



# ADVENT



*Glory to the Newborn King*

CHRISTMAS 2022



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GLORY TO THE  
NEWBORN  
KING

The season leading up to Christmas is traditionally called “Advent” and celebrates the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth. The word “advent” has its origin in a Latin word that means “coming” or “arrival.” In Advent, we look back on the first coming of Jesus, born as a baby in Bethlehem, while also looking forward to his second coming – when he will return to make wrong things right and renew all things. Just as the Lenten season precedes our observance of Good Friday and Easter, so too the Advent season precedes Christmas Day and gives us space to reflect, to remember, and to respond in worship and adoration.

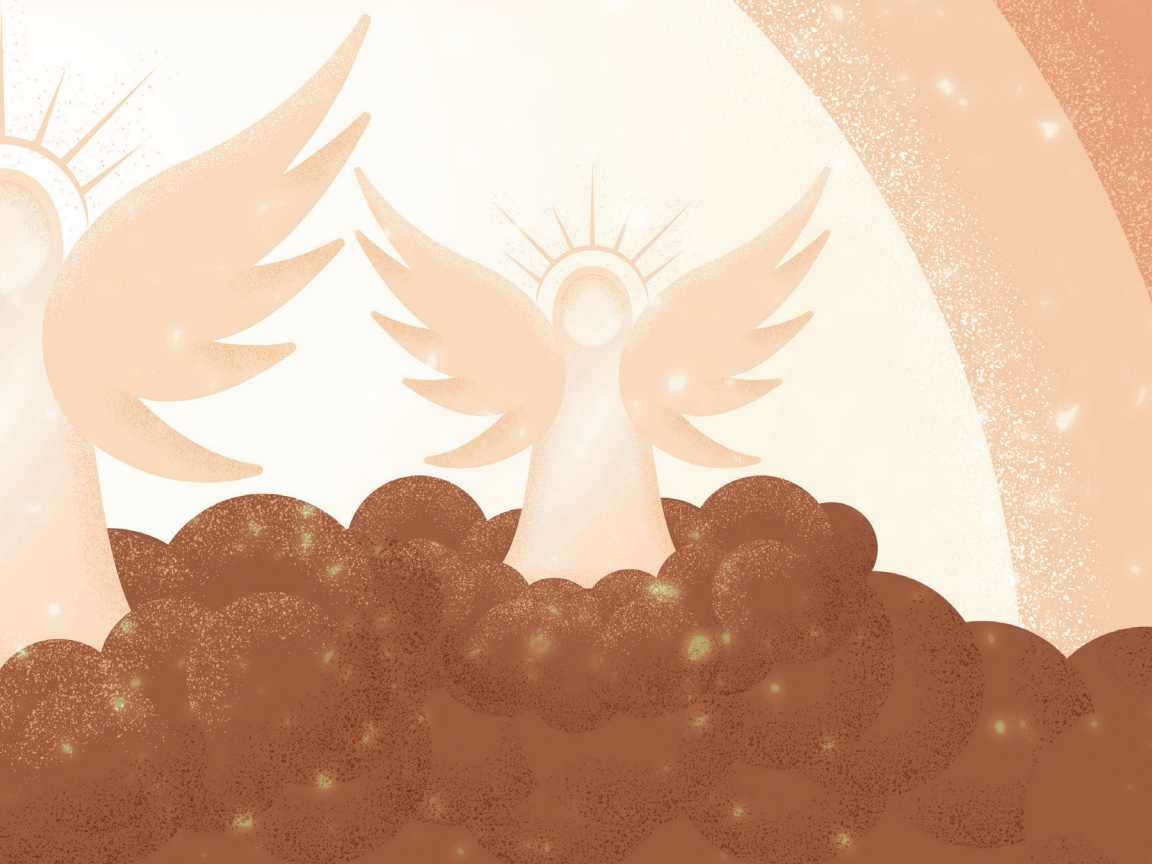
This resource is designed to help you navigate this season with *anticipation* and *expectation*. We know that it’s so easy to get swept up in the busyness of the holiday season. There may be times in the coming weeks where you can’t wait to “get through” the holidays. Our aim here is to ground you in the timeless truth of Scripture while releasing you to be on mission in your circle of influence. At the conclusion of this booklet, we’ve included a Christmas Eve invite card that you can deliver to a friend, neighbor, or family member. This is a great opportunity to invite someone to join you at one of our campuses for a Christmas Eve worship service. There’s also a Christmas cookie recipe you can use to bless someone this season.

We are celebrating the glory of Christmas – when God came to earth and put on human flesh to redeem humanity and bring us back to God. There is no better news than this! So we invite you to contemplate on the glory of God this Advent season.

# GLORY HIGH



# IN THE BEST



## LUKE 2:4-14

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> **Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**  
<sup>14</sup> **“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**





HARK!  
THE HERALD  
ANGELS SING  
GLORY TO THE  
NEWBORN KING  
PEACE ON EARTH  
AND MERCY MILD  
GOD AND SINNERS  
RECONCILED

As the Advent season begins, we start by reading about an Angel who interrupts a normal night for some shepherds. These angels bring them life-altering news, and they immediately run to find out more. It's the news that we may be used to hearing around this time of year: the "good news that will cause great joy for all people." We start Advent here – not out of obligation or duty, nor out of familiarity or mere "tradition." It's not just a call for us to remember a seasonal Scripture, but a deep call for us to reorient our hearts.

Christ has come to reconcile us and God, to bring peace, and salvation. It's easy for us to get caught up in the season, the busyness that it brings (or maybe, the mundane that life brings) and we coast past the truth about this season. Christ has come. Peace is here. Joy can be found! At the mention of this news, heavenly hosts erupted in praise saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven." The outpouring of this good news is to glorify God, to bring him praise, and to live in his joy. Are we glorifying our Lord and lifting him into his rightful place in our lives? Are we rejoicing as people who have been reconciled? Or are we flying by because we've convinced our hearts that the good news of this season is everything but him? Are we breezing by the manger because we've been there before?

The right response for us is that of the angelic host: to direct all glory to God. Yes, that's especially true in this Christmas season. But it ought to be true of us always – that our lives are to be devoted to glorifying the One who has come. He is worthy of our worship at this – and every – season!

**REFLECT**

Take a moment and gauge your “emotional pulse” as this Advent season begins. What are you feeling? What are you looking forward to? Just as important, what are you not looking forward to as you head into this season? Why? Make a few notes for yourself about how you are approaching the beginning of Advent.

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When we value someone’s viewpoint or opinion, we sometimes say that we “give them the most weight” in the discussion. That’s because someone else’s uninformed position may get “less weight” than the person we respect. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for “glory” (chavod) carried with it the idea of “weight” or “heaviness.” To glorify God, then, means we give God the most weight in our lives. So ask yourself: does God get the most weight in my life? Where does he? Where doesn’t he?

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In light of what you have reflected on, write out a prayer to God in the space below. Begin your prayer with this phrase:

**God, I want to glorify you more in my life because...**

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# GLORY LOW



# IN THE WEST



## HEBREWS 2:5-11

JESUS MADE FULLY HUMAN

<sup>5</sup> It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified:

**“What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
a son of man that you care for him?**

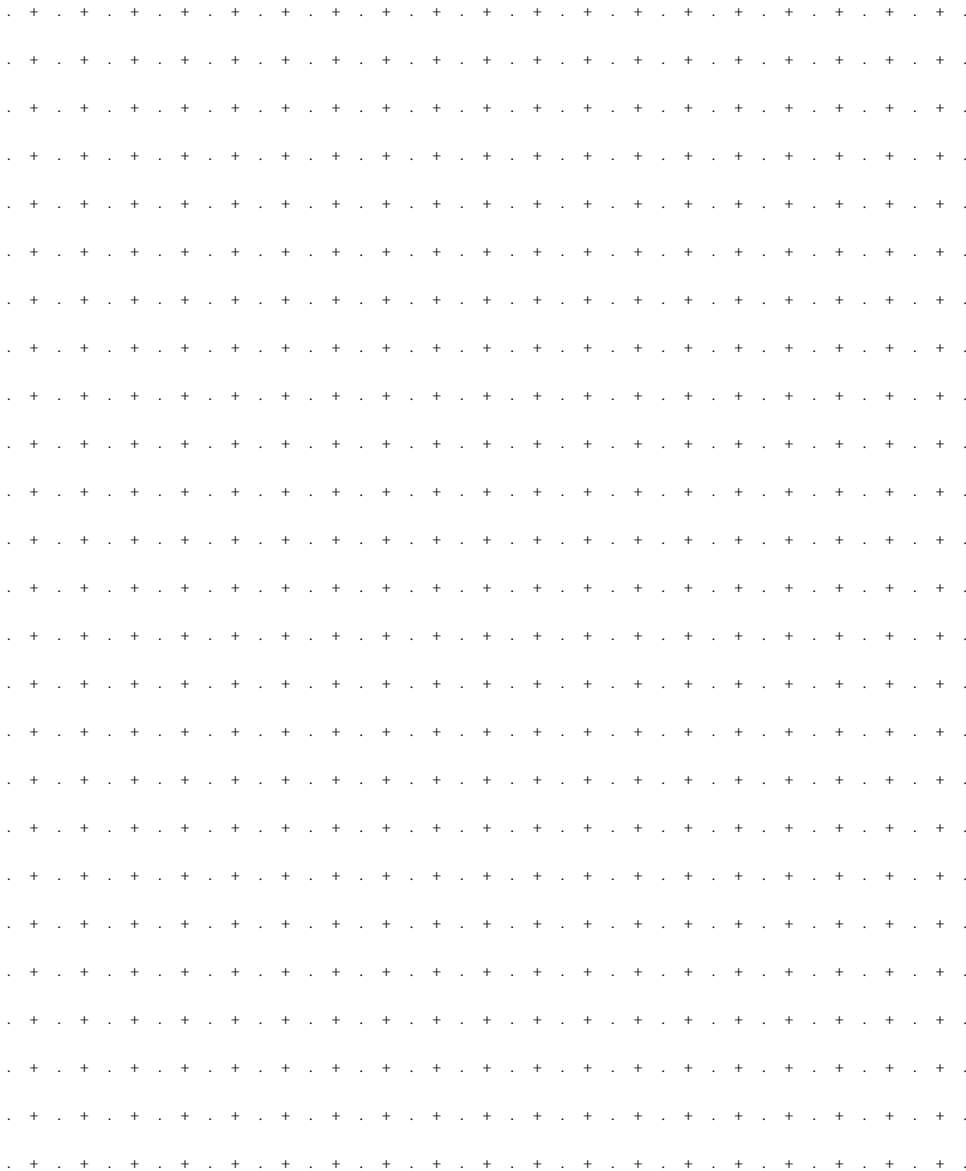
**<sup>7</sup> You made them a little lower than the angels;  
you crowned them with glory and honor**

**<sup>8</sup> and put everything under their feet.”**

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. <sup>9</sup> But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup> In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.





MILD HE LAYS  
HIS GLORY BY  
BORN THAT MEN  
NO MORE MAY DIE  
BORN TO RAISE THE  
SONS OF EARTH  
BORN TO GIVE  
THEM SECOND  
BIRTH

You've probably already heard the phrase "Christmas miracle" used a time or two this season. But sometimes, it's not used to truly describe something miraculous that only God could do. We're probably more likely to hear someone say that getting a parking space in front of Target is a "Christmas miracle." But is that really what this phrase means?

Consider this instead: the God of all creation, the one who is enthroned in the Heavens, sent his son Jesus to be born into the world as a baby. That's a Christmas miracle! Consider this as well: God did this so that we no longer have to experience death and separation from God. A miracle! This baby came to bring many sons and daughters to glory (Hebrews 2:10), making them alive in himself (Ephesians 2:5).

He walked where we walked, experienced what we experienced, and suffered death for our sins so that we would no longer have to die. He ultimately destroyed the power of sin and the grave. This really is the miracle of Christmas, as C.S. Lewis put it: "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." Or in the Apostle Paul's words, "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9b). This is a miracle, because only God could do this – and only God did.

REFLECT

Jesus was (and is) fully God and fully human at the exact same time. Focus for a moment on Jesus' humanity – that he lived in a real, physical body like yours. Now read **Hebrews 2:14-15**. Why was it necessary, from this Scripture, for Jesus to “share in [our] humanity”?

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Though Jesus shares in our humanity, he has never sinned. Even when tempted, he overcame temptation and remained faithful to his Heavenly Father. Read **Hebrews 2:18** and **4:14-16**. What do these verses teach us? To whom should we run when we are tempted? Why?

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In light of what you have reflected on, write out a prayer to God in the space below. Begin your prayer with this phrase:

**Lord Jesus, thank you for leaving the glory of heaven and humbling yourself to be like us. I am in awe of...**

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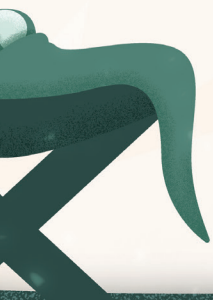
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# BEH HIS G



# GOLD GLORY



## JOHN 1:1-14

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

<sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—  
<sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

<sup>14</sup>**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**





HAIL THE  
HEAVEN-BORN  
PRINCE OF PEACE  
HAIL THE SON OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS!  
LIGHT & LIFE TO ALL  
HE BRINGS RISEN  
WITH HEALING IN  
HIS WINGS

If you're a parent, you can never forget the first time you held your newborn child. Or maybe you're an aunt or uncle or friend, and have had a similar experience. The first time you hold that precious newborn, your heart is flooded with love and gratitude. You're just listening to their breathing and cooing, embracing this little life and filled with awe. What will their voice sound like? What will their hobbies be? There is a lot that is unknown, but that doesn't stop us from a sense of expectation and wonder.

Have you ever sat and thought about what it must have been like to look upon Jesus? If we can feel this way about children who are born with a sin nature, imagine what that must have been like for Mary and Joseph – to look upon the sinless, spotless Son of God in their arms. After that first advent, everything changed. The fulfillment of so many prophecies now born in the flesh, the Word now became Human, and the glory of the Father's one and only Son now making his home among us. It must have been a glorious sight.

To see Jesus was to see his glory – and one day, his glory will be seen by all. He has the name that is above every name and the heaven-born prince will secure peace everlasting. Though it will be as clear to all as the sun breaking the dawn, the second advent is still yet to come and so many prophecies will still come to pass. The risen Jesus will return, not as a lowly baby, but as highly exalted King. Everything will forever change, for the reign of darkness will end! A new day will dawn for all of God's people as we forever delight in the glory of none other than Jesus Christ Himself.



In light of what you have reflected on, write out a prayer to God in the space below.  
Begin your prayer with this phrase:

**Heavenly Father, thank you for making yourself known through Jesus, because...**

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# CHRISTMAS EVE

*Evening Liturgy*

As you prepare for bed tonight, read the following passage out loud.

## LUKE 2:1-20

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

<sup>1</sup> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company

of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup>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.”

<sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.





Use the prayer below as a starting point, or pray using your own words in light of what you just read.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gospel – the good news that has brought great joy through your Son, Jesus. We celebrate that our Savior has been born – and he came to die for our sins. We identify with these lowly shepherds who first heard this good news, and we are humbled that you would bring this message to us – the undeserving. As we sleep tonight, we rest in your peace and in your favor, which has come to us through Christ our Savior.*

# CHRISTMAS DAY

*Morning Liturgy*



Before you unwrap any presents, read the following passage out loud.

### **MATTHEW 2:1-12**

#### THE MAGI VISIT THE MESSIAH

<sup>1</sup>After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup>“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they

saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## PRAY

Use the prayer below as a starting point, or pray using your own words in light of what you just read.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for waking us up in your mercy and grace today. Just as the Magi came to worship, we start this Christmas by worshipping you, Jesus. You are our Savior, our God, our Mediator, our Lord, our Friend. As we exchange gifts with one another today, remind us that you are the Greatest Gift of all. Teach us to be grateful for the gifts we receive, but even more, teach us to be grateful for the people who give the gifts. We also want our lives to be gifts to you today – that we would bring you glory in how we speak, think, and act. We praise you, Jesus, and thank you for this Christmas.*





# AFTER CHRISTMAS

*A Time of Reflection*

While we dig ourselves out from piles of wrapping paper and start breaking down the cardboard boxes, there might be a temptation to just get onto the next thing. But now that the Advent season is over, we shouldn't just return to "our previously scheduled programming" as if nothing has changed. The purpose of walking through this season of Advent is to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Savior – but it doesn't stop there. Its purpose is to carry us forward, into the beautiful reality that the Savior has come, and he has changed everything. Look at what the Apostle Paul said:

### **GALATIANS 4:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."**

You may not typically think of this as a Christmas verse, but take a second look: "When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman." That's the Christmas story! At just the right time – the perfect point in history – Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph. He stepped into the human story and took on human flesh. But this passage in Galatians is also so important because it tells us why this happened: "to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship." Jesus came to earth, and we celebrate that at Christmas. But he didn't come just to give us a beautiful nativity scene on our mantle. He didn't come





to fill us with warm feelings and sentimentality. He came to redeem us. He came to save us, to forgive us, to reconcile us.

The text says, “that we might receive adoption to sonship.” Jesus came to this earth so that we could be adopted in God’s family, becoming his sons and daughters. And because we are adopted as God’s children, “God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.” Father, Son, and Spirit are all at work here, bringing us out of our sin and darkness, and into the light of relationship with God.

So it’s the Day after Christmas. It’s not a holiday, per se. But it should be a holy day for us: a day to recognize that because of Christmas, we can look forward to Easter. Because of Christmas, we have been redeemed and given new life. Because of Christmas, we have the Spirit in our hearts, who gives us the ability to address God as “Dearest Dad” instead of as our judge. Christmas itself may be over, but the reality of Christmas never ends. “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)





# TWENTY TWENTY-TWO

*A Year in Review*

What has God taught me about Himself this year?

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What has God taught me about myself this year?

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A passage of Scripture that I've been coming back to a lot is: .....

A sermon that stands out to me is..... because .....

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I am most thankful for:

An unexpected sorrow:

The highlight of this year was...

An unexpected joy:

# TWENTY TWENTY-THREE

## *A Year Ahead*

We can't predict tomorrow, let alone the entire next year. If you could travel back in time to January 1, 2022, and if you told yourself all of the things that would happen in this calendar year, you wouldn't have believed it! (I mean seriously: 13 seconds left in the game? Still too soon?) Scripture testifies to this idea as well. Consider these verses:

### **ECCLESIASTES 8:7**

"Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?"

### **PROVERBS 27:1**

"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring."

### **JAMES 4:13-15**

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"





So while none of us knows what will happen in 2023, there are some truths that are timeless and unchanging. This is what we cling to in uncertainty. “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19a). We know that whatever will come, our God is still on the throne, Jesus is still our Savior, and the Spirit dwells within us. With that truth resting on your heart and mind, write out a prayer of trust and dedication to the Lord for 2023.

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# CHRISTMAS COOKIES

*On a Mission*



## CUT-OUT COOKIES

2 CUPS BUTTER  
1 1/2 CUP SUGAR  
4 EGGS  
1 TABLESPOON VANILLA  
4 TABLESPOONS MILK  
6 CUPS FLOUR  
6 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER

- Mix ingredients in the order written above.
- On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/4" thick.
- Cut out with desired Christmas cookie cutters.
- Transfer to parchment lined or greased baking sheet.
- Bake at 350° for 15 minutes, or until bottoms are lightly browned.
- Let cool completely before frosting or decorating.

## BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

1/2 CUP BUTTER  
3 CUPS POWDERED SUGAR  
1 TABLESPOON VANILLA  
3 TABLESPOONS MILK

- Cream butter.
- Mix in remaining ingredients until smooth.
- Add food coloring, if desired.
- Apply liberally
- Decorate & deliver to a friend, family member, or neighbor with the Christmas Eve invitation card included in the back of this book!

## INVITATION

### *Christmas Eve Service Invite Opportunity*

The Christmas season is filled with opportunities for us to invite our friends, family, and neighbors to hear about the good news of Jesus. Maybe that will mean bringing some Christmas cookies to a neighbor that tends to be forgotten, and telling them that you're there for them. Maybe it will be a chance to share your Grace Story with a family member around a dinner table. Or maybe it will mean inviting someone to join you at one of our Christmas Eve services.

As we all take time to pray for those in our circle of influence, we want to give resources that can help you to initiate a conversation. At the back of this book is blank tear-out Christmas card. The important thing is to make sure it's personal! It should feel casual and conversational. Before you write, pray and ask God to give you the right words to say. If you need help getting started, maybe it could look something like this:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you are enjoying this Christmas season, and I wanted to send you a note to tell you how much I appreciate you and your friendship. I'm sure you have plans for the evening of the 24th, but I wanted to invite you to join me/us for a Christmas Eve worship service at our church that morning. I'm going to be attending the 11am at the \_\_\_\_ Campus, and would be more than happy to give you a ride. I thought it would be great to celebrate Christmas this way with you...

#### **CHEEKTOWAGA CAMPUS**

200 Thruway  
Plaza Drive  
9am & 11am

#### **CROSSPOINT CAMPUS**

500 CrossPoint  
Parkway  
9am & 11am

#### **LOCKPORT CAMPUS**

25 Walnut  
Street  
9am & 11am

#### **NIAGARA FALLS CAMPUS**

520 66<sup>th</sup> Street  
9am & 11am

NEW YEAR

HAPPY

*and a*

*wishing you a*

MERRY

CHRISTMAS

PRODUCED BY



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716.636.2636  
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