

BETHANYKIDS' 2021

CHRISTMAS GUIDE



A month-long guide with daily stories, scripture readings and prayers to help center our season on Jesus.



A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me I pray!
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.*

Away in a Manger, William J. Kirkpatrick



'TIS THE SEASON

It's easy to get carried away with the hustle and bustle and totally miss the very reason for this season. To help, we have prepared this simple daily advent guide.

We've invited authors from around the world, including staff, board members and volunteers from BethanyKids who have dedicated their lives to serving others.

Every day in this season we encourage you to read a page of this guide and then share it with someone who needs to hear it. Together we can spread the word of hope.



The Light of a Long-Awaited Messiah

CHRISTMAS GUIDE *WEEK 1*



Week 1, Day 1: Nov 28, 2021

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

Kate Duncan // United Kingdom // @nurseryrhymeville

READ *Isaiah 2:2-5*

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

REFLECT

The word 'light' is mentioned in the Bible no fewer than 272 times. There was light surrounding Jesus Christ ever since He was born, nay, ever since His conception; indeed, at His prophesied conception and birth. He was born to be the 'light of the World.' Light was not just a metaphor to describe Him, as seen at His transfiguration, where His white light 'dazzled.' He illumined everyone He healed and all His followers. He brought out the best in them. He shone. He can still shine in us and in our lives, nowadays, if only we let Him.

However, we have to make the decision to walk with Him and to have our paths lit. It is down to us. We can quite easily choose to stray from His side and stumble in the shadows and darkness as a consequence. If, on the other hand, we decide to stay by Jesus, rather than to stray and become lost in a spiritual wilderness, we will have our ways lighted forever in the glow that radiates from Jesus Christ our Lord. His infinite love for us and for the world will blaze in our hearts forever.

PRAY

Dear Lord, please be with us always and guide us by your light. Let us walk with you forever. Let us! Oh, let us walk in your light. For all is darkness, all is wrong, when we don't. We don't want to be in the shadows, in the darkness. We want to be in your light, Lord and to reflect your light for all to see. We want everyone to feel what it feels like to have their way lit by your lamp. Thank you so much for illuminating our paths!



Week 1, Day 2: Nov 29, 2021

WE HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT

Kidron Tirey // Texas, USA // @kidron_tirey

READ *Isaiah 9:1-2*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

REFLECT

When we find ourselves in a dark season of loss or pain, we must resist the temptation to believe we are abandoned by God. The process of feeling one's emotions of fear or frustration can add value to our health, though we must not let ourselves stay in an anxious state. Prayer, song and scripture that support God's faithfulness can provide space for the heart to rest. Believing God holds us in the dark is the way to be carried into the light. Indeed, great darkness precedes a greater display of God's beauty; perfect love rescues us when we hate our sin and seek to live in the light of truth. If all we recalled was a memory of a blissful life apart from Christ, we would miss out on the need for rescue and rebirth. The Savior of the world knows our past and will direct the steps of those who know Him as Lord of their lives.

PRAY

Lord, please help me to prefer the moments in which I feel helpless, because only in my weakness will I have the contrast of Your amazing might and unlimited light. Amen.



Week 1, Day 3: Nov 30, 2021

HIS GREATNESS WILL REACH TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Britney Grayson and Micah Wilfong // Kenya // @kenyaoperate

READ *Micah 5:2-5*

...out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel...

REFLECT

We moved to Kijabe, Kenya in 2020 to join the BethanyKids team. Kijabe, like Bethlehem, is considered small among the towns in Kenya yet it is home to an incredible medical facility where so many children are born and, for those with medical and surgical problems, are healed. God's greatness, through his Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit, definitely reaches to the ends of the Earth here in Kenya.

In pediatric surgery, we like to say that we are not just saving lives but saving LIFETIMES. Out of these children will come leaders, pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers and more. No one expected the Savior of the world to come from Bethlehem. We can't wait to see who comes from Kijabe.

PRAY

God, remind us of our humble beginnings and involve us in your plans wherever they might be. Open our eyes to see your greatness. Open our eyes to see your purpose. Open our eyes to see your peace. Amen.



Week 1, Day 4: Dec 1, 2021

WITNESSES TO THE LIGHT

Kona Brown // South Africa // @konabrown

READ *John 1:4-8*

...he came only as a witness to the light.

REFLECT

John the Baptist was very clear on his mandate. By his work and words he was not to point to himself, but to point to Jesus, the Light of men, so that "all might believe through him"(v7).

The word "witness" means to testify, to bear record, to give a report, and if you've ever watched a legal show on TV, you would know, a witness is always called with a singular purpose and message. Jesus called all of us to this (Matt 28), but I think we sometimes overcomplicate it. Being a witness is not something we need a specific script and skill for. No! It's simply the act of testifying about the Light we have seen in our own lives. Simply telling someone about what happened when Jesus entered into my marriage, my parenting, my work. That is the good work set in advance for each of us to do (Eph 2 v 10).

PRAY

Lord Jesus, you are the light of all people, the only light that illuminates the darkness inside all of us (John 1 v 3-4). Help us to stop pointing to ourselves, and to start pointing to you, so others might see it and glorify the Father (Matt 5 v 15-16).



Week 1, Day 5: Dec 2, 2021

FOLLOWING THE LORD'S PATH

Laura Ajidiru // Uganda // @lovehas.a.name

READ *Psalm 25:1-5*

...my hope is in you all day long.

REFLECT

I had no clue where to start when I first reported to work with BethanyKids at Mbarara Hospital in Uganda. Not knowing what to expect, where to go, the people I would work with etc. I obviously needed guidance. The in-charge staff agreed to show me around the unit and introduce me to other staff. I trusted her to take me around and explain how the unit operates on a daily basis.

In the same manner we ought to follow the path of our Lord Jesus Christ now that we have seen the light. This starts with a desire of being guided to walk in the will of God for our lives (Ps 25:4-5, Ps 5:8). Waiting patiently upon Him to direct us in all aspects of our lives because He cares about every tiny detail (Ps 40:1). God is true to His word and fulfils each and every one of them (2 Cor 2:19-20, Num 23:13).

PRAY

Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may live according to the truth of Your word. Grant us purity of heart that we may honor and follow your marvelous light all the days of our lives without doubt or compromise. Make your way plain for us to follow as we earnestly study and meditate on Your Word. Amen



Week 1, Day 6: Dec 3, 2021

HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM

Peter Lublink // Ontario, Canada // @peterlublink

READ Galatians 4:4-7

God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

REFLECT

I think sometimes when we read scripture we interpret the word 'kingdom' a bit too metaphorically. Don't get me wrong, it's definitely still a metaphor, but perhaps as a 21st Century audience we can lose sight of the fact that in the ancient world, Kingdoms were also very real places people were born into with laws, a government and a unique culture. It would be impossible to truly be part of one Kingdom and at the same time be part of another. You might live in Rome, but to follow Jesus meant you could never be truly and fully Roman.

The same, I think, is true today. I might live in Canada, but I'm not truly of this nation. Instead I am adopted into a new kind of Kingdom where my fellow citizens, my true family, live around the world and are not defined by borders, ethnicity or nationality. As the Church we look past borders, nations and ethnic differences and instead seek to be a Kingdom of God's love on earth.

Whether 2,000 years ago, or two months ago, when we look at the world around us there is such a need for a new kind of Kingdom, a new way of life that brings light, rather than darkness. A King that can bring salvation rather than oppression.

In Jesus we have that long awaited Messiah-King who is the Light of the World.

PRAY

Jesus, Yours is the Kingdom and the Light; help us mirror it to all.



Week 1, Day 7: Dec 4, 2021

MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

Melissa Sivels // Indiana, USA // @melissadawng1

READ *Colossians 2:13-15*

He forgave us all our sins...

REFLECT

"I forgive you."

A few words that hold a lot of power. Forgiveness is something that we all want a generous portion of. But, do we dole it out as generously?

It's not always easy. In fact, sometimes it feels good to hold on to our grudges and resentments. We worry that if WE don't remember what happened to us, who will? Who will be there to hold them accountable or make sure that justice is served?

The problem with this is justice isn't ours to dole out. Our role is to forgive. That doesn't mean we move on and pretend we were never hurt. In fact, it might take us a long time to forgive the people who have wounded us or caused us harm.

But when it feels impossible, we can look to Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. We can marvel at the example he gave us. We stood in condemnation and because of his great love for us he took that upon his own shoulders. What a shining example of how to forgive.

If Christ can forgive people who were once his enemies; shouldn't we be able to?

PRAY

Jesus, thank you for your incredible gift of forgiveness. Help us to model it well to those around us today.





Including others in your Christmas traditions can be a beautiful act of generosity.

The Release from Darkness

CHRISTMAS GUIDE *WEEK 2*



Week 2, Day 1: Dec 5, 2021

NO END OF PEACE

'Deola Sanwoolo // Alberta, Canada

READ *Isaiah 9:6-7*

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

REFLECT

I was a bag of nerves as I drove down the dark snowy road, with excited kids squabbling in the back seat. We were driving out of town to spend Christmas with close friends. It had gotten dark and it was bitterly cold outside. I felt quite pressured to give my children a special Christmas since their dad was away. I worried I had forgotten something important and that we would have an accident because of the road conditions.

Thankfully, my thoughts turned to Isaiah 9:6. The kids and I had been talking about the greatest gift of Christmas. That gift is a Son, born to us and given to us. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. I froze, realizing that the Prince of Peace had been given to me for this season. I quietly prayed, asking God for the peace I desperately needed and almost immediately, I felt a calmness wash over me.

The peace which God gives isn't just for Christmas. We read in verse 7 that there will be no end to His peace. In Jesus, we have both peace with God and peace in the midst of our darkness. Do you need the Prince of Peace this Christmas? You can ask Him to be your Lord and invite Him to fill you with His peace. He will.

PRAY

Dear Father, thank you for giving me Jesus to be my Peace. I surrender the chaos, challenges and troubles I am going through right now to you and invite you to be my peace and to give me a peace that the world cannot give. Amen.



Week 2, Day 2: Dec 6, 2021

A HUMBLE BEGINNING

Angela Lawley // Texas, USA // @angelalawley_ghm

READ Luke 2:1-7

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

REFLECT

Think about this moment in our Lord's life. His earthly parents being led into a town in the dark of night, where there was no room to stay; the image of laying the King of Kings in an animal manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. This image plays out in my heart every year. It's a great reminder that God can use the smallest and most unlikely situation to bring about greatness.

In the day in age where we all strive to have the biggest house and the nicest car, it's important to remember that God doesn't need to give you those things in order to use you. In fact, I believe in some cases those material things can keep us from seeing the beauty in life. The image of the manger, of our Lord and Savior having nowhere to lay his head, is a beautiful reminder that God doesn't look down on small beginnings. He instead uses it to fulfill a great purpose.

PRAY

Lord, Help us see you in the little moments in life. When the world seems to rush past us, help us to humble our hearts and see the beauty in all moments. No matter how great or small, help us see you as our release from the darkness.



Week 2, Day 3: Dec 7, 2021

A VOICE CALLING IN THE WILDERNESS

Rachel Stewart // Georgia, USA // @iamrachelstewart

READ Matthew 3:1-3

...Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight the paths for him.

REFLECT

I don't know what season you are in or where you are in the world but if you're feeling lost or hopeless, God knew that you would be in this wilderness that you are currently in way before you got there. He has already prepared a way out for you. Though you may be in a dark place right now, there is a light that is coming.

The wilderness you are currently in is not your destination; just a place where you have to journey through to get to where God is taking you. It's a place of preparation not habitation. Don't get stuck because you can't see past where you are right now in life; but allow your ears to be open enough to hear the voice calling out to you in the wilderness saying "There is more I have in store for you my child."

You might have thought because you have been in this same place in your life for so long that you would always be there going through the same issues thinking nothing will ever get better or change, but God can turn pain to joy and worry to peace. Just as John the Baptist had prophesied, repent, turn away from your old way of living and thinking, for God - the one who holds your breakthrough - is near and he has come to free you from your place of wilderness.

PRAY

God we thank you that we know you are with us in our suffering. We say goodbye to our wilderness and prophesy that our light has come, our new season is here and we choose to move forward. Amen.



Week 2, Day 4: Dec 8, 2021

LIFTING UP THE HUMBLE

Mark Dalley // Ontario, Canada

READ *Luke 1:46-56*

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

REFLECT

When I was young people used to say, "You have so much potential!" Now that I am 46 it has changed. Today I am more likely to hear someone say, "You *used* to have so much potential!" Maybe you've heard the same things in your life. Life has a way of beating us down. We are left feeling rejected, alone, and even worthless.

I wonder if Mary felt like that. She was a pregnant, unmarried teen. People thought she had broken her vows to God and Joseph. There was a reason she was sent away to stay with Elizabeth. She was only too familiar with the whispers of "lost potential". It must have been a very dark time for her.

But Mary's response to the miracle taking place in her is telling. She praises God. Not because of who she is or what she's done. Instead, she praises God for what He can do through rejected, lonely, and worthless individuals. You see "potential" is not about us; it is about Him!

PRAY

God, thank you for your promise to lift up the humble. For those who are feeling rejected, alone and worthless today remind them of your presence and surround them with your love. Let them feel that release from darkness. Amen!



Week 2, Day 5: Dec 9, 2021

PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

Lillian Gitau // Georgia, USA // @lillian.gitau

READ *Luke 4:16-21*

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

REFLECT

Have you ever eagerly waited to receive good news? I have. I remember waiting anxiously to learn the college I had been admitted to. My wish was to join one closest to my hometown but wound up in one the farthest away. I was disappointed. What was supposed to be great news left me dejected. This was one of the best universities in the country, but I did not quite appreciate that. My expectation got in the way of my perception.

I consider this passage to be one of the most profound in scripture. It summarizes Christ's entire ministry, containing the best news ever for our healing, deliverance, and salvation. In verse 20 we learn that 'the eyes of all were fastened on him.' Everyone was waiting for some real 'good news.' And there it was, in verse 21, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' Jesus arrived as our release from the darkness of this world.

Christ, Messiah, Savior, and Lord was right there with them gently beckoning. Did they perceive it? No. They regarded Jesus as 'one of them.' Ordinary. Unfortunately, this scenario persists. Many of us regard Jesus as ordinary and miss out on God's best gift to us, Jesus Christ, our eternal hope.

PRAY

Dear Lord, please open our eyes and our ears so that we will understand and accept your gift of salvation to us through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.



Week 2, Day 6: Dec 10, 2021

PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS

Naomi Dalley // Ontario, Canada // @naomi_dalley

READ Romans 5:1-2

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

REFLECT

I learn a lot about peace from my dogs. While we stew about purchasing the ideal gift on each loved one's wish list, personalizing beautifully crafted greeting cards, coordinating the tree decorations in balanced beauty, displaying the outdoor lights with timed precision, and getting the Christmas meal cooked and plated to perfection, the dogs watch with unwavering contentment. Their only concern is whether a piece of turkey might fall within their reach! In fact, I would describe their stance as a watching-and-waiting peace. They are happiest when they are quite literally in the shadow of their master.

At Christmas, a season where we intentionally acknowledge God's presence - Immanuel, God with us, let's make sure that all our activities are done in the full awareness of the shadow of our Master. In fact, we can celebrate Christmas with an even fuller awareness of who God is because of the saving sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. So Christmas can be especially significant when celebrated in the shadow of the cross.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, forgive us when we allow ourselves to be consumed by the chaos of the season. Turn us again today to the power of the cross and the gift your peace, as you are indeed the Prince of Peace. As we instinctively pray for peace on earth this season, may we each be keenly aware that true peace is found in the shadow of your cross and your ongoing presence. Thank you for accomplishing that depth of peace for us - Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.



Week 2, Day 7: Dec 11, 2021

SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT

Myunique Inez // California, USA // @instagramforbelievers

READ Psalm 34:12-14

...seek peace and pursue it.

REFLECT

It is no doubt that we live in a chaotic, sinful, and divisive world. Over the last year and a half, we have seen division across the globe for a plethora of reasons, whether it be politically, racially, medically - this list can go on and on. One of the beautiful things about being a believer who puts their faith in Jesus, is that we can cling to what is pure, and what is good, which means seeking peace in a broken and dark world.

In the book of Psalms, David tells us in chapter 34 to "seek peace and pursue it." In this context David is teaching his men, not only in terms of war and battle, but in terms of peace. He is saying we should seek peace with God and amongst men, but not only that - to pursue it. By Webster's definition, *to pursue* is to follow or to continue in procedure, meaning once we find peace, to continue walking in that peace daily.

In Hebrews 12:14, it says, "Make every effort to live in peace." Peace has always mattered to God and this means it should matter to us. In a world that wants to tear us down and be disruptive, continue to pursue peace. Sometimes that looks like turning the other cheek, it looks like deleting a post, and sometimes it even looks like silence. Whatever your peace looks like, pursue it.

PRAY

Lord, let us pursue your peace above all the sin and darkness in this world. Be our light. Amen.





Why not think about giving a gift to someone who could really use your help this year?

*Reflecting
God's Love
to the World*

CHRISTMAS GUIDE *WEEK 3*



Week 3, Day 1: Dec 12, 2021

I AM YOURS, YOU ARE MINE

Kelly Goldson // Georgia, USA // @realkellygoldson

READ *Isaiah 43:1-7*

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

REFLECT

Have you ever been blindsided by circumstances that made you doubt God's love? This promise from Isaiah 43 offers immeasurable comfort and reassurance to us when we need it the most. You see, the Lord chose His words carefully when He gave the prophet Isaiah this message for you and me. God calls Himself our "Kinsmen Redeemer," which historically, was a person who would intervene for a relative left orphaned or widowed, adopting them as their own. A Kinsmen Redeemer is someone who comes to the rescue, and this is exactly what God wants to do for us. He steps in to be our Father every time we need one.

God calls you His "kin" (family) and promises to be your Redeemer forever. You never face anything in life alone. What a beautiful reflection of God's love for us.

PRAY

God, you are the hope of the world and the Light of my life. Teach me to trust You all the more deeply when my heart is overwhelmed. With You, I am safe. In Jesus' name, amen.



Week 3, Day 2: Dec 13, 2021

THIS IS OUR GOD

Kezia September // South Africa // @keezkas

READ Nehemiah 9:16-18

But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

REFLECT

My daughter came home one day, filled with a fantastic rage unbeknownst to a five year old, threw down her school bag and shouted: "I am so mad! I cannot stand Ben Stevens! He is such a meany! He made fun of everyone, had a nickname for everyone in class and called Shane 'daddy long legs' just because he's tall and thin. That wasn't very nice of him," she said for emphasis.

"Words can be very harmful but maybe Ben was having a bad day. Maybe he thought that everyone should feel as badly as he did," I responded.

"No Mama! He was mean and a bully," she insisted. "I will never forgive him."

"Wow! You are upset. You know, never is a very, very long time," I said. "You are allowing someone's bad behaviour to rule your emotions. You can choose to forgive him and show him how to be caring and kind, or you can choose for him to ruin your day. It's your choice, my child."

God is aware that forgiveness isn't easy. It takes bravery to show compassion, and reflect God's love where we feel it is undeserved. His greatest act of forgiveness was to send His only Son to pay for our sins. God is aware that beginning afresh with those who had harmed us, will shine a light on friendships that will end with goodness and joy.

PRAY

Lord, you are my Light and my salvation. No matter our circumstances, shine Your light and guide us through our moments of darkness. In Jesus name, Amen.



Week 3, Day 3: Dec 14, 2021

THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE

David Ng'ang'a // Kenya // @ngangamuthumbi

READ *Lamentations 3:22-24*

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

REFLECT

In 1 John 4 we are told that God is Love. His Love is what drives His personality. The relationship between God and the World begins with God's great love. That great love is not owed to the world but rather graciously given. That great Love is best seen when while we were yet weak, helpless sinners, God gave His son to live and die for creation, paving the way for us to be reconciled to him instead of being destroyed.

It is impossible for us to truly understand the greatness of God's love because we are mere humans and so often we fail to reflect this love back to each other. However, if we open our eyes to His works in the world, we are amazed at just how much He expresses his love to us.

A few years back I spent time with a group that visited Joytown School, which BethanyKids helps run in Kenya. At the end of the day, the group would sit and share instances where they saw God's love expressed during the day. It was sobering to hear beautiful stories of God's love even when initially we thought it was a bad day. Even in suffering we should know that things could be far worse were it not for God's love. Paul, in writing about enduring suffering, introduces the idea of God pouring out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Giving us ever-present remembrance of the beautiful truth that God always greatly loves us but also enables us to share that great love with each other. We are to reflect God's love to the world.

PRAY

Lord help us to be rooted and established in love, so we may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17b-19).



Week 3, Day 4: Dec 15, 2021

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

Lauren Smith // Texas, USA // @thehonestpursuit

READ *John 3:16*

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.

REFLECT

This year I want to learn how other cultures around the world celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ. Let's experiment with new dishes, learn a hymn in a different language, and experience the joy of Christmas from another's point of view. In this season of giving, let us remember the greatest gift that God gave us: Jesus and the hope of life forever with him. God truly gives the best gifts, even when we are undeserving.

His love reaches beyond the walls of your church, your city, and even beyond the borders of your country. Not only is His love limitless, but it can even reach the intimate places of our hearts. God shows His love for us by his grace, patience, and willingness to sacrifice the One He loves the most. Believe that God loves you, and that He desires to spend time with you.

PRAY

Lord, let us trust you completely and accept the love that you offer to us daily. Let your Spirit guide the motives of our heart and use us to share the light of Jesus Christ at home and to the ends of the Earth. Amen.



Week 3, Day 5: Dec 16, 2021

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Stacy Edwards // Kentucky, USA // @stacyjedwards

READ *Matthew 22:36-40*

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

REFLECT

Love is, possibly, the most overused and misunderstood word in the English language. We love people, puppies and pizza. We love art, animals and artichokes. To misquote Inigo Montoya, "We keep using that word, but I do not think it means what we think it means."

At its very essence, the gospel is a love story. When speaking with the lawyer, Jesus said that all of the teachings of Scripture depend on love. If we don't love the Lord, we won't obey Him. If we don't love our neighbors, we won't minister to them. If we don't love our enemies, we won't forgive them.

We can take any command, teaching, or promise in God's Word and, when broken down, find love at its core. In the Old Testament we read of the everlasting love of God. Then, in the New Testament, we see love appear in flesh. It's often the first thing we learn in church; God gave his son because he "so loved" the world. And we, His people, are most like Him when we love.

PRAY

Lord, make us more like you. Help us to love well and, by so doing, live out the gospel in our lives.



Week 3, Day 6: Dec 17, 2021

GOD IS LOVE

Yohan Mahimwala // Ontario, Canada // @mahimwala

READ 1 John 4:7-12

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

REFLECT

Think about a time in your life when someone went out of their way to make you feel appreciated...like you matter, like you belong and like you are valuable. Like you have something to offer with your gifts, talents or just with your presence. It could be a special gift that someone picked specifically with you in mind, a meaningful compliment that was based on something they saw in you or an invitation to experience or participate in something together.

People who are aware of God's love and grace expressed in their own lives are in the best position to find ways to share that in the lives of others. And it simply starts with having open eyes to remain others-centred as we walk through our day. This inward transformation through Jesus' grace and spirit becomes the daily wellspring from which we can become a blessing to the world around us. This is God's design to let His love and light shine through each of us!

PRAY

Lord, thank you for your unfailing love for us, demonstrated through the life of your son, Jesus. Thank you for your example of deep, enduring, everlasting love through Jesus' life and resurrection. Lead us and remind us of your love as we walk through each day. Show us how to experience your love more fully and then share this love with others in our midst. Amen.



Week 3, Day 7: Dec 18, 2021

BEING ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED IN LOVE

Keith Dow // Ontario, Canada

READ *Ephesians 3:16-19*

...to know this love that surpasses knowledge...

REFLECT

"I love you, daddy!" "I love you more!" "I love you the mostest!!" This regular back-and-forth with my middle daughter Lucy never really ends. Once we've started making up words to express how we feel, there's no turning back... we attempt to convey that our love is always growing bigger – always shining brighter. It is love as a direction, not as a statement, belief, or doctrine.

Many of the people I work with at Christian Horizons, people living with a developmental disability, have difficulty expressing doctrines or theological statements using words. Yet they often shine with the length, height, and depth of Christ's love in ways I could not have imagined otherwise.

As Christians – siblings with and without disabilities – we eventually all "tap out" when we try to describe the love of God. Words fail us as we discover that we are rooted and established in this love that surpasses knowledge, a love paradoxically revealed to us simply and profoundly in the story and person of Jesus.

PRAY

Dear Father, as your incomprehensible love shone into the world at Jesus' birth, so may it reflect through us to one another as we rest in its mysterious warmth.





Singing is a great way to share the Christmas story; living that story in your everyday life can be even more transformative.

The Power of His Light

CHRISTMAS GUIDE *WEEK 4*



Week 4, Day 1: Dec 19, 2021

RELEASE FROM THE DARKNESS

Musenya Mwangangi // Kenya // @musenya_.22

READ Isaiah 61:1-4

...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning...

REFLECT

In the wake of sin comes about the pain of brokenness, shame, unworthiness and lack of hope. After all, the wage of sin is death. It then becomes difficult to find joy or peace, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, and all seems but lost. Many times we then tend to remain in darkness because we believe we cannot be saved or rather we are not worthy. But fret not, for "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim the good news."

In this passage Isaiah talks about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, who is a beacon of hope for those caught in the clutches of sin and despair. He mends the broken-hearted, frees the captives, comforts those who mourn and bestows a crown of beauty on them. The same is repeated by Jesus in Luke 4:18 where He came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

The good news is that Jesus Christ is the prophecy of redemption fulfilled. He so lovingly gave up His life so that we may live ours abundantly. He came to turn our darkness into light, to give us a hope and a future, one which had been robbed from us through sin. He came to set us free.

This gift is open to whosoever accepts Him as their personal Lord and Saviour. There is no qualification needed, no gift or payment required. Jesus already paid it all and now, after we have accepted Him, we wait for the day to be with Him in glory forever.

PRAY

You patiently waited; hands held out in hope that I would place mine in Yours. You taught me to trust You so that I can let go of all that I had ever known, especially the sin that so easily ensnares. From the darkness into light, my life You have brought forth. Thank you for saving me and may I share this good news to all, that we may come home.



Week 4, Day 2: Dec 20, 2021

GLORY TO GOD

Bournventure Amalu // Kenya // @bournie_amalu

READ *Luke 2:8-21*

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

REFLECT

When Jesus was born, the angels came from heaven glorifying God and bearing the good news to the shepherds. But why did God choose shepherds? In our society, shepherds are lowly regarded in the community. God chose them to glorify *himself*. God is not concerned by the social status of a person, but the heart. He can use anyone to bring glory to his name.

Throughout this year, many of us have gone through different seasons. Some seasons we come out feeling victorious and stronger where we have felt it easy to glorify God. And some seasons we come out very weak and even end up doubting our faith in God. We forget that if God was not with us we couldn't have made it. We need to learn to glorify God even through the challenging situations we are experiencing.

As we continue with our festivities this season, let's remember to give glory to God, considering also those less fortunate as it is our responsibility as Jesus-followers to care for one another. As Christians we glorify God through our actions and how we relate to people. In our relationship with God, all glory goes back to him.

PRAY

Dear God, help us to remember to give you all the glory in our highs and lows. You are the light in our darkness.



Week 4, Day 3: Dec 21, 2021

OVERJOYED

Jasmine Agudelo // California, USA // @theagudeloartisan

READ *Matthew 2:1-12*

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

REFLECT

When I first found out I was pregnant with our first baby, there was an overwhelming sense of peace, excitement, and **hope**. Not a second did I doubt the moment, not even the test. When I first held her after birth, that feeling of peace, relief, and **hope** returned. Overjoyed might be an understatement to explain that feeling. It's part of it, but the bliss you feel when eyes are first locked, skin-to-skin, cries are matched, more than just joy is felt. If you can't relate to this analogy, maybe you can relate to that feeling of making a new friend or meeting someone special? You know that feeling? Excitement and joy and **hope**. We cannot forget the journey for that sense of bliss. God takes 9 months to form a baby in a mother's womb with all the symptoms, what-if's and the unglamorous and painful events of childbirth. Parenthood is beautiful and rewarding, but it sure is messy. Although love and marriage is a glorious and Heaven-reflective union, there is so much work and sacrifice required. We cannot forget the journey.

Can you imagine what they felt? When the star rose? When the news sank in that our *Savior* was born? What *hope* must have been found! What joy they must've felt! The very power of that light in the sky brought them the joy and hope that led them to be sustained in the journey it took to get there. Another thing that I'm amazed by in their actions is their haste to be with the King and to worship Him. These men were quick, urgent and pursuant to be with the King. This was all because of promised hope, joy, and peace.

PRAY

Lord, I pray that we make pure and holy haste to be with you. May we be overjoyed to be in Your presence and to worship You. May our burning hearts sustain throughout our years and may we never grow old from longing to be with You. We remain in trust, hope, and faith in You and let it lead me to overwhelming peace, bliss and joy. Amen.



Week 4, Day 4: Dec 22, 2021

MAKING HIS FAITHFULNESS KNOWN

Cheyenne Perry-Suarez // South Carolina, USA // @hospitalprncss

READ Psalm 89:1-4

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever...

REFLECT

I remember it as if it were yesterday. Sitting in the church pews, mumbling the lyrics to whatever worship song was playing after my mom nudged me forcefully in the side. I suppressed my laughter while my brother belted out an off-pitch tune, but only because my father gave him the stink eye.

Back then, my family never missed a Sunday service. Nearly every week was the same come worship time. Singing in church mortified me. I couldn't sing like the worship leader, so I didn't try. It wasn't until I was saved that I realized the Lord doesn't care whether we can produce the perfect melody as long as we praise Him.

Attending church became a luxury at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It opened up a range of remote worship opportunities, showing other ways of worship that don't require gathering in large groups and singing praises. However, it's also exemplified the importance of an act many took for granted.

When we are able to meet in person again, I know believers will be praising the Lord louder than ever because God has remained faithful despite worldwide illness.

PRAY

Lord, thank you for making your faithfulness known in ALL circumstances - good and bad.



Week 4, Day 5: Dec 23, 2021

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS

Chantal Huinink // Ontario, Canada

READ *Philippians 4:4-7*
Rejoice in the Lord always.

REFLECT

Christ's light was first seen in the star of Bethlehem. His power is evident in the signs and wonders performed throughout his life. That light is now demonstrated in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joy, gentleness, and peace are fruits of the Spirit which may draw others to the light of Christ within us. These qualities do not depend on what we can do but the Holy Spirit's work in us.

Physical challenges make it difficult for me to do some things for myself. A friend once asked me, "do you ever feel bad asking for help?" My answer was, "no, because I don't ask for help unless I need it and if I truly need it, I have no reason to feel bad."

I rejoice because God does not expect us to carry our burdens alone. I have peace because he designed everybody to need help with some things. The light of Christ might be seen most clearly in communities where joy is found in opportunities to serve one another, and gentleness is practised through the ways we help each other.

PRAY

Lord, Help us to Rejoice in the You always, especially through opportunities to help one another.



Week 4, Day 6: Dec 24, 2021

INEXPRESSIBLE JOY

Kenyon Sivels // Indiana, USA // @kenyonsivels

READ 1 Peter 1:1-12

..you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy..

REFLECT

A movie once said, "...hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things..." Hope is expressed throughout the Advent season as charities hope for end of year funding to sustain them through the next year, children hope for their specific, desired gift to be found under the tree, and long-ago humanity longed for a coming Messiah. Many during that time missed it, but for the few who realized what was taking place, they were "filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy..."

It is always magnificent when what we hope and long for meets or exceeds our expectations. For the awaited Messiah to finally arrive after hundreds of years was an event worth celebrating. This Christmas Eve, may you feel just a twinge of realized hope that leads you to inexpressible and glorious joy.

PRAY

Lord, we have much we can and do put our hopes in, but none of these objects compare to You. As we conclude the lead up to Christmas, help us to remember it is You who helps make family, worship and life worth it. And may the thought of You lead us to inexpressible and glorious joy that we reflect back to those around us. Amen.



Week 4, Day 7: Dec 25, 2021

THE JOY WE HAVE

Felista Karanja // Manitoba, Canada // @felistakaranja

READ 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

REFLECT

There is so much beauty and admiration in Paul's mentorship and friendship towards the Thessalonians. He was determined to see the believers grow in their faith and love. He also understood the power of prayer. Therefore, Paul prayed day and night and gave thanks to God for the sake of the believers (1 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Paul emphasised the love of Christ which is worth emulating, and his desire was to see that the Thessalonians' hearts were pure. Paul truly wanted the believers to be faithful in showing Christ's love to one another. Paul's joy was based on the Thessalonians' faithfulness to Christ. He demonstrated his love by praying so that they may also enjoy the joy of salvation through Christ.

Today, our world is broken. There are so many calamities and painfully dark experiences and a lot of people are desperate for joy, peace and light. We know that true joy and peace comes from our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the most powerful light. We are called to show Christ's love to others in our communities and in the world. We can do this by interceding for others so that they may learn and experience the joy of Salvation too. We are called to share His message of hope and Good News with the world. How else, brothers and sisters, can we joyfully shine Christ's love into the world?

PRAY

Dear God, thank you for your boundless love and mercy. Thank you, Jesus, for the joy that comes through your salvation. Increase in us the brevity to share your Word, and give hope to others who are in dire need of true joy and peace. Help us to constantly pray for ourselves so our faith in You may continue to grow, and that we may truly love others the same way You love us. Amen.



Every year we bring healing to thousands of children across Africa through surgery and rehabilitation care. We do it because we want to mirror the light of Jesus.

This Christmas we invite you to join us in providing Jesus-centered medical care across Africa. Even \$150 can be enough to pay for a surgery for a child who desperately needs it.

From all of us at BethanyKids, thank you for your continued support.

Merry Christmas!





May the Peace of Christ be with you.