so we can welcome Someone.

The question isn’t how moved we felt this season — it’s how much room we made. And how much of God’s love is now moving through us. John says that Jesus makes the Father known. That’s our calling too. We’re meant to carry that same love: a love that tells the truth, pays the cost, doesn’t keep score, and sticks around.

So we open the door again. Jesus is already at the threshold, already knocking, already bringing the Father’s heart into our real, messy, everyday lives. And from there, He sends us out — to love neighbors, enemies, and strangers with the same kind of love that found us first.

### Reflect

Is there a part of me that struggles to believe I’m loved just as I am?

What’s one area of my life where I could make room for Jesus this week?

Who is someone I can love this week—with no conditions or expectations?

## Pray

Christ who pursues, I open the door.

Let Your love fill the rooms I keep closed, calm the stories I live in,  
and heal the places I hide.

Make my life a welcome — wide, warm, honest —  
so that others might meet the Father's heart in my words and ways.

Send me in Your love to the least and the overlooked,  
until Your kindness becomes a river in this city.

Amen.

## Family Devotional

When Jesus was born, the angels said it was good news for everyone. That's how big God's love is—it reaches everyone, everywhere. And God doesn't wait for us to be perfect. He loves us just as we are. When we love other people—by being kind, sharing, forgiving—we're passing along the love God has already given to us.

## Reflection For Families

What's one way someone showed love to you this week?

What does it look like to love someone when we feel like they don't deserve it?

Who can we love as a family this week—through kindness, sharing, or helping?

## How to Use This

Read the Scripture aloud (use the "Read as a family" passage when gathered).

Sit in the Devotional slowly — maybe twice.

Journal or discuss the Reflect prompts.

Pray the Prayer out loud.

Use the Family Devotional and Reflection For Families together around the table, at bedtime, or in the car.

May these four weeks tune our hearts to the God who comes near — awakening hope, guarding us with peace, rooting us in joy, and sending us in love.