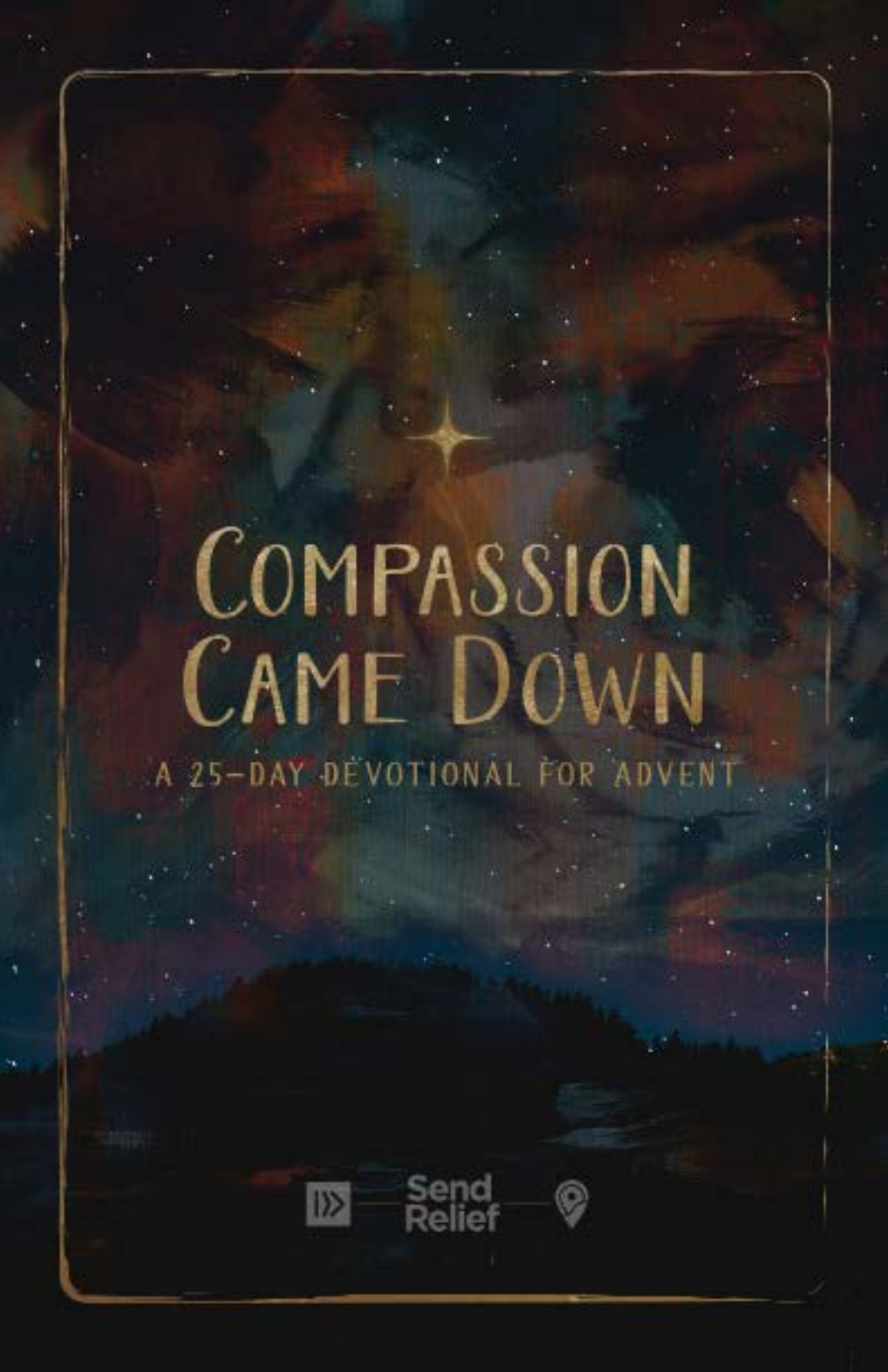




COMPASSION CAME DOWN

A 25-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR ADVENT



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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Advent is a season of waiting, remembering, watching, and rejoicing in the love, joy, peace, and hope that entered our world through the birth of Jesus Christ. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, we're also reminded that Jesus came to meet our greatest need—and He calls His followers to reflect this same compassion to the world by caring for others.

Throughout this holiday season, you'll encounter opportunities to extend simple acts of compassion, meet tangible needs, and build meaningful relationships that can open the door to gospel conversations. As you serve others in Jesus' name, you'll also point them to the One who came to bring hope to a waiting world.

This Advent devotional is designed to help you prepare your heart for Christmas while living on mission each day. You may use it individually or invite your family, friends, or group to complete it alongside you.

Each week begins with:

- A theme
- A verse
- Suggested acts of compassion

Each daily devotional includes:

- A verse
- A brief devotional
- Reflection questions to help you consider how God is equipping you to serve others

As you journey through Advent, ask God to keep you attentive to the needs of the people He has placed in your path. Pray that He would use your words, your generosity, and your acts of compassion to meet real needs and create more opportunities to share gospel hope with those in need.

May this season not only deepen your love for Christ but also inspire you to join Him in bringing His hope to the world around you.

The background is a dark, textured sky filled with numerous small white stars. A prominent, bright four-pointed star is located above the word "HOPE". A faint, multi-colored rainbow arches across the middle of the image, behind the text. The bottom of the image shows dark, silhouetted hills or mountains.

HOPE



HOPE • PSALM 130:5

At the beginning of the week, place a candle (real or battery-operated) somewhere it can be easily seen in your home. Light the candle as a reminder that Jesus is the Hope and Light of the world.

READ PSALM 130:5.

"I WAIT FOR THE LORD: I WAIT AND PUT MY HOPE IN HIS WORD."

Choose one simple "light-bringing" act of compassion to complete each day of the week.

Ideas include:

- Writing encouraging notes or drawing pictures for people who are lonely
- Donating canned goods, toys, coats, or groceries to a local ministry
- Praying together for someone who is hurting or struggling
- Calling or visiting someone who may need encouragement
- Offering practical help to a neighbor or friend

As you go about this week, keep these questions in mind:

- Where did you see the hope of Jesus this week?
- How did you share the love of Jesus with others?
- Who can you pray for?

This activity helps connect the hope of the Advent season with intentional acts of compassion, reminding us that even small acts of kindness can reflect the light of Christ.

DAY 1: GOD'S PROMISE OF HOPE

ISAIAH 9:6–7

GOD'S PROMISE FULFILLED IN THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR

Advent begins in the dark. Not the peaceful quiet dark of a winter night, but the kind of dark that feels heavy and weary. This is how the Israelites found themselves when God spoke these words. They were surrounded by threats and in a place of instability, longing for God to do *something, anything*. One generation after the next had heard the promises of a coming Savior, yet they still found themselves waiting.

Into that yearning, God spoke: “For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us. ... He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

These aren't just grandiose titles, but specific promises of the hope Jesus brings.

A Wonderful Counselor means we can navigate life with the wisdom of the One who has gone before us. A Mighty God assures us of God's sovereignty, with the strength and power to save. An Eternal Father reminds us of God's unchanging, unwavering love for His children. And a Prince of Peace promises not just temporary aid, but lasting restoration for all who place their trust in Him.

For Israel, this hope was promised but not fully realized. They had to trust that God would do what He said He would do, even when their situation seemed to suggest otherwise. This is the tension of Advent: holding onto a hope that has not fully arrived yet. However, you and I get to see the other side of that promise. In Jesus, that hope for a Savior is no longer abstract—it's here! The child that Isaiah wrote about has been born and given. And because He came, we can be confident that God keeps His promises.

Yet even now, we still feel that tension of Advent. We live in a world of remaining brokenness and are constantly bombarded with images of suffering, war, and hardship. Christ reminds us that while He has already come, we're still awaiting the fullness of His kingdom. We aren't called to be bumps on a log as we wait. No, God has made us messengers to carry the hope we've found and share it with others.

When we embrace serving someone in need, offering compassion instead of indifference, we reflect the heart of Jesus. In a world that often feels dark, these acts of compassion become a beacon of light, pointing people to our ultimate hope that's only found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Advent begins, remember this: God's promise of hope has never been empty. It was fulfilled through Christ and carried down through generations of His people—all the way to us!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Read Isaiah 9:6 again. Which of Jesus' names speaks most deeply to your current season of life, and why?
2. How do you see the people around you longing for hope today?
3. As you go through this week, how can you make the hope of Christ tangible for someone through the work of compassion?

DAY 2: A HOPE IN GOD'S WORD

PSALM 119:114

PLACE YOUR TRUST IN THE PROMISES OF GOD

If Day 1 begins in the dark, Day 2 reminds us where to turn when we find ourselves in weary spaces. The psalmist writes, "You are my shelter and my shield; I put my hope in your word" (Psalm 119:114).

This verse is deeply personal. The psalmist is not simply saying God's Word is helpful; he is saying that it is his refuge. God's Word is not merely instruction but the source of our protection, stability, and hope.

The world that the psalmist lived in was not so different from ours. He, too, experienced brokenness, temptation, and the constant pull toward sinful desires. Just a few verses later, he speaks about evildoers and his desire to remain rooted in what is good. That tension feels familiar to us still today. How do you remain faithful in a world that constantly pulls you elsewhere?

This answer from Scripture is simple, though not always easy: the psalmist places his hope in the Word of God—not in circumstances, personal strength, or things within his control. His hope is anchored in the words God has spoken.

That kind of hope changes the way we live. If God's Word is true (and it is!), then His promises can be trusted. His commands are not given to restrict us, but to lead us in our pursuits of life everlasting. The psalmist understood that obedience was not about earning God's favor, but about walking in the goodness of what God had already spoken over His children.

At the center of those promises was the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. God's people clung not only to the law, but to the greater story unfolding.

God had promised a Savior, and His Word became the anchor that held them steady as they waited for His promise to come to pass.

Like the psalmist, we must choose where we place our hope. It's easy to treat Scripture as something we visit occasionally when life feels difficult. But the psalmist shows us something deeper: God's Word is where we dwell with our Creator.

And when we abide there in His Word, we are moved toward the work of Christlike compassion. Scripture reminds us that every person bears the image of God, even when addiction, poverty, trauma, or failure have distorted that image in visible ways. It reminds us that justice and mercy matter deeply to the Lord and that loving our neighbor is not optional for the believer.

Throughout the New Testament, we see God's heart for the vulnerable. He teaches us to defend the oppressed, the overlooked, and the weary as His Son did. The early church became known for its radical generosity and care. When our hope is real, it is revealed through our ordinary acts of obedience.

What if our ministry efforts seem to go unnoticed? Much of compassion work happens within our quiet faithfulness: meals prepared, volunteers coordinated, prayers whispered over hurting families. These things may not seem big, but obedience rooted in hope never goes unseen by God.

So, where are you placing your hope today?

Hope that's rooted in God's Word does not lead us to withdraw from the brokenness we see and experience. Instead, it gives us the courage to walk directly into it, trusting that God is still faithful and His promises still stand.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When life feels uncertain or overwhelming, where do you naturally turn for comfort? Why?
2. How has God's Word strengthened or guided you in difficult seasons of life?
3. In what ways can spending time in Scripture shape how you respond to the needs of the vulnerable or hurting people around you?

DAY 3: HOPE FOR THE WEARY

ROMANS 8:22

CREATION GROANS FOR OUR REDEMPTION IN CHRIST

Some kinds of tiredness go deeper than sleep can fix. There is a weariness that settles into the soul, the kind that comes from living too long in a broken world. We feel it when grief lingers, when prayers seem to go unanswered, when injustice continues, and when the weight of everyday life feels heavier than we can carry. Even creation itself feels marked by it.

Paul writes in Romans 8:22, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now.”

Paul describes creation itself as groaning. The earth—the world around us—longs for something better. This world is not as it was meant to be, and deep down we know it. Hurricanes destroy homes. Bodies grow sick. Families struggle to make ends meet. Relationships fracture. Death still comes. Everywhere we look, creation seems to ache under the effects of sin.

But Paul makes an important distinction: *this* groaning is not hopeless despair but hope-filled anticipation. He compares it to childbirth—painful but filled with the expectation that something new is coming. We celebrate that Jesus Christ has already come into the world, having brought salvation, hope, and redemption through His birth and life, death and resurrection. But we also live with the longing for His return, when all things will finally be made new. We are living between the two Advents of Christ: remembering His first coming while hoping for and anticipating the second.

While we wait, weariness can creep in. Do you feel it today?

Maybe the past year has been physically, emotionally, or spiritually taxing, or you've been carrying burdens for what seems like forever. The good news of Advent is not that Christians can never grow weary. The good news is that our weariness is not wasted, because it points us toward the hope of our future restoration.

One day, Christ will return and make all things right. Sin will no longer wound. Suffering will no longer linger. Brokenness will no longer define creation. The hope of the gospel is not simply that we will survive this world, but that God is renewing it completely. Until then, we live as people of hope in a weary world. That means noticing the hurting people around us: the overwhelmed parent, the lonely neighbor, the grieving family, the person silently wondering if anyone else even notices their struggle.

Compassion ministry begins when we slow down enough to notice. As followers of Jesus, we step into others' burdens with tangible care: praying, listening, providing meals or groceries, offering help, or simply being present. Small acts of compassion remind people that they are seen, valued, and loved.

God did not stay distant from suffering; He entered into it willingly and joyfully. And now we reflect His heart when we move *toward* weary people instead of *away* from them. We cannot remove every burden, but we can point people to the One who will. Every act of compassion becomes a glimpse of the coming kingdom.

Hope is coming! And His name is Jesus!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What burdens or weariness have you been carrying lately?
2. How does the promise of Christ's return give you hope in the midst of your own suffering and brokenness?
3. Who around you may be carrying hidden exhaustion or grief, and how can you offer compassion to them this week?

DAY 4: HOPE OF A BLESSING

GENESIS 22:15-18

THE PROMISE OF ABRAM FULFILLED IN CHRIST

Some promises are so big that they stretch far beyond the person receiving them. When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 22, He wasn't just making a promise about Abraham's future family—He was unfolding His plan to redeem the world.

After Abraham's willingness to trust and obey God, even in an incredibly difficult moment, the Lord reaffirmed His covenant with him, saying, "And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring" (Genesis 22:18).

At first glance, it may simply sound like a promise about descendants or land. But this promise was always meant to point us toward something greater. God was preparing the way for the coming Messiah, the One through whom every nation, tribe, and people would ultimately be blessed.

That blessing was never meant to stop with Abraham. It was always meant to spread outward. From the beginning, God's heart has been for the salvation of people who are far from Him. His rescue plan was never limited to one group or generation. Through the coming of Jesus Christ, God opened the door for all people to receive forgiveness, redemption, and new life.

Jesus is the greater offspring that Abraham could not yet fully see. The promised Savior who came not only for Israel, but for the salvation of anyone who would believe. Through Him, people who were once separated from God are now invited into His family. This shows us that God keeps His promises, even across generations.

Imagine Abraham hearing these words from God without fully understanding how they would unfold. He wasn't able to see how it would all end. We are called to live with that same faith. We know the Messiah has come, but people around us have still never experienced the hope and blessing found in Him. Some are physically close to us—neighbors, coworkers, classmates, family members—yet spiritually far from God. They may be searching for meaning, carrying hidden pain, or trying to fill their lives with things that can never truly satisfy.

Sometimes, we think “being a blessing” means doing something large or impressive. But throughout Scripture, blessing is usually much simpler: welcoming someone in, sharing a meal, meeting a need, praying with them, listening well, and showing unexpected kindness. Compassion opens doors for people to experience God's heart in tangible ways.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we're not meant to keep the hope of the gospel to ourselves. We are blessed so that we can become a blessing to others. During Advent, while the world rushes through the season focused on consumption and busyness, we can slow down. We can notice the people around us who may be lonely, hurting, overlooked, or far from the God we know and serve. And their opportunity to know Him, too, can come from a simple invitation. A warm meal. A conversation filled with grace. A need quietly met.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How have you personally experienced God's faithfulness in your life?
2. Who are the people “close to you yet far from God” whom you can intentionally pray for or encourage this Advent season?

DAY 5: HOPE OF SALVATION

GENESIS 3:1-15 THE HOPE OF THE LAST ADAM

The story of Advent began long before Bethlehem. In fact, it began in a garden. Genesis 3 tells the heartbreaking story of humanity's first rebellion against God. Adam and Eve were created to live in perfect relationship with their Creator, enjoying His presence and trusting His goodness. But when the serpent tempted them to doubt God, sin entered the world through their disobedience. And with their sin came shame, fear, suffering, separation, and death.

Adam and Eve hid from God. Blame entered their relationship. The ground itself became cursed, and what was once whole has now been fractured. From that moment on, all of creation began carrying the effects of sin.

In Genesis 3:15, God spoke to the serpent, declaring, "He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

At first glance, it may seem like a strange verse tucked into an already painful story. But this promise is incredibly important. Many theologians call it *the first gospel* because it is the first promise of salvation and victory over sin. God promised that one day, a Savior would come who would ultimately defeat Satan and crush the power of sin. Even at humanity's lowest moment, God was already making a way for redemption.

Jesus did not come into the world simply to be a good teacher or moral example; rather, He came to rescue us from our sin. The serpent may cause harm, but Christ has already secured the victory. He is our last, better Adam.

And that matters because we still live in a world deeply affected by the fall. Sin's impact is evident all around us. We see it in poverty, addiction, abuse, loneliness, injustice, broken families, and suffering of every kind. The vulnerable around us often carry wounds caused by both personal sin and the brokenness of the world itself. Sometimes, the most powerful thing we can do is remind someone that God has not abandoned them in their pain.

Advent is the celebration of exactly that truth. God saw humanity in our rebellion and suffering and chose not to leave us there. He came near. He entered our broken world personally, through Christ, so that redemption could become possible for all who would trust in Him for salvation and experience His gift of everlasting life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you see the effects of brokenness and sin in the world around you?
2. What does it mean to you that God promised and secured the redemption of His people—even in humanity's darkest moment?
3. How can you share the hope of Jesus with someone who may feel forgotten, wounded, or overwhelmed?

The image features a dark, textured background with a celestial theme. At the top center, a bright, four-pointed star shines. Below it, the word "PEACE" is written in a large, gold, serif font. The background is a mix of dark blues, purples, and reds, with numerous small white stars scattered throughout. At the bottom, there is a dark, silhouetted landscape that appears to be a mountain range or a forest. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

PEACE



PEACE • ISAIAH 26:3

Place a large bowl or basket in a central location, along with small slips of paper and pens. Decorate and label it: “Peace in Action.”

READ ISAIAH 26:3 ALOUD AND PRACTICE MEMORIZING IT:

“YOU WILL KEEP THE MIND THAT IS DEPENDENT ON YOU IN PERFECT PEACE, FOR IT IS TRUSTING IN YOU.”

Each day, write down one of the following ways that you:

- Experienced God’s peace
- Helped bring peace or encouragement to someone else
- Noticed someone who was in need of prayer, care, or support

(If you’re participating as a family, young children can draw pictures or dictate responses for an adult to write down.)

As the week progresses, the jar becomes a visible reminder that peace grows through everyday acts of grace, presence, and compassion.

At the end of the week, read the notes and thank God for the ways His peace was shared. Afterward, pray for the people and situations represented in the jar.

This activity connects Advent peace with intentional compassion, reminding us that the peace of Christ is not meant to stay only with us—it’s something we carry into the lives of others, too.

DAY 6: BROKEN DOWN WALLS

EPHESIANS 2:13-22 CHRIST RECONCILES SINNERS TO HIMSELF

One of the most beautiful truths of the gospel is that Jesus brings near those who were far away. Paul reminds believers in Ephesus: “But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

People feel distant from God and from one another. Sometimes, even their sense of worth feels out of reach. Sin creates separation everywhere it touches. But Paul himself says that Jesus is “our peace” (2:14). Because of His death and resurrection on the cross, Jesus destroys the hostility that exists vertically between God and mankind, but also horizontally between people. In a divided world, the people of God are called to live differently. The church is meant to be a community where barriers of race, class, background, age, and status no longer determine someone’s value or belonging.

Peace looks like making room at the table for those who are different than you. Or maybe, it looks like removing barriers that are keeping others isolated from embracing a loving community. It looks like churches becoming places where struggling families are invited in and supported instead of being quietly judged.

Some people stay “far off” because they fear that their past disqualifies them for closeness with others. Some feel disconnected because of poverty, language barriers, disability, addiction, and loneliness. The gospel teaches us to move toward people, rather than waiting for them to figure things out on their own. Jesus’ sacrifice doesn’t just preach peace to those who need it; it creates it.

How amazing! Compassion is more than charity from a distance. It is the work of reconciliation. We are not simply meeting needs; we're helping reveal the nearness of Christ to people who may have spent years believing they were unseen or unwelcome among the people of God.

Maybe, you'll be the one to notice those who are standing alone at church and can help them feel comfortable enough to return. Or maybe you're an advocate who bridges conversations between your church and community. You can create spaces where peace becomes tangible through hospitality, patience, and consistency. All of these things matter deeply to God!

Paul ends this passage by describing believers as being a household built together as a dwelling place for God. He is forming a community—not merely rescuing isolated individuals. Christ came near so that those who were far off could find belonging in Him and among His family, the church.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What “walls” in your heart or church may make it difficult for certain people to feel welcomed or seen?
2. How has Jesus personally brought you near after being “far off,” and how does this reality shape the ways you approach others?
3. What practical barrier could you help remove for someone in your community this week?

DAY 7: PEACE FOR THE BROKEN

ROMANS 5:1-8

GRACE UNDESERVED IN THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION

Romans 5 refutes the deepest fear that many people are carrying—this idea that they somehow must fix themselves before God will love them. The apostle Paul reminds us, “For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). The coworker masking anxiety behind a smile. The friend overwhelmed by depression. The neighbor quietly struggling with loneliness. You don’t have to look far to see these invisible burdens those around us are carrying. We often assume acceptance from God must be earned through improvement, discipline, or moral “success.” But the Bible tells us otherwise!

Paul writes that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, not because we’ve made ourselves worthy, but because Christ made a way for us while we were still broken. Justification means being made right with God. It is the declaration that through Jesus, sinners are welcomed, forgiven, and restored.

This peace is completely undeserved, but that’s what makes it so incredible! Compassion ministry that’s rooted in the gospel reflects this same grace. We do not require people to “clean up” before they can be loved. We do not withhold compassion until someone proves themselves responsible enough, spiritual enough, or grateful enough to receive it. Jesus moved toward people in the middle of their messes. He ate with sinners, touched lepers, and welcomed the outcasts and the ashamed.

Extending love can be challenging at times because people are complicated. Healing is rarely quick or linear. Some people make the same mistakes repeatedly. Others carry wounds that take years to heal. Without the gospel, our compassion for one another can slowly harden

into frustration. But Romans 5 calls us back to grace. Peace with God also gives believers joy, even in our suffering. Paul does not deny hardship; he says affliction—or suffering—produces endurance, character, and hope because God’s love has already been imprinted onto our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:3–5).

Even when ministry feels difficult, we remain anchored in the reality that God has already reconciled us to Himself. Many leaders and volunteers quietly carry the burden of feeling like they have to hold everything together for everyone else. But peace with God means we do not have to prove our worth through endless striving. Christ has already done what we could never accomplish on our own—and it’s in Him that we find our security.

Out of that security we receive from Him, we are free to extend patience and mercy to others in need. The church is a place where broken people encounter grace, not performance. Peace is not earned; it is freely given through the compassionate heart of Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever find yourself believing you must earn God’s approval rather than receive His grace?
2. How does remembering that Christ died for us while we were still helpless in our sin change the way you view “difficult” or “messy” people?
3. Where might God be inviting you to extend compassion to someone who doesn’t already “have it all together”?

DAY 8: SET FREE TO LIVE AT PEACE

ROMANS 8:1–4

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” Few verses speak more directly to weary hearts than these words found in Romans 8:1. Many people live under the weight of constant condemnation—some they’ve received from others, but often from themselves. Shame becomes a heavy burden they carry daily, and past failures replay endlessly in their minds. Even believers sometimes live as though grace applies to everyone else but them. But Romans 8 begins with freedom.

This reality doesn’t mean that the gravity of sin no longer matters. Instead, it means that Jesus has fully dealt with our sin through His death and resurrection. For those who belong to Christ, shame no longer has the final word. Praise God! And this truth is life-changing because shame keeps people trapped. It convinces them that they will never change, never belong, and never be worthy of love or community. Many people who walk into our churches already assume that they’re disqualified before they ever hear a word spoken. But the gospel removes that barrier.

Freedom in Christ is not simply freedom from the penalty of sin. It is the freedom to thrive in a new way of living. Through the Holy Spirit, God empowers believers to walk differently. What the law could not accomplish on its own, Christ fulfilled, once and for all.

Walking with people means more than investing in a single gospel conversation. It turns our evangelism into an ongoing discipleship relationship by helping new believers become more deeply acquainted with life in Christ. This kind of investment often requires patient and consistent discipleship. It means reminding someone who struggles with addiction that relapse does not erase God’s grace. It means helping a

young mother believe she is more than her past mistakes. It's sitting with someone who's learning how to trust again after having experienced years of trauma. It means reminding people that they can be defined by so much more than the worst thing that they've ever done.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus restored dignity to people buried under the weight of shame. The church is called to follow His lead by doing the same. For many serving in ministry, there's also a personal invitation to receive for ourselves. Some faithful followers quietly carry condemnation in their own lives. You may feel responsible for every unmet need, every difficult outcome, and every ministry challenge you face. You may replay your own failures long after God has already forgiven them. But Romans 8 reminds us that peace grows where condemnation loses its grip.

The Spirit empowers us not only to serve others but to live as beloved children ourselves. This freedom creates communities marked by grace instead of fear. When we begin confessing our struggles honestly, healing becomes possible. Then, the church becomes a place where transformation can unfold safely over time.

Peace is not pretending that sin doesn't exist. Peace is knowing that Christ has already made a way through it. And because of Him, shame no longer defines our future.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What sources of shame or condemnation are you still carrying that Christ has already addressed?
2. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit helping you walk in freedom instead of fear?
3. Who in your life may need patient encouragement to believe that lasting freedom is possible in Christ?
4. Where might God be inviting you to extend compassion to someone who doesn't already "have it all together"?

DAY 9: THE IMAGE OF THE ONE TRUE GOD

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23
WE ARE SET FREE IN CHRIST

Paul's words to the church in Colossae calls them to lift their eyes upward. In a world filled with instability and competing directions, he reminds us exactly who Jesus is:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15–17).

Jesus is not merely a good teacher or moral example. He is supreme over all creation. All things were created through Him and for Him. He holds all things together. If peace depended on human effort alone, it would always remain fragile. But peace comes through the blood of Jesus Christ, the One who rules over all things.

Paul says that through Christ, God is reconciling all things to Himself. Sin broke what was whole; Jesus is rebuilding what we could not fix. That truth gives tremendous weight and confidence to the Christian mission. We are not carrying a weak or uncertain message. We serve under the authority of the risen Christ Himself.

Sometimes, ministry can feel small in the face of the overwhelming needs we see. A meal may seem insignificant against systemic poverty. One conversation may feel small compared to generations of pain. But Colossians reminds us that Christ is already reigning over all things. His kingdom is advancing, even when we cannot fully see it. Our role is not to manufacture transformation through our own strength, but to faithfully point people toward the One who reconciles all things (Colossians 1:20).

This reality also protects us from burnout rooted in self-reliance. Our work in compassion ministry was never meant to operate apart from our dependence on Christ. He alone sustains the church and transforms hearts. He alone brings lasting peace. The work matters because Christ is supreme. Every act of mercy done in His name joins Him in His work of reconciling all creation back to Himself.

Because Jesus is supreme, no person is beyond His reach. Not the family in crisis or person battling addiction. Not the teenager filled with anger or the volunteer exhausted by years of ministry. Christ's authority extends over every broken place. The more clearly we see His greatness, the steadier our hearts become and the more confidently we can carry His hope into the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are you tempted to rely on your own strength rather than the authority and power of Christ?
2. How does seeing Jesus as supreme over all things strengthen your confidence in difficult seasons of ministry?
3. How does Christ's work of reconciliation shape the way you engage with brokenness in the world?

DAY 10: THERE IS PEACE IN KNOWING CHRIST

PSALM 119:165

GOD'S WORD PROVIDES THE STABILITY WE SEEK

The psalmist understood the peace that comes from obeying and following Yahweh. Psalm 119:165 tells us, "Abundant peace belongs to those who love your instruction; nothing makes them stumble." At first glance, this verse may sound surprising. Most think of God's commands as more instructional rather than life-giving. Yet the psalmist connects loving God's law with experiencing peace, tranquility, and stability.

Why? Because God's ways lead us toward life in its best form. The law was never meant to be treated as a mere list of rules. It reveals God's character and points His people toward relationship with Him. And ultimately, the law points us to Christ, who fulfilled its commands perfectly on our behalf.

Peace grows when our lives align with God's design. This does not mean believers never struggle or face hardship. The psalmist is not promising an easy life. Instead, he's describing the stability that comes from trusting God's wisdom rather than resisting it. In a chaotic world, obedient lives become spiritually steady lives.

Trauma, poverty, addiction, family breakdown, and injustice often create environments where chaos feels normal, almost expected. The church has an opportunity to become a steady presence in the middle of that uncertainty. Peaceful people help create peaceful spaces.

When believers consistently walk with God, respond with patience, speak truth with gentleness, and remain in others' lives dependably, they reflect God's kingdom. Their lives quietly testify that another way of living is possible. Maybe you're serving faithfully and already embody this kind of steady presence. You keep showing up and remaining faithful

in unseen responsibilities. You create environments where people feel safe enough to trust again. These acts of consistency may seem ordinary, but they often become lifelines for hurting people.

Obedience also guards our own hearts in ministry. Without deep connection to Christ, compassion work can slowly cause us to become reactive, anxious, or emotionally exhausted. But loving God's ways brings peace because we can allow ourselves to stop carrying these burdens we were never meant to control.

Jesus fulfilled the law completely, and now, we follow Him not to earn acceptance, but because we already belong to Him. That relationship changes our obedience from obligation to love.

The world notices people who remain faithful without becoming cynical. That kind of peace cannot be manufactured through personality alone. It grows from knowing Christ deeply. Peace produces stability and stable believers often become anchors for others during life's most difficult storms.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What rhythms or habits help keep your heart rooted in Christ when life feels chaotic?
2. How has obedience to God brought peaceful stability into your life over time?
3. In what ways can your steady presence become a source of peace for others this week?

DAY 11: A PEACE THAT IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 DWELL WITH THE GOD OF PEACE

Anxiety has a way of narrowing our vision. It pulls our thoughts toward worst-case scenarios and convinces us that we must somehow hold everything together ourselves. Faithful servants know this feeling well. There are always more needs than resources, more hurting people than time we have in a day, and more uncertainty than answers we feel like we can provide.

Paul does not dismiss these realities. Instead, he gives believers a response to their anxiety: prayer.

In these two verses from Philippians 4, he tells us, “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7).

Prayer is not a passive response. It is acknowledging the Lord’s power, provision, and authority are greater than we can even wrap our minds around. Paul describes God’s peace as something that will “guard” our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (4:6). The image is comforting: God’s peace stands watch over our anxious hearts like a guard protects what he’s been entrusted with.

This peace also “surpasses all understanding” (4:7). This means that it cannot always be explained by our circumstances. Sometimes, nothing outwardly or immediately changes, yet God steadies His people inwardly. This is one of the great mysteries of the Christian life: supernatural peace in the middle of real difficulty. Without prayerful dependence, ministry can slowly become driven by the urgency of our

circumstances rather than trust in God. We begin carrying emotional burdens as though everything depends entirely on us. But prayer reminds us who God is—and who we aren't. We are not the Savior. Only Jesus is.

Offering to pray for others is also a profound act of compassion. Prayer can sometimes feel secondary compared to the practical needs others are facing. Yet throughout Scripture, prayer is never presented as second-rate or weak. It is active dependence on God who changes hearts *and* circumstances. Praying with someone communicates that they are not alone in their moments of fear, grief, confusion, and exhaustion. Many hurting people have rarely experienced someone slowing down long enough to genuinely pray for them.

Prayer also changes us. As we continually bring burdens before God, we become less controlled by fear and more anchored in trust. We learn to surrender. This does not mean anxiety disappears instantly. Some seasons require that we return to God repeatedly with the same fears. But over time, prayer trains our hearts to rest in His care rather than in our own control. That's a tough one to swallow!

For faithful servants in the church, this invitation matters deeply. You do not have to carry every burden by yourself because God never asked you to sustain people through your own strength; He simply asks us to lay it all down at His feet. The more tightly we cling to control, the more anxious we become. But the more consistently we place our fears before Him, the more room we make for His peace to guard our hearts.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How have you experienced God's peace guarding your heart during difficult seasons?
2. What anxieties are you carrying right now that you need to intentionally bring to God in prayer?
3. Who could you encourage or care for simply by slowing down to pray with them?

DAY 12: AN ETERNAL PEACE

PSALM 4:8

THE PEACE OF OUR SAVIOR REMAINS SECURE

When we trust in the Lord, we receive His peace that offers us rest. We can share this rest with others who are far from Him and experiencing hurt. Psalm 4:8 says, "I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, Lord, make me live in safety."

There is something deeply vulnerable about sleep. When we sleep, we let go of control. We stop working, planning, fixing, and striving. We rest because our bodies feel safe.

David's words in Psalm 4 reveal a profound confidence in God's care for him. His peace is not rooted in ideal circumstances, but in the character of God Himself. This is the kind of peace that Advent ultimately reveals.

The story of Advent begins with longing and waiting, but it moves toward arrival and rest. Jesus came into a restless world carrying the promise of lasting peace—not temporary relief, but true reconciliation with God. Many spend their lives searching for relief without ever finding true rest. Relief eases pressure for a temporary moment. Rest reaches deeper; it comes from knowing that we are held securely by God.

Compassion ministry often places us alongside people who are desperate for relief. Families need housing. Parents need food. Children need protection. These needs matter deeply, and practical care reflects the heart of Christ. But ultimately, through providing relief, we're inviting people into something even greater: eternal peace with God.

That peace cannot be created solely through comfort, money, success, or stability. Rather, it comes through salvation in Christ. Because of Jesus, believers can rest knowing they are fully known and fully loved. We

can lie down in peace because God Himself holds us securely. Even in uncertainty, suffering, or grief, His presence remains steady.

This truth also speaks directly to those serving tirelessly in ministry. Many compassionate people struggle to rest because the needs around them feel endless. You may feel guilty slowing down. You may carry your worries home with you long after your ministry conversations end. But Psalm 4 reminds us that God remains at work even while we are sleeping. You were never meant to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. Jesus already has! When we rely on Him, our rest becomes an act of trust. It acknowledges that God is faithful, even when we are limited. Peace is not something we manufacture through constant effort, but it's a gift we receive by grace.

As Advent draws our hearts toward Christ, we remember that the Prince of Peace has already come and will come again. One day, every trace of brokenness will finally be undone, every fear will end, and every sorrow will be healed. God's people will dwell with Him in perfect peace forever. Until then, the church becomes a living invitation into that future rest. Every act of compassion points beyond itself toward the eternal safety found in Christ alone. Because He holds us securely, we can finally exhale, lie down, and rest in the peace He provides.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are you seeking temporary relief from stress or a lasting peace that is rooted in Christ? How so?
2. What keeps you from truly resting in God's care and security?
3. How can you help create spaces of rest, safety, and hope for the people God has placed in your life?



JOY



JOY • ISAIAH 9:2-3

READ ISAIAH 9:2-3:

"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. YOU HAVE MULTIPLIED THE NATION; YOU HAVE INCREASED ITS JOY; THEY REJOICE BEFORE YOU AS WITH JOY AT THE HARVEST, AS THEY ARE GLAD WHEN THEY DIVIDE THE SPOIL."

Next, create and decorate a "joy jar." Add acts of joy that you can share with others, then place them in the jar. Choose one act of joy to complete each day.

Examples of Acts of Joy:

- Taking hot chocolate to a neighbor
- Writing an encouraging card to a single parent in your neighborhood
- Providing a backpack with hygiene items to give to someone who is unhoused
- Creating a welcome basket for a refugee family to help them assimilate to their new home
- Offering lawn care services or to pick up groceries for a family who is caring for children in foster care

DAY 13: GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

LUKE 2:8-18

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR IS GREAT JOY TO ALL

Good news can transform a bad day into a great one—an ordinary day into an extraordinary one. For those who may find themselves in a season of struggle, good news can be as simple as a bed being available at the local shelter or someone providing food and clothing in a time of need.

For God's people, good news had sometimes been far and in-between. They lived under the oppression of the Roman government, longing for relief. Looking for the long-awaited King and Savior who would rescue them, longing for good news.

And then, the news came one night, on an evening that began like all the others. It didn't come to the privileged in society, to the priests, or to the wealthiest. Instead, the messenger—an angel—appeared to a group of shepherds tending to their sheep in a field outside of town. The news came to those who were lowly and left on the outside.

Luke's narrative tells us that this news broke through the quiet of the waiting, through the stillness of the night—as the shepherds watched over their sheep and as God's people waited, longing to finally hear some good news.

An angel appeared suddenly, declaring, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10). The Savior had been born in the nearby town of Bethlehem. This was indeed great news! The shepherds' night had suddenly changed from ordinary to extraordinary, as they experienced a host of angels praising God for this glorious birth.

Many people are like the shepherds—treated as lowly outsiders. Their circumstances often keep them from participating in society and community. Compassion ministry calls us to see these people and to share our good news of great joy with them, as well as the people we see on a regular basis. As we focus on joy during Advent, we rejoice in the news that Jesus came and that He alone has the power to save. This is truly good news for all people.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the people closest to you with whom you can rejoice in the birth of Jesus this week?
2. How can the good news of the gospel bring hope to someone in your life who doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus?
3. How can you intentionally seek out those who are suffering and share the good news of the gospel with them?

DAY 14: CLOTHED IN JOY

ISAIAH 61:10 GARMENTS OF SALVATION

Clothing can be everything and nothing, depending upon the circumstances. A shirt can make or break a job interview. A new pair of shoes can give a kid unmatched confidence on the first day of middle school. A coat can bring warmth to someone experiencing homelessness. The donation of clothing to a struggling single parent can mean less worry for a season. A wedding dress passed down through generations can symbolize tradition and honor those who have gone before us.

Scripture is full of references to clothing and its connection to God's work within His people's lives. Isaiah uses clothing as a symbol that describes the transformative power of Christ. Without Christ, we metaphorically wear filthy rags that barely cover us or offer us protection or warmth. But the prophet declares that for those who are redeemed, "he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). This robe is not a literal robe, but a symbol of the righteousness of Jesus that is counted as our own through faith in Him.

The Israelites looked forward to this coming redemption. For those who are in Christ, Advent serves as a remembrance that, regardless of the brand, style, or quality of clothing we wear now, those who are in Jesus can greatly rejoice because we are clothed in His garments of salvation. Advent is a time of rejoicing that our status is no longer *unredeemed* but counted as children of God and wrapped in robes of righteousness. This is only possible for us because of a Baby who was born in a stable in a little town called Bethlehem thousands of years ago.

For many, choosing the clothing they wear isn't an option.

The only choice they face is to wear what is given to them from a donation pile or what is found on the street. For others, the struggle lies in how they will clothe their children as they face the insecurity of life with one income. But all who trust in Christ for salvation will be clothed in garments of righteousness all the same.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Consider how clothing can convey status and other aspects of a person's image or condition in life. How have you made judgments about people who are poorly dressed in your community?
2. How has the provision of new or fresh clothing made a difference in someone's life?
3. Isaiah rejoiced greatly that he was clothed in garments of salvation. How does the knowledge that the birth of Jesus brings salvation to the world bring you joy?
4. How have you expressed this joy to others, especially those who are vulnerable in your community? How can you express this joy to others this week?

DAY 15: A SONG OF JOY

LUKE 1:46-55

JESUS' BIRTH LEADS TO JOYFUL WORSHIP

The angels sang when Jesus was born, their voices joining together to proclaim His greatness and announce to the world that Immanuel had come. The first song for Jesus wasn't a quietly sung lullaby as He was rocked to sleep in His mother's arms. The first song was for the Father who had promised to send the Savior into the world, long before Jesus was even born. So, when the Father sent His angel to proclaim the good news, He was keeping His promise! In response to His faithfulness, Mary sang.

Mary's song was an exultation to the Lord for His faithfulness. Present only in Luke's Gospel and known as the Magnificat, her song is filled with eternal truths about Yahweh, the Promise Maker and Promise Keeper. Though she was young and had only been betrothed to Joseph at the time, she rejoiced in the part she would play in the greater story written by the God of her salvation. She had been chosen to be the mother of the chosen One, the Savior of the world. Simeon prophesied over her that great suffering would befall her one day, as "a sword will pierce [her] soul" (Luke 2:35), or the depth of anguish her Son would experience on behalf of the fallen world He'd been sent to save.

Today, we, too, can sing with joy, knowing God sent His only Son into our world to dwell among us and save us from our sins. This truly is good news of great joy that will be for all people! This gift of salvation is what unites us as Christ followers, regardless of economic status, position, or role.

This good news makes way for a song of joy to come up from within us as we reflect upon the birth of the promised One, Jesus. Advent is a season of reflection on this great joy, not only in song but also through sharing

our joy with others as we live out our call to compassion. Inviting those who are lonely and without family can bring joy to what might otherwise be a joyless season for those who have not yet heard or received Christ's invitation to everlasting joy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Advent is full of opportunities to sing songs that celebrate the coming of Christ. What song most resonates with the joy His birth brings? How can you share the joy of this song with others this Advent season?
2. Consider Mary's response when she first learned she was chosen by God. What is your response to your own salvation? Who can you share the good news of the gospel with this season?

DAY 16: WHAT GREAT THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE

PSALM 126:1-6
REDEMPTION PRODUCES JOY

Holidays often elicit nostalgia in us as we remember special Christmases when we were young or the traditions we celebrated together with our families. Perhaps we spent time caroling, baking cookies, or decorating the tree together. These good things we enjoy in the presence of those we love are special to us as we reflect on our pasts and look toward the future traditions that await us. These fun moments of nostalgia and joy point us to an even greater reality. Advent invites us to remember the good things God has done, as we anticipate the good things He has promised to do.

The psalmist's reflection in Psalm 126 is upon the goodness of the Lord to the nation of Israel. The Israelites had spent 70 years in captivity, having sown countless tears because of their own disobedience. They suffered throughout this season of oppression and exile, yet now they were reaping with shouts of joy (Psalm 126:5). God had liberated not one or two of His people, but the entire nation. He set them free and restored their fortunes, blessing His people—just as He had promised.

The psalmist marvels at the “great things” the Lord had done in the lives of His people Israel (126:2-3). This restoration of His people then points to the future redemption and restoration of *all* people who will come to trust in Jesus for salvation.

Advent invites us to rejoice in the good things the Lord has graciously given to us, here in the temporary moments of celebration, and even more as we look toward the eternal celebration that awaits us in heaven. This season reminds us that Jesus has come bringing salvation to the

world, and as we rejoice in His great mercy toward us, we also reflect His compassion toward us to those around us. This Advent season, as we invite those who struggle or feel like outsiders into our lives, we are reminded to share our joy with them—offering Christ’s light and love to a world in need.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does the truth that God has made a way to liberate us from our sin produce joy in us?
2. How can you share this good news of Christ’s compassion with those who may be suffering this Advent season?

DAY 17: REJOICE IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD

PSALM 16:11

JESUS IS THE PATH OF LIFE

These days, finding our way around is as simple as inputting an address into a GPS and clicking “Go.” The automated voice of our choosing begins directing us left, right, and all around until we get to our desired destination. Whether we’re walking or driving, we trust in the GPS to get us there, to lead us on the right path.

In Psalm 16:11, discovering the path of life is not found on a road map, from another person, or even in oneself. Instead, it is Yahweh who makes this *path* known to us, and when David the psalmist finds it, his response is simply to rejoice. Not in the found destination. Not in the easy journey, either. But in the goodness of the Lord, who made the path clear to him.

The idea of finding the “path of life” is used throughout Scripture to point to the only true life we can have—the eternal life given to us in Christ Jesus (Psalm 16:11). John 14:6, says Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Just as David rejoiced in the knowledge revealed to him from the Lord, everyone who finds this same knowledge likewise rejoices because it is the path to life. David understood that the path to life is found in God’s truths. In Psalm 16:11, he speaks of the abundant joy found in God’s presence and in the eternal pleasures at His right hand.

For some today, finding the right path is challenging. The road to survival is rocky, and there doesn’t seem to be a light at the end of the dark tunnel of need and struggle they now find themselves in. For others, success has come quickly and easily, yet it has clouded their hearts from seeing their need for Jesus. Instead, they believe they are on the right path, chasing earthly pursuits rather than eternal blessings.

For all people, the path home is the path of life David speaks of: the way of life, which is only found in Jesus.

Advent invites us to walk this path of life and to rejoice in the God of our salvation. He has made a way for us by sending His Son. When we find our way on the path of life, we, like David, will rejoice in the goodness of the Lord and invite others to join us. Compassion ministry is choosing to help those who struggle to find the right path to discover their way forward. Befriending someone who is new to our country or seeking to help a neighbor meet their basic needs is the outpouring of our compassion and a way to share the joy we've found in Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How have you found abundant joy in the Lord's presence? What are some tangible ways you can share this joy with others this Advent season?
2. Jesus says He is the way, or the path of life. How does the path of life offer us more than the paths this world offers?

DAY 18: AN INEXPRESSIBLE JOY

1 PETER 1:8-9

THE REDEEMED ARE FILLED WITH INEXPRESSIBLE JOY

Advent is a season of waiting, though that doesn't mean it's a season of empty longing. Marked by enduring joy, these weeks are a time to reflect on the deep, steady confidence we hold in Christ. This joy is rooted not in what we can see, but in the One who has come to redeem His people and who has promised to come again. Our awareness of this hope-fueled joy overflows into the compassion we extend to others.

Peter speaks to believers who have never laid eyes on Jesus, saying, "Though you have not seen him, you love him" (1 Peter 1:8). Their circumstances were difficult and their futures unsure, yet they still possessed transcendent joy. Not joy in their situation, but an inexpressible joy in the One who had already redeemed them and saved them from their sin.

Peter writes of this salvation as an event that produces "inexpressible and glorious joy," an event that produces feelings of relief, joy, happiness, and thanksgiving within us (1 Peter 1:8). Peter knew the joy of having physically walked alongside Jesus yet aligned himself with the same joy of these new believers who had never seen Him. Why? Because the joy of His salvation is the same, no matter when you have come to place your faith in Him.

The inexpressible joy of our salvation is possible because the hope of the believer, no matter at what point in history he or she may live, is received in Christ. Advent invites us into to the same joy, to rest in the salvation Jesus has provided for us. As we remember the Savior who humbly and quietly entered the world to bring us salvation, we find

joy—not in our circumstances, but in the Savior whose finished work has saved our souls. We do not wait without purpose, and we cannot fully rejoice without sharing our joy with the hurting world around us; it's how we live out the gift of compassion we've already received in Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you express your joy during the Christmas season? Does it lead to even greater joy over your salvation? Why or why not?
2. As you wait with inexpressible, glorious joy, how does it spill over into acts of compassion for others in your life?

DAY 19: THE JOY OF SALVATION

HEBREWS 12:1-2

JESUS SET HIS EYES ON THE CROSS BEFORE HIM

Joy is not typically associated with death. When we think of the passing of someone we love, joy is not usually the first emotion we feel. The passage today tells us that when Jesus looked to the cross, the instrument that would ultimately bring about His death, He felt joy. It was the joy set before Him that fixed His steps, His gaze, and His purpose on the redemptive plans of His Father.

What is this joy that was set before Jesus? How could death be considered a joy to Him? When Jesus saw the cross, He looked beyond it and gazed upon the fulfillment of His Father's promise to redeem and restore His people back to Himself. That was what brought Him joy—the thought of reconciling us back to the Father.

When we consider this example set before us, the salvation we've experienced should produce a joy in us that enables us to persevere through even the most difficult struggles. Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, endured the cross so that we might be restored to a relationship with our Creator. This is the great news we rejoice in and celebrate with others.

Why does joy matter in this season, or in any season of life for that matter? Because Jesus has set the example of seeing first what is at hand and then looking beyond it to what the Father has promised. From there, as we are led by the power of His Holy Spirit, we are able to obey His commands, just as Christ did. As we celebrate this season, the joy around us is not hard to find. Giving sacrificially seems to come with the territory at Christmastime.

For many people, this is what brings them joy—when presents are procured and wrapped in hopes for the joy of Christmas morning before them.

But for others, Christmas is just another day: 24 more hours of struggle and hardship as they try to meet their daily needs and continue moving forward. As we celebrate the Advent of our salvation and the joy it produces within us, we can see those around us with the same compassion with which Jesus, too, saw the world.

Setting our eyes on the joy of our salvation, we can step into the struggle with others, seeing their current circumstances while also pointing them to the hope that transcends all circumstances—Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can you follow Jesus' example of rejoicing in your salvation today?
2. As you consider the joy of your salvation made possible by Jesus, how can you share this joy with those who are near to you but far from God?

A romantic night landscape painting. The sky is a deep, dark blue, filled with numerous small, white stars. A single, larger, four-pointed star with a soft, golden glow is positioned above the word 'LOVE'. A faint, multi-colored rainbow arches across the middle of the sky, its colors blending into the starry background. Below the sky, the dark, silhouetted outlines of mountains and a forest are visible against the horizon. The overall mood is serene and romantic.

LOVE



LOVE • JOHN 3:16

READ JOHN 3:16:

“FOR GOD LOVED THE WORLD IN THIS WAY: HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, SO THAT EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

The Christmas season is a time when many of us want to put our faith in action. We want to share with others the hope we’ve found in Christ. The birth of Jesus embodies the love God has for His created world. We can share this love through compassionate acts.

Consider the following compassion opportunities:

- Writing notes to widows in your church or neighbors who live alone and delivering them with a small treat or gift card
- Creating toiletry kits and handing them out at a local shelter
- Volunteering to babysit for a single mom or dad while they finish their Christmas shopping
- Serving at a local food pantry or food distribution center

DAY 20: WHO AM I?

1 JOHN 3:1-3

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE KING

Identity. It's one of the biggest questions we ask ourselves, whether we realize it or not. Often, we define ourselves by our accomplishments, failures, others' perceptions of us, or the relationships we share with others. Yet all these things can, and often do, change in a moment's notice.

Advent is a reminder that our identity is not found in what we do or do not do, but to whom we belong. This truth is found not in anything we've done, but in the love of the Father who has sacrificially given His best for us in Christ.

John writes of this great, extravagant love that defines God's people as His sons and daughters. It was no ordinary love that led God the Father to send His only Son to redeem the world so that we might receive this adoption into His family.

This extravagant love is redemptive and transformative, moving those who are outcast and without hope into a position of confidence as children of God forever. For believers, our identity is no longer in question. It is a sure thing, and it rests in the eternal love of the Father who calls us His sons and daughters.

Advent is a time to remember this extravagant love that was poured out on us. It is also an opportunity to pour out our own extravagant love on those who are close to us but far from God: those who are still searching for their true identity, needing to hear the hope of the gospel and see the love that has been given to them in Christ. Consider how you can invite others to find their truest identity in Christ.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stands out to you about God's choice to call His people sons and daughters?
2. How can you share this lavish love with others this Advent season?

DAY 21: A LOVE THAT NEVER ENDS

ISAIAH 54:4-10 THE STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD

We're all seekers. From the moment we're born, we seek comfort, warmth, food, and the touch of our mothers. We're all seeking to be known and to know someone who will love us unconditionally and forever. It's our human condition and the way God created us—except He is the One who fits into the hole we're seeking to fill with other things.

God's people, the Israelites, notoriously looked in all the wrong places to find the One who would lead, protect, and love them in their time of need. All along, they had been chosen by the eternal God who had promised His love to them and would keep His promises. However, the cycle of their lives was one of hearing God's commands, disobeying them, then turning back to Him only to disobey His commands again. This rinse-and-repeat cycle of disobedience led them to suffer greatly.

When Isaiah prophesied about their future, they had already spent years in captivity and exile. Their homes and cities were destroyed, and they found themselves at their lowest point yet. They had been captive to some of the worst nations the world has ever known, yet God never really left them. He had always remained with them, steadfastly seeking and protecting the remnant He pledged His salvation to.

Isaiah 54:4-10 is a testament of God's faithfulness, first to His people the Israelites and second to all who would trust in the Messiah by faith. God would have compassion with "everlasting love" (Isaiah 54:8). They had been on the outside as captives in a strange land, and now, He would restore them. He promised that His love would never depart from

them and that His covenant of peace would remain unshaken, though the “the mountains move and the hills shake” (54:10).

The Advent of Jesus is the expression of God’s never-ending love for all His people. Jesus came, born in a manger one night in Bethlehem and sent to seek out and save the lost. He is the answer for all who are seeking something they’ve found to be lacking in life. For those who have been found in Christ, we have the good news to share and are told, “Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame” (54:4). Our shame has been put on God’s Son, and now we, who once were lost, have been found—lacking nothing in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What things or people have you sought to fill the God-sized hole in your heart?
2. As you reflect on the steadfast love of God this Advent season, how can you share the good news of Jesus with those who are seeking fulfillment in something else?
3. God’s compassion led Him to send Christ for our salvation. How can you extend compassion to others this holiday season, so that they would experience the satisfaction found only in Him?

DAY 22: LOVE THAT SECURES

ROMANS 8:38-39

NOTHING SEPARATES US FROM HIS LOVE

The one constant in everyone's life is change. We all experience it through shifting seasons, life circumstances, and relationships. We're even prone to change our minds numerous times throughout the day. Change is so constant in our lives that we learn to expect change, even when we shouldn't.

Paul writes about something unchanging in Romans 8. This concept can be so foreign to us because we live in a world that is, in essence, always changing. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he told them of God's unchanging, eternal love. Not only did he give them assurance that *nothing* could separate them from this love, but he promised that it was capable of enduring through any situation, circumstance, or obstacle they could think of. Paul's encouragement covered every possible obstacle or threat they could have imagined: death, life, angels, rulers, things to come, powers, and even the whole of creation. None of these things would separate them from God's love. None of these things would stop God from loving them.

How was this possible? How could so great a love last through anything? When Paul wrote this letter to the early church, he anchored the love of God "in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). It is through the finished work of Jesus that God's people can be secure in their relationship with Him. This love, unlike any other love we experience, is an active love that secures us—both in this life and in eternity. Because God's love for us is not anchored in us, our choices, our feelings, or our actions, it is eternally secure.

As we reflect on the coming of Jesus this Advent season, we are to first remember the birth of Jesus and to secondly recall the gift of God's eternal love in our lives. For many, the concept of receiving a love that lasts is not a reality. They live on the outskirts of society, outcast and separated because of their vulnerability or struggles with homelessness, poverty, or addiction.

However, we as believers can extend this eternal love to those in need as we share the good news of Advent, the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does Romans 8:38–39 change the way you view God's love for you?
2. How does this type of love result in compassion for others?
3. How can you show this love of the Father to others this Advent season?

DAY 23: A REDEEMING LOVE

JEREMIAH 31:3

GOD'S LOVE RESULTS IN REDEMPTION

Love is more than a feeling. We often look for the veracity of someone's love by the way they treat us or others. If a person's actions do not match the words they speak, then we must insist that they don't truly love what they profess to love. When God says He loves His people, He proves it time after time. Not only does He prove that His love is faithful; He proves that His love is more than a feeling. And the love He has extended to us produces the greatest action ever known to the world: salvation.

Jeremiah speaks of God's love and the action that results from it. Our God who embodies love extends to us an everlasting covenant resulting in redemption. God does not just love in word; He loves in deed, as well.

Jeremiah prophesied of this love long before the birth of Jesus—approximately 600 years before, actually. When God speaks through Jeremiah to tell His people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued to extend faithful love to you," Jeremiah is foretelling God's promised redemption hundreds of years in the future. He is relaying a future action and speaking of it as if it were already completed.

Only God can do this. As much as we would like to promise that our love is everlasting, we continually fall short. Yet God, who is eternal in nature, speaks through the ages to proclaim His everlasting love to all the world. This love was embodied through the birth of Jesus, who entered into our broken world as a Baby—as God in the flesh, a tangible reality of His faithfulness to His people.

Celebrating this redeeming love is a celebration of God's great compassion to the world He created. Advent is more than remembering a Baby who was born to die for the sins of the world. It's remembering the faithful love of our God who had a plan to redeem the world since the beginning of time. Compassion ministry is stepping into the messiness of those who are struggling and showing them that our love is more than a feeling—it's an action that reflects the love of our Creator. It's meeting needs but also sharing the truth of the gospel and continuing to show up, time and time again, as we reflect the redeeming love of the Father.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does God's faithful love produce compassionate action in you?
2. How is God's redeeming love unique? How can you rejoice in His love this Advent season?

DAY 24: THE FIRST LOVE

1 JOHN 4:19
GOD LOVED FIRST

Love, like breathing, is not a lesson taught in classrooms or a fable learned from a children's book. It's the sound of our mother's voice, expressing affection toward us while we were still nestled inside her womb. It's the voices of our fathers, our grandparents, or even our siblings for those nine months before we were born. Our parents and caregivers love us, and through their loving actions, we experience what love looks like for ourselves. For some, love is experienced through the compassionate acts of others who step into their struggle, showing the love of Christ to them.

Like breathing, we often learn what love is by experiencing its opposite. We know what breathing is because we've lost our breath before in a sudden, unexpected moment. It's when we hold it too long that we realize we aren't breathing. In this moment of lack, we realize what we have. When someone is unloving towards us, we suddenly realize that the actions and words targeted at us do not match what we've come to know from previous experience. They cause pain in place of the joy and warmth we've come to recognize and receive from others.

When John wrote to believers about God's love in 1 John 4:19, he taught the early church that we only know what love is because God loved us first. He reminded his brothers and sisters of the truth that our God is the embodiment of love, and if God is love, then love comes from and originates with Him.

We know love because we have a Creator who fashioned us in love and has continued to love us in every season. Advent is a reminder of this love, a time to reflect upon God's love made incarnate through His

only Son. On this day before Christmas, we'll make sure all is ready for those we love. The gifts we've purchased and wrapped with care will be placed under the tree. We will fill stockings and finish up all the last details to ensure that the morning brings a glimmer of the joy and delight we hold toward those we love.

We share these expressions of love because we have been loved through the ages by a God who first gave everything for us. We do this because God, in His great compassion, showed His love and kept His promise to us. On this day, we remember the careful preparations He made to give us the greatest gift we could ever receive—the newborn King who has come to save.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does the truth that we know love because God first loved us change your perspective on what it means to love others?
2. God's compassionate love is evident in the gift He has given us in Jesus. What acts of compassionate love can you show to your family and others in your community as the Advent season comes to a close?

DAY 25: THE GREATEST ACT OF LOVE

LUKE 2:1-20 GOD GAVE HIS SON

Thousands of babies are born every day in the U.S. Most of these babies are announced with great joy and excitement, as their parents, grandparents, and extended family share the good news with anyone who will listen. The wait for their arrival is finally near, and those nine months that seemed like an eternity end as the joy of seeing and holding this new baby takes over.

For God's people, the arrival of Jesus was much longer than the nine months of Mary's pregnancy. Luke records the details of Joseph and Mary's pilgrimage to Bethlehem, His lowly birth in a stable, and the angels' announcement that God had sent His Son to the shepherds in the field. But the Old Testament shows us even more.

God's people had waited hundreds of years for the arrival of the Messiah. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that God foretold of the coming One through the prophets, but that He has now spoken to us through the Son, Jesus. God promised to send the Messiah who would redeem His people from their sin, and at long last, His promise was fulfilled.

As Joseph and Mary held their newborn Son for the first time, the fullness of who He was and what He would do was still a mystery to them. It was not lost on them that angels had appeared to shepherds. However, they could not fathom that the One who would bear the sin of all humanity was now sleeping soundly in their arms, swaddled in borrowed cloths. They would not fully know for quite some time that this Baby would bear the weight of the world's sin, which included their own.

What Mary and Joseph could know was the love they felt toward the Son they had been given, as well as the love they'd received from the God they served. They could know that God, in His greatest act of love, had sent His Son to them and that this treasure had been entrusted to them and to all humanity, until it would be His time to go to the cross.

For now, they would swaddle Him, rock Him, guide Him, and watch over Him just as any parent would. And one day, Mary would stand by as the Son she had been given hung on the cross. And she would know that God's greatest act of love had taken place because of a night so long ago in a stable in the little town of Bethlehem.

Because of God's great love, we can know love and experience the greatest gift we could ever receive: the salvation that comes through the sacrifice of His Son. When we live out our compassion for others to receive and respond to, we do so with the love first shown to us, that others would see that their true need is to know Christ's love for themselves.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Advent is a season of giving gifts and showing love. How does the incarnation of Jesus remind you of the Father's love?
2. As you ponder the people around you who are close to you but far from God, consider the tangible ways you can show His love to them even after the Christmas season ends.
3. What have you learned about God's great, compassionate love toward you this Advent season? How could what you learned encourage someone else?

Serve with compassion. Build toward restoration. Walk the discipleship path with those in need.

Every community has people in need—families in crisis, neighbors facing overwhelming circumstances, and individuals searching for hope. Discover how your church can respond not only with resources, but with the eternal hope of the gospel.



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