

November 29 – December 25

THRIVE
COMMUNITY CHURCH

A 4-Week Devotional Through Advent
Created for Thrive Community Church
Edited by Rev. Dr. Kevin Walden © 2026

Dear Christian Friends,

Thank you for traveling along with us on this Advent Journey which starts Sunday, November 29, 2026.

The focus this year is straight-forward: Thoughts and Bible passages on Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. And each short devotion ends a space for you to reflect and add your own thoughts, prayers or needs, then a closing prayer.

Whether you are a part of the Thrive Community Church or a friend or someone we have yet to meet, we pray that this will be a start to an enjoyable and blessed Christmas.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

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Opening in the Spring of 2027

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Week 1 — The Candle of Hope (Purple)
November 29

Lighting Prayer: "Lord God, as we light this first candle, we remember the promise of hope You gave Your people. Fill our hearts with hope in You, even as we wait for the coming of Christ."

Day 1 — Hope Begins with God

"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." — Romans 15:13

Hope isn't a personality trait or a lucky mood. Paul calls God Himself "the God of hope." Real hope flows from who God is, not from how our day is going. When your outlook runs dry, the answer isn't to try harder at optimism — it's to trust the God who is the source, and let His Spirit fill you.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Closing Prayer: Father, You are the God of hope. Fill me today with joy and peace as I trust in You. Amen.

Day 2 — Hope Holds On While It Waits
November 30

"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope." — Psalm 130:5

We're uncomfortable with waiting. But biblical hope isn't passive; it's the whole being fixed on God while we wait. Israel waited generations for a Messiah. Their waiting wasn't wasted — it was the posture through which God's promise finally came. Whatever you're waiting on, know that waiting on God is not empty time.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Closing Prayer: Lord, teach me to wait with my whole being, putting my hope in Your word rather than in my circumstances. Amen.

Day 3 — Hope Shines in the Dark
December 1

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light."
— Isaiah 9:2

Isaiah spoke these words to a nation in exile and judgment — a genuinely dark time. Yet it was exactly then that God promised light. Hope matters most precisely where it's hardest to find: in grief, anxiety, and uncertainty. The candle shines brightest in the darkest room. Where is the darkness in your life? That's where Christ wants to be born.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Closing Prayer: Jesus, Light of the world, shine into the places I keep in shadow. Be my hope when I can't see the road ahead. Amen.

Day 4 — Hope Arrives in Small Ways
December 2

*"**The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**"* — Isaiah 7:14

We expect hope to arrive with fireworks and headlines. God sent it wrapped in swaddling clothes — a helpless baby in a backwater town. The sign was small, yet it meant everything: Immanuel, "God with us." Not God watching from a distance, but God present in the ordinary. Your hope is not in a situation being fixed, but in a Person who has drawn near.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Closing Prayer: Immanuel, thank You for coming near in the small and unremarkable. Teach me to find hope in Your presence today. Amen.

Day 5 — Hope Trusts What It Cannot See
December 3

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." — Hebrews 11:1

Advent is a promise made, a promise kept, and a promise yet to come. Christ has come; Christ will come again. We live in between. That's why faith is required — we hope for what we do not yet see. The manger points to the empty tomb, and the empty tomb points to the day when every tear will be wiped away.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Closing Prayer: Lord, give me confidence in the hope I cannot yet see, and let that hope steady me today. Amen.

Day 6 — The Hope of Mary
December 4

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." — Luke 1:46–47

Mary received a promise that made no sense, carried it at great personal cost, and responded with joy. Her hope wasn't rooted in her circumstances — they were frightening and uncertain — but in the character of God. "The Mighty One has done great things for me." Hope looks at God's faithfulness and rejoices, even before the answer arrives.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Like Mary, let my soul magnify You. Help me rejoice in You even when I don't yet see the promise fulfilled. Amen.

Day 7 — The Blessed Hope
December 5

***"While we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." —* Titus 2:13**

All Christian hope ends in one place: the appearing of Jesus. Our hope is not vague optimism about the future — it is a Person, Jesus Christ, who has come, who lives, and who will come again. Hold onto this through every circumstance: the blessed hope is not a thing but a face. And He is coming.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus. Fill today with the hope of Your appearing, and make me ready and watchful. Amen.

My Reflections on Hope:

- Hope Begins with God
- Hope Holds on While It Waits
- Hope Shines in the Dark
- Hope Arrives in Small Ways
- Hope Trusts What It Cannot See
- The Hope of Mary
- The Blessed Hope

<u>Week 2 — The Candle of Peace (Purple)</u>
December 6

Lighting Prayer: "Lord God, as we light this second candle, we remember the peace You promised through the Prince of Peace. Calm our restless hearts as we wait for Christ."

Day 1 — The Prince of Peace Is Born
***"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given… And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* — Isaiah 9:6**

Peace is not something we manufacture; it's a person we receive. The child born in Bethlehem is named the Prince of Peace. The world offers temporary calm through circumstance; Christ offers peace that comes from Him alone. Before we light any further candles, we remember that real peace has a name.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Prince of Peace, rule in my heart today. Where there is turmoil, bring Your calming presence. Amen.

Day 2 — Peace That Passes Understanding
December 7

***"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* — Philippians 4:7**

This peace doesn't depend on our understanding of our circumstances — it transcends it. It guards our hearts and minds like a garrison around a city. We often pray for our problems to be solved; God often gives us peace in the middle of them. Peace that passes understanding is not the absence of storms; it's the presence of Christ in them.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Father, give me a peace that goes deeper than my understanding. Guard my heart and mind in Christ. Amen.

Day 3 — Peace in the Storm
December 8

***"He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."* — Mark 4:39**

The disciples panicked while Jesus slept. They saw the storm; He saw the Father's will. When He spoke, creation obeyed. This is the same Jesus who comes at Advent — the one who has authority over every storm in your life. He doesn't always calm the sea, but He always calms His children.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Jesus, You rule over every storm. Speak peace into the chaos I face, and help me trust You when I cannot see a way. Amen.

Day 4 — Peace with God
December 9

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." — Romans 5:1

The deepest conflict in every human heart is our separation from God. Before Advent, we were enemies of God; through Christ, we are at peace with Him. Every other kind of peace flows from this one. No matter what storms rage around you, if you are reconciled to God through Christ, your foundation is settled.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that through Jesus I have peace with You. Let that settled peace anchor my soul. Amen.

Day 5 — Peace That Came at a Price
December 10

***"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things… by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." —* Colossians 1:19–20**

The peace of Christmas cost the cross. The baby in the manger came to die — to make peace between God and humanity through His blood. We must not sentimentalize Advent into a cozy story. This peace was purchased at the highest price, and it is offered to us as a free gift.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for the price You paid to make peace between God and me. Help me never to take that gift lightly. Amen.

Day 6 — Peace in the Wait
December 11

***"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you."* — Isaiah 26:3**

Perfect peace is promised to those whose minds are fixed on God. Not circumstances fixed — minds fixed. Advent is a season of waiting, and waiting is where anxiety breeds. But the one who trusts in God, who keeps their thoughts anchored in Him, is kept in perfect peace — peace that holds steady through the wait.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: God, keep my mind steadfast on You. In the waiting of this season, give me perfect peace. Amen.

Day 7 — Peace on Earth
December 12

***"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."* — Luke 2:14**

The angels' song at the first Christmas proclaimed peace on earth. Two thousand years later, we still long for it. Yet the peace the angels announced is not the absence of conflict but the presence of the King. God's favor rests on those who receive His Son. Where Christ reigns in a heart, peace begins — and one day it will cover the whole earth.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Come, Prince of Peace. Let Your peace begin in my heart and spread to my home, my church, and my world. Amen.

Reflections on Peace

- The Prince of Peace is Born
- Peace that Passes all Understanding
- Peace in the Storm
- Peace with God
- Peace That Came at a Price
- Peace in the Wait
- Peace on Earth

Week 3 — The Candle of Joy (Pink/Rose)
December 13

Lighting Prayer: "Lord God, as we light this third candle, we rejoice that our Redeemer is near. Fill us with the joy of Your salvation as we wait for Christ."

Day 1 — The Joy of the Season
"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" — Philippians 4:4

Joy is commanded. That may sound odd, because we think of joy as a feeling that comes and goes. But biblical joy is deeper than emotion — it is the settled delight of knowing God, regardless of circumstances. Paul wrote these words from prison. If joy can be commanded in a jail cell, it can be lived in the stress of December.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Lord, teach me to rejoice in You, not in my circumstances. Let joy be my response to who You are. Amen.

Day 2 — Joy That Arrived in the Night
December 14

***"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'" —* Luke 2:10**

The shepherds were out in the dark fields, the last people anyone would expect to hear heaven's announcement. Yet to them the angel declared "great joy for all the people." God's joy doesn't wait for the perfect setting or the worthy audience. It arrived in the night, to ordinary shepherds, and it is offered to you today.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Father, thank You for announcing good news of great joy to ordinary people. Let me receive that joy today. Amen.

Day 3 — The Joy of Salvation
December 15

***"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."* — Psalm 51:12**

David had lost his joy through sin, and he knew the only cure: God's restoration. Joy can be dimmed by unconfessed sin, by drifting, by busyness. But the joy of salvation is never lost forever — it can be restored. This Advent, ask God to renew in you the wonder of being saved, the gladness of being forgiven.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, Lord. Renew in me a willing spirit to sustain me. Amen.

Day 4 — Joy Set Before Him
December 16

***"For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* — Hebrews 12:2**

Christ's joy was not in the suffering — it was beyond it. He endured the cross because of the joy set before Him: the salvation of His people and His exaltation. When Advent feels like endurance, remember that your joy is also set before you. The waiting, the hardship, the long road — all of it is leading somewhere glorious.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for enduring for the joy set before You. Give me eyes to see the joy that lies beyond my present struggle. Amen.

Day 5 — Rejoicing Always
December 17

***"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* — 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**

Rejoicing always doesn't mean pretending everything is fine. It means choosing, again and again, to anchor your joy in God rather than in events. This is why it's paired with prayer and thanksgiving — they keep us connected to the source of joy. On the hard days of Advent, rejoice not because circumstances are good, but because God is good.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Lord, help me rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in every circumstance. Let joy be my daily discipline. Amen.

Day 6 — Joy Overflows
December 18

***"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice because of his birth."* — Luke 1:14**

Zechariah was told his son John would bring joy to many. Joy is never meant to stay contained — it overflows and spreads. The joy of the first Advent spread from Mary to Elizabeth, from angels to shepherds, from a baby to the world. Your joy in Christ is meant to be contagious. This season, let your gladness draw others toward the source.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Father, let my joy in You overflow to the people around me. Use my gladness to point others to Christ. Amen.

Day 7 — Joy That Comes in the Morning
December 19

***"Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."* — Psalm 30:5**

The darkest hour of the Advent story is still the night before Christmas — but morning always comes. Scripture's pattern is consistent: sorrow lasts a season, joy is eternal. If this season finds you weeping, hold on. Rejoicing is coming. The Christ who came in the night is the morning light who wipes every tear.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Lord, when weeping lasts through the night, remind me that rejoicing is coming in the morning. Be my joy now. Amen.

Reflections on Joy

- **The Joy of the Season**
- **Joy That Arrived in the Night**
- **The Joy of Salvation**
- **Joy Set Before Him**
- **Rejoicing Always**
- **Joy Overflows**
- **Joy That Comes in the Morning**

Week 4 — The Candle of Love (Purple)
December 20

Lighting Prayer: *"Lord God, as we light this fourth candle, we remember the love You showed in sending Your Son. Teach us to love as You have loved us, as we wait for Christ."*

Day 1 — God Is Love
"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." — 1 John 4:8

Love is not merely something God does; it is who He is. All that we long for in love — acceptance, security, devotion, faithfulness — finds its perfect source in God. As we light the fourth candle, we remember that the love of God is not a mood that comes and goes but the unchanging nature of the One who made us.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Father, You are love. Teach what real love looks like by showing me Your heart. Amen.

Day 2 — Love That Gave a Son
December 21

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* — John 3:16**

This is the most famous verse in Scripture, and its heart is love. God's love was not a feeling He kept to Himself — it moved Him to give the costliest gift imaginable. The cradle and the cross are inseparable. The baby born in Bethlehem was the love of God made flesh, given so that we might not perish but live.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Father, thank You for loving the world enough to give Your Son. Help me to receive that love and to live in its power. Amen.

Day 3 — Love That Seeks
December 22

***9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."* - Luke 19:9-10**

We did not find God; He found us. The Advent story is one of divine pursuit: God came looking for His lost children in the darkness. Love that seeks is active, not passive. It doesn't wait for us to get our lives together. It comes to the manger, to the cross, to the tomb — and it comes for you.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for seeking me when I was lost. Let me never forget that Your love pursued me first. Amen.

Day 4 — Love That Serves
December 23

"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." —
Matthew 20:28

The King of the universe came not with a crown but a towel. Love in the kingdom of God looks like service. Mary wrapped the Son of God in cloths and laid Him in a feeding trough — the most humble beginning imaginable. As you prepare for Christmas, let love take the form of humble service to those around you.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love not in word only but in deed and truth. Make me a servant like You. Amen.

Day 5 — The Word Became Flesh
December 24 — Christmas Eve

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." —
John 1:14

Tonight the waiting ends. The eternal Word — God Himself — took on human flesh and made His home among us. Not from a distance, not in symbols, but in a body, in a manger, in our world. Whatever you brought into this Advent, bring it to the manger now. God has drawn near to you tonight.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You came near and dwelt among us. Welcome me into Your presence this holy night. Amen.

Day 6 — The Savior is Born
December 25 – Christmas Day

***"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."* — Luke 2:11**

Today the hope of all our candles is realized. The Christ candle, lit at last, reminds us that the promise is kept: a Savior has been born. Not a teacher to admire or a story to enjoy, but a Savior — the Messiah, the Lord. Receive Him today, not merely as the figure of a season, but as the King of your life. Hope has come in the flesh.

Thoughts, prayers and needs that come to mind:

Prayer: Christ the Lord is born. Thank You for the gift of a Savior. Rule in my heart today and every day. Amen.

Reflections on Love

- **God is Love**
- **Love That Gave a Son**
- **Love That Seeks**
- **Love That Serves**
- **The Word Became Flesh**
- **The Savior is Born**