

The
COLORS of
CHRISTMAS

An Advent Companion



CROSSROADS

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

What Is Advent?

Advent is the 4-week season leading up to Christmas Day. This time is meant to prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. Instead of only celebrating the day of Christmas, we are celebrating the season leading up to Christmas and using that time for our hearts, minds, and spirits to anticipate the arrival of our Savior. Spending time in preparation and active waiting can deepen the meaning of Christmas and help us step into the holy longing for the coming kingdom God promised, which is already, but not yet.

Advent means “**coming**.” Similar to those who were waiting for the arrival of the Messiah 2000 years ago, we join in the waiting and hope for his return at the second coming by actively anticipating the celebration of his arrival at Christmas.

The Advent season focuses on four themes: **Hope, Peace, Joy,** and **Love**. This Advent season at Crossroads, we are diving into the Colors of Christmas, where we are looking at some emotions you may feel this Advent/Christmas season and connecting these emotions to the themes of Advent, reflecting on ways we may experience them during the holidays, offering scriptures to reflect on, a prayer for this emotion, and an action step you can take this season to embody our prayers.

We hope this booklet provides some insight into the different emotions you may be feeling this Christmas, and offers tools to help you step into the **Hope, Peace, Joy,** and **Love** that is here for you in Christ.

God, prepare our hearts for the arrival of your son, for the anticipation and celebration of his birth, the greatest gift and miracle you ever gave. And help us prepare our hearts for when he will come again. Help us walk in the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love that you provide for us this Advent season. Amen!

the Colors of Christmas

Emotion

Advent Theme

Contentment

Restful, Satisfied, Blessed,
Loving, Peaceful, Fulfilled

Peace

John 14:27

Sadness

Lonely, Despair, Drained,
Bored, Hopeless,
Discouraged

Hope

Jeremiah 29:11

Anger

Shocked, Frightened,
Anxious, Frustrated,
Worried

Love

Ephesians 4:26-27

Joy

Happy, Surprised, Ecstatic,
Hopeful, Playful, Pleasant

Joy

Philippians 4:4

Contentment / Peace

Contentment feels like an odd place to start Advent. In a season saturated with advertisements and commercials saying you need more, how is it possible to say "I have enough"?

What if we move on from that question and ask, "Am I at peace?" "Am I rested?" "Am I loving others in my life?"

These questions might make us uncomfortable because we seldom stop to ask them. The 24/7 news cycle talks of war, disasters, and emergencies. In our personal lives, we are dealing with difficult family members, sickness and death, and trying to balance our own mental and emotional health. Trying to find this deeper rest and peace is something we are struggling to do.

In the face of the uncertainty and craziness of the world, we are called to rest in contentment. This is something we cannot do ourselves; we must rely on God to achieve this contentment. Resting in the blessing and peace he offers.

Jesus says in John 14:27, ***"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."*** The peace Jesus gives is the peace that can help us enter this Advent season and embrace the peace God can offer in his wholeness.

Jesus' birth in the New Testament was an ignition of hope for a people waiting over 400 years for a Messiah. We celebrate Advent to anticipate his arrival at Christmas, but also his arrival at the second coming. We can live actively in this hope of his coming knowing that when we put our trust in him, we will find the peace and contentment he offers.

This Advent, let's remember to rest in God and be content in his presence. Knowing if we rest in the presence of the Good Shepherd, we will have all that we need.

Contentment / Peace

In this first week of the Advent Season, we are reflecting on the emotion of contentment and seeing how we can step into the peace God offers. Whether this contentment and peace are things you have in your life or things you need to cultivate, there is always space for us to grow.

This week, read the reflection on the previous page and pick one scripture to read and reflect on each day. Take the time to read this passage prayerfully, asking God to reveal how you can let the contentment and peace he offers seep into your life this week.

Scriptures To Read and Reflect On This Week	
Psalm 23	2 Corinthians 12:9-10
1 Timothy 6:6-10	Philippians 4:11-12
Colossians 2:6-7	Psalms 100

God of peace, our Good Shepherd, grant us your peace this Advent season, knowing all good gifts come from you and your greatest gift is the arrival of your son, Jesus Christ. Lead us into your presence so we can dwell by your living water and find rest for our souls in you. Help us to be grateful and live into your peace this week. Amen

EMBODY YOUR PRAYER

- Take some time each day this week to write down things you are thankful for.
- Practice contentment by saying no to purchasing things you don't need.
- Practice generosity by giving some money or possessions away to those in need.

Sadness / Hope

Elvis Presley famously said, "I'll have a blue Christmas without you." While this song is about a lost love at Christmas, I think everyone understands the feeling of having a Blue Christmas. The joy of the Christmas season, the lights, the presents, the parties, and the food cannot take away the sadness some of us carry into this season.

Some of us walk into Christmas having lost a loved one this past year, knowing our dinner table will have one less seat at the family meal. Some of us walk into Christmas with a recent job loss, not knowing how we are going to make ends meet. Some of us walk into Christmas fearing the pain we will face returning to see our family. Some of us walk into Christmas running on empty, exhausted from the past season of life.

Sadness is a heavy emotion to hold during Christmas, but it is one many of us are holding. If you are walking into Christmas holding sadness, you are not alone. God knows the pain and sadness we feel, and while on this side of eternity. There may not be a resolution, but God is working to make all things well. We just need to hold onto the hope that God is at work, and while we may not understand or see how things are working out, he is working.

The prophet Jeremiah, writing to the recently exiled Jewish community, says, ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*** Jeremiah is telling the Israelites who were just deported to a foreign country that God is working and because God is still working, there is hope, even in the darkness. And even when it feels like God is absent, he is working, he is present.

God's hope is a gift for us in the Advent season. Jesus' birth was a hope that took over 400 years to fulfill. The silence is when God works. In this Advent season we can know that while we wait, God is working, and we can have hope because he is the God who moves and works even when we don't see it.

Sadness / Hope

In this second week of the Advent Season, we are reflecting on the emotion of sadness. Sadness is an emotion we are far too familiar with, but our God is with us in our sadness and because of the arrival of Jesus, there is hope for us, no matter what we may be facing in our life.

This week, read the reflection and pick one scripture to read and reflect on each day. Take the time to read this passage prayerfully, asking God to reveal how this passage can speak to you this week.

Scriptures To Read and Reflect On This Week	
Deuteronomy 31:8	Jeremiah 31:13
Matthew 11:28-30	Isaiah 41:10
John 11:1-44	Revelation 21:3-4

God of hope, help us step into your presence and take on your gentle yoke. Remind us that death is not the end, and the pain we feel has lost its sting with your son's death on the cross. Help us live freely in your unforced rhythms of grace. Give us eyes to see the hope you bring because of the resurrection. Amen!

EMBODY YOUR PRAYER

- Light a candle this Christmas season to remember a person you've lost.
- Call a friend or family member who's lost someone recently.
- Reflect on a time when a hope of yours was fulfilled and reflect on the ways God worked.

Anger / Love

In the movie, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, Jim Carrey's Grinch stands at the top of a mountain shouting names from the phone book so he can hate the citizens of Whoville alphabetically.

Some of us may have our own list of names we are shouting in our minds. People we are angry with for a variety of reasons. They have wronged me, they lied to me, they cheated me, and they said bad things about me. It is easy to get angry in our culture, and our society is attempting to tell us that our anger is justified and we should act on it.

Anger, fear, frustration, and anxiety are easy to carry around. We carry them like badges of honor, unaware of the weight they are putting on our souls and the damage they may cause to those around us if we lose control of them.

Anger is not a bad emotion, but when we act or react in anger, it can cause harm. God does not want us to avoid being angry; he wants us to acknowledge our anger as a sign that something is not the way it is supposed to be. But God invites us to surrender our anger to him and pick up his mantle of love.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26-27, ***"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."*** Paul doesn't tell us not to be angry, but not to sin in our anger, so we avoid giving the devil a foothold in our hearts. Laying down our anger is the step we must take. This Advent season, we are invited to acknowledge when we get angry, and to lay it down at the feet of Jesus, and pick up his mantle of love.

As hard as it is to lay down anger, especially when the people we are angry with refuse to lay down their anger, it takes our action of love for any change to happen and to break the cycle.

Be courageous and know that change takes time. If you can start the change within yourself, God can start bringing change within others.

Anger / Love

In this third week of the Advent Season, we are reflecting on the emotion of Anger. Anger is an emotion we are far too familiar with and an emotion that is celebrated in our society. This week we are reflecting on how we can surrender our anger to God, admitting when we feel it, and choosing to act in love rather than anger.

This week, read the reflection and pick one scripture to read and reflect on each day. Take the time to read this passage prayerfully, asking God to reveal how this passage can speak into your life this week.

Scriptures To Read and Reflect On This Week	
James 1:19-20	Psalms 103:8-10
Ephesians 4:25-32	Colossians 3:5-17
Matthew 5:21-24	Ecclesiastes 7:9

God of love, help me be slow to anger and filled with your love. Remind me that you created anger. Help me acknowledge when I feel it and turn it over to you. Help my life be a vessel, pouring out your love and grace to all I encounter in my life. Amen!

EMBODY YOUR PRAYER

- If you have someone in your life you are angry with, make an effort to forgive them and act and speak in love towards them?
- Write down the moments you feel angry this week and pray over the moments you experience it.

Joy / Joy

"Joy to the world; the Lord is come." These words ring loudly each Christmas season, and joy is one of the central themes found throughout Christmas. Despite Joy's presence in the Christmas season, sometimes it is hard to be joyful.

How can I be joyful with all that's been going on in my life? How can I be joyful with all that's going on in the world? How can I be joyful with (insert the reason from your own life)?

In Advent, and at Christmas, we are invited to step into joy. And the odd thing about joy is that God calls us to joy even when we don't feel like it. Joy is more than an emotion. Joy is a choice.

Paul says in Philippians 4, ***"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!"*** What are we supposed to rejoice in? God's presence. At Christmas, we are reminded that God sent his son, Jesus, to dwell with us. God is not far off; he is present among us, and because of that, there is cause to rejoice and be joyful.

The joy that was shared that night when the angels visited the shepherds is the same joy shared with us today. No matter what we may be facing in our lives, the Joy of God's presence in our incarnate Savior Jesus is our reason for joy.

No matter the emotions we are feeling this Christmas: contentment, peace, sadness, despair, anger, anxiety, happiness, we are called to be joyful in God's presence.

As we draw close to Christmas, we need to remember the joy of Jesus and what his arrival on earth means for us. Let that joy seep into your bones and flow out of your life with everything you do.

He has come. He is here. He is coming again!

Joy / Joy

In this fourth week of the Advent Season, we are reflecting on the emotion of joy. Joy is one of the central themes of Christmas and a theme that is easy to talk about, but hard to put into action. Joy is something we can put on this Christmas, not the joy of the season, but the joy of Christ's birth and how God's presence is with us.

This week, read the reflection and pick one scripture to read and reflect on each day. Take the time to read this passage prayerfully, asking God to reveal how you can let the joy of these passages seep into your life this week.

Scriptures To Read and Reflect On This Week	
Philippians 4:4-9	Psalms 16
Hebrews 12:1-2	Romans 15:13
John 15:9-17	Luke 2:1-20

God of joy, fill my heart with the joy of your constant presence. Help me rejoice this Advent season about the arrival of your son Jesus and the impact his birth, life, death, and resurrection have on my life. Help me be a joy-filled person who shares this joy with everyone I meet this week. Amen!

EMBODY YOUR PRAYER

- Speak words of encouragement to a friend or family member in your life. Call, text, or write them a letter.
- The next time you are in a drive through line, pay for the person's item behind you to pass some joy along.

the Birth of Jesus

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, *"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

the Mosaic of Christmas

Christmas is a season filled with emotions because Jesus was born and lived as a human. Being human means Jesus lived a life full of emotions.

Jesus experienced contentment, sadness, anger, joy, and all the emotions we feel in our lives. At Christmas, we are reminded of this and how we will carry multiple emotions into this Christmas season. Oftentimes, we are carrying joy in one hand and sorrow in the other.

In this Christmas season, we can celebrate that God created a wide range of emotions and know that he is with us no matter what emotion we may be feeling this Christmas.

For when we are feeling content this Christmas, we can remember the **Peace** that can be found in Christ. When we are feeling sadness, we can remember the **Hope** of Jesus' birth. When we are feeling anger, we can remember Jesus' mantle of **Love**. When we are feeling joy, we can remember God's **Joy** that is shared with us.

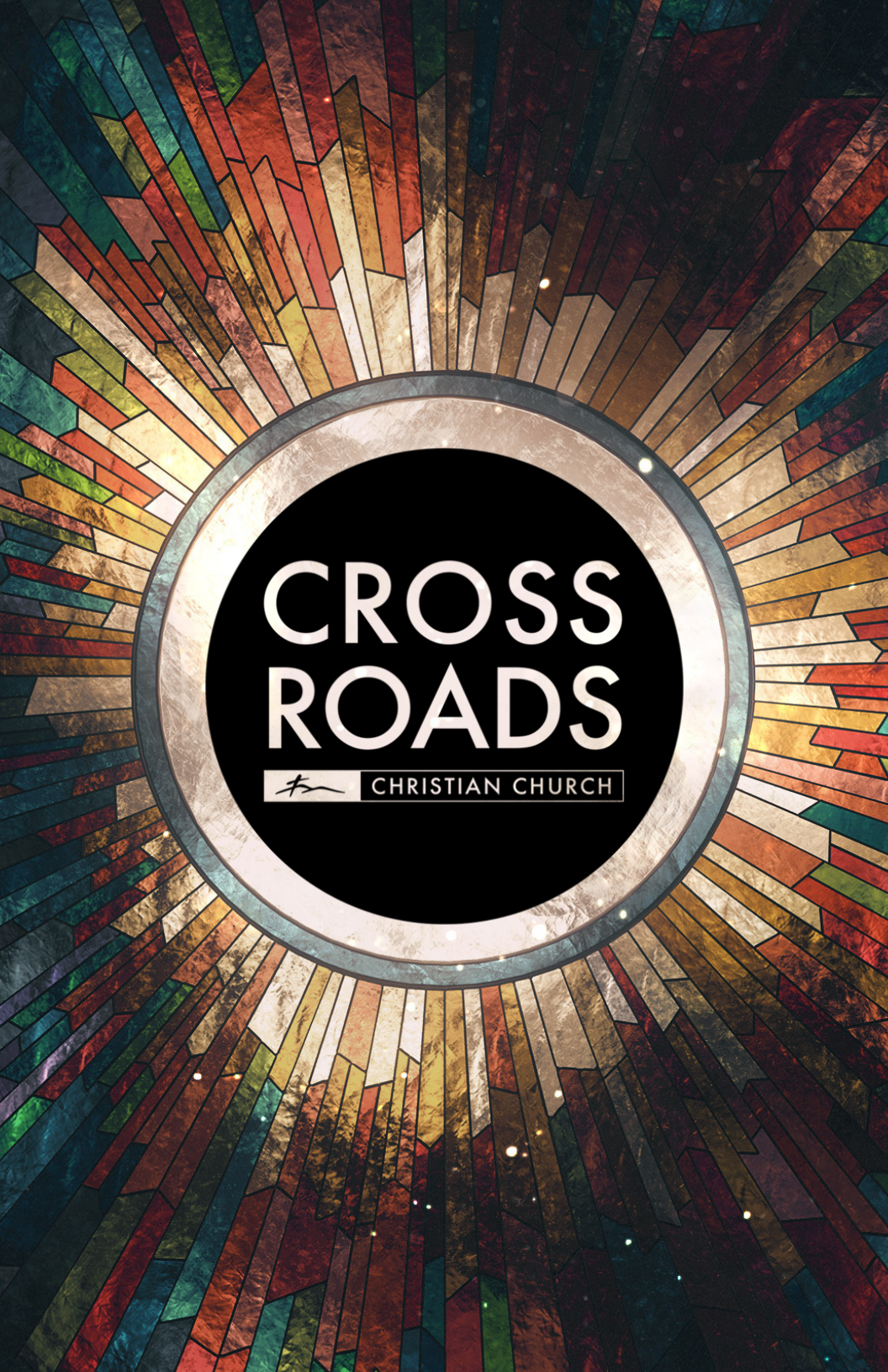
God, thank you for making us with a wide range of emotions and for sending your son to live in this emotion-filled world. Help us turn to Christ this Christmas and see him as the exemplar of our emotions. No matter what we might be feeling this Christmas: contentment, sadness, anger, or joy, help us be filled with your hope, peace, joy, and love this Christmas. Help us celebrate the arrival of your son and all that means for us and our salvation.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Amen!

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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The background is a vibrant, multi-colored stained glass sunburst pattern. The rays radiate from a central circular frame, with colors ranging from deep reds and oranges to bright yellows, greens, and blues. The central circle has a metallic, textured border.

CROSS ROADS



CHRISTIAN CHURCH