



St. Andrew's Community Church

Advent Study 2023

Re•main Ex•pect•ant: *to continue unchanged in having or showing an excited feeling that something is about to happen.*


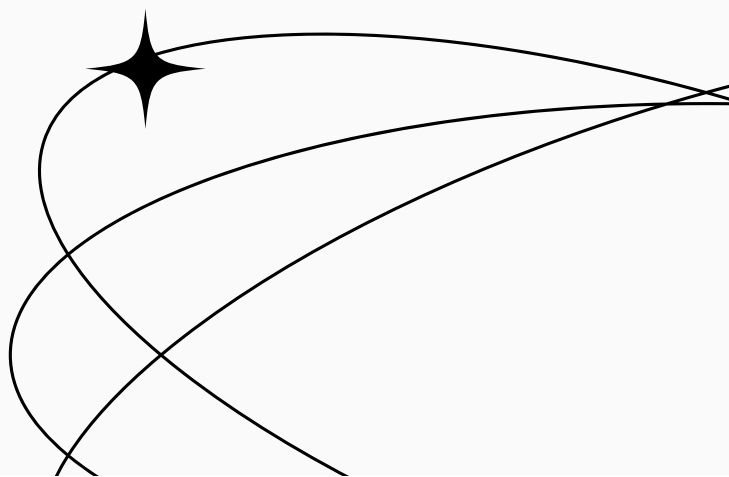


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ADVENT means “arrival” and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person. In Christian communities around the world, **ADVENT** refers to a four-week season in the Church calendar dedicated to the hopeful anticipation for the arrival of Jesus. It is a time to intentionally engage in **PRAYER, MEDITATION** and **SCRIPTURE STUDY** that emphasizes hope, peace, joy and love.

When the long-awaited Messiah came to earth, the nation of Israel had been expectantly waiting for His arrival for a very long time. Yet many had difficulty receiving Him because He wasn't what they expected. As we enter the season of Advent, we don't want to miss God at work in our lives. We must **REMAIN EXPECTANT**, open and willing to receive.

For some, you may feel like you have been waiting on God to move in your life for a very long time. **REMAINING EXPECTANT** can be as much about endurance as it is anticipation. Given that the word patience comes from the Latin word for suffering, it's no wonder when the Psalmist commands us to wait patiently for the LORD in Psalm 27:14, the very next words are to "be **BRAVE** and **COURAGEOUS**."

In this season of **ADVENT**, as we spend intentional time together in prayer and God's word, let's not lose heart and choose to **REMAIN EXPECTANT** for the hope, peace, joy and love that is only offered through **JESUS**.

**This advent study journal is adapted from the Advent word study guide that can be found at www.bibleproject.com.*

WEEK ONE - RE-MAIN HOPE-FUL

*It can be difficult to feel hopeful. But biblical hope means trusting in God's character and **CHOOSING** hope despite our circumstances.*

Week 1 - Day 1 – Monday, November 27

Watch the video provided by the Bible Project and consider how hope arrives in the world through Jesus.

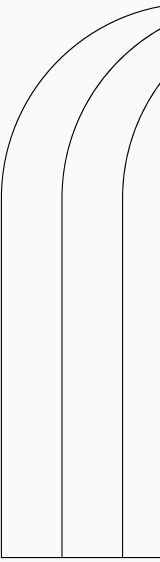
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/yakhal-hope/>





Week 1 • Day 2 – Tuesday, November 28

Read **Genesis 8:6-12** (note the mention of 40 days of waiting). After the earth suffers long under humanity's violence, God resolves to wash away corruption while preserving Noah and his family. The rain pours down, and for months Noah sways back and forth in an ark. He needs to yakhal (wait) in the middle of animal waste and landless seas. So what assurance is Noah waiting to receive? And how does the dove deliver that assurance?





Week 1 - Day 3 - Wednesday, November 29

Read **Psalm 130**. The psalmist is sure that if God preserved a record of sin, everyone would be washed out – it's a scary thought. What specific things about God bring the psalmist relief? What does he yakhal (wait) to receive from God?



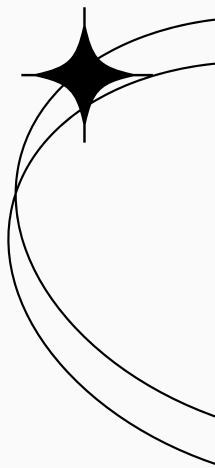
Week 1 • Day 4 – Thursday, November 30

Reread **Psalm 130**. What do you think the psalmist would do if He did not wait on God for healing and forgiveness? How do you think despair might lead to violence and corruption? Consider how the process of forgiveness removes corruption while preserving life. How is this similar and different from the flood and Noah's long wait on the ark?



Week 1 - Day 5 – Friday, December 1

Read **Luke 2:22-33** and pay special attention to details about the setting. Then, check out **Leviticus 12:1-8** and note the mention of 40 days of waiting (33+7). Why do Mary, Joseph, Jesus and Simeon go to the temple that day? What is Simeon waiting on God to do for Israel?



Week 1 - Day 6 - Saturday, December 2

Let's examine a few key verses, starting with **Luke 3:15-16**. Who does John the Baptist say the people have been waiting for? Now, read **Luke 3:21-22** and compare the message that accompanied the Spirit (appearing as a dove) with the message of Noah's dove. What similarities and differences do you notice?

How does the arrival of Jesus bring relief and assurance? Take time to reflect on this and any other themes, questions or key takeaways from this week's readings.



WEEK TWO - RE-MAIN PEACE-FUL

*Biblical peace is about **WHOLENESS** or **COMPLETENESS** and it was brought to earth in the person of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.*

Week 2 - Day 1 – Monday, December 4

Watch the video provided by the Bible Project and consider how peace arrives in the world through Jesus.

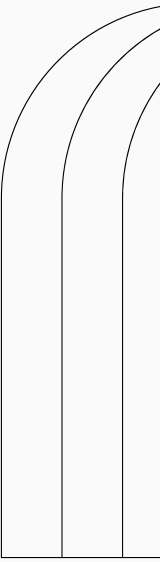
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace/>





Week 2 • Day 2 – Tuesday, December 5

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the arrival of a future king who would make a covenant of shalom (peace, well-being) with his people. This king would set the world right and heal all that has been harmed. Read **Isaiah 9:6-7**. What specific words or phrases stand out to you as you observe this passage and why?





Week 2 • Day 3 – Wednesday, December 6

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the arrival of the Prince of Peace, whose reign would lead to eternal shalom. Jesus' arrival fulfilled Isaiah's words. Read and reflect on **Luke 2:9-15**. Why do you think God announced the king's arrival to no-name shepherds? Record your thoughts about the nature of God and His Kingdom?



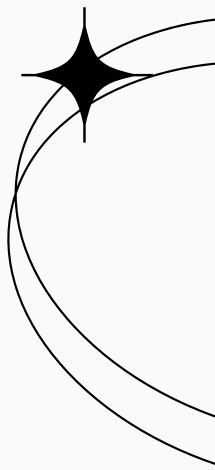
Week 2 • Day 4 – Thursday, December 7

The biblical story shows how humanity often chooses a way of life apart from God and suffers as a result. According to **Colossians 1:19-23**, what did God want to do to remedy this pain and how did He accomplish His desire through Jesus?



Week 2 - Day 5 – Friday, December 8

Jesus offers His peace to all people as a gift. How did Jesus make peace between two sharply divided people groups (Jews and Gentiles) and why did He do it? See **Ephesians 2:11-16**.



Week 2 - Day 6 – Saturday, December 9

Carefully read **Ephesians 4:1-3**. How can humility, gentleness, patience and love help maintain the unity Jesus calls His followers to? What happens to unity when one of these virtues is missing?



WEEK THREE - RE-MAIN JOY-FUL

*Biblical joy is more than a happy feeling. It's a **LASTING EMOTION** that comes from the **CHOICE** to trust that God will fulfill His promises.*

Week 3 - Day 1 – Monday, December 11

Watch the video provided by the Bible Project and consider how joy arrives in the world through Jesus.

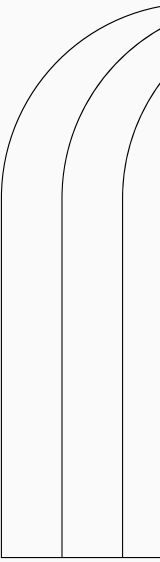
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/character-joy/>





Week 3 • Day 2 – Tuesday, December 12

The Israelites chose a path apart from God. As a result, they got exiled from their land and dominated by foreign nations. But the prophet Isaiah knew that sorrow would not have the final word with these people. He looked forward to the day when Yahweh would end pain and corruption to lead them into endless, joyful living. Read **Isaiah 49:13** and **Isaiah 51:11**. What does Isaiah tell us about God's character in these passages? What does Isaiah say will happen to God's people?





Week 3 - Day 3 – Wednesday, December 13

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the coming of Isaiah's redeemer. His prophecies were fulfilled with the arrival of Jesus. Read **Luke 2:9-11**. Why were the shepherds afraid? What reasons did the angels give for them to rejoice instead?



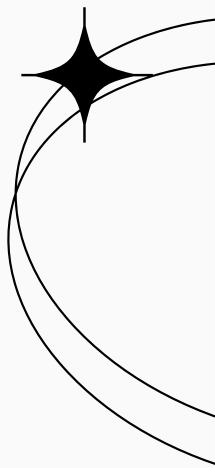
Week 3 - Day 4 – Thursday, December 14

Joy can persist in the harshest of circumstances because it depends on God and His promises. Read **Matthew 5:11-12**, **Acts 13:50-52** and **Hebrews 12:1-3**. According to these passages, what specific truths about God can sustain joy even through painful or dire situations?



Week 3 - Day 5 – Friday, December 15

When we see how Jesus' loving way of life has overcome death itself, joy starts to become strangely reasonable. But this doesn't mean it is wise to ignore or suppress sorrow. Read **2 Corinthians 6:3-10**. How did Paul integrate both joy and sorrow?



Week 3 - Day 6 – Saturday, December 16

Watch the Bible Project video on joy again and then take time to reflect on it, the scriptures you read this week and any other themes, questions or key takeaways from this week's devotions on joy. If you struggle with joy in your life or know someone who does, spend time praying and inviting the Holy Spirit to help you/them experience the joy of the Lord in all circumstances.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/character-joy/>



WEEK FOUR - RE-MAIN LOV-ING

*Biblical love refers to **MORE THAN JUST A FEELING**. It's about caring for someone regardless of their response and it's modeled perfectly by Jesus.*

Week 4 - Day 1 – Monday, December 18

Watch the video provided by the Bible Project and consider how love arrives in the world through Jesus.

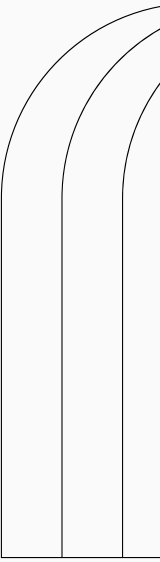
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/agape-love/>





Week 4 • Day 2 – Tuesday, December 19

When Jesus arrived, God's love became an embodied reality in our world. The God of the Bible doesn't merely express love through Jesus; He is love. As a triune God – Father, Son and Spirit – He always has been and forever will be an others centered, self-giving, communal being who thinks, feels and acts with pure love. Read **1 John 4:16** and **John 15:9-13**, taking note of the triune relationship and the theme of living and abiding. What do you observe?





Week 4 - Day 3 - Wednesday, December 20

Read **Mark 12:29-31** and take note of how Jesus quotes the Hebrew Bible (*the Old Testament*) (**Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Leviticus 19:34**). How does loving God relate to loving other people? Can you love God if you do not love people? (**1 John 2:9-11**)



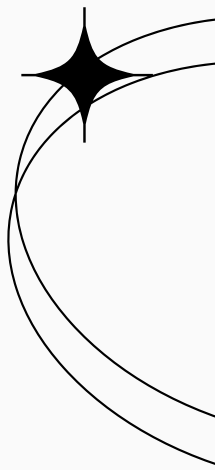
Week 4 - Day 4 – Thursday, December 21

The Hebrew Bible (*the Old Testament*) records the history of the ancient Israelites as they struggle to follow the commandment to love God and love others. If Israel had difficulty with this, how can we hope to do any better? Jesus helps us when He adds a new commandment to empower the greatest commandment. Compare **John 13:34** with **Mark 12:29-31**. What is the difference between these two commands? How does Jesus enable us to follow the greatest commandment?



Week 4 - Day 5 - Friday, December 22

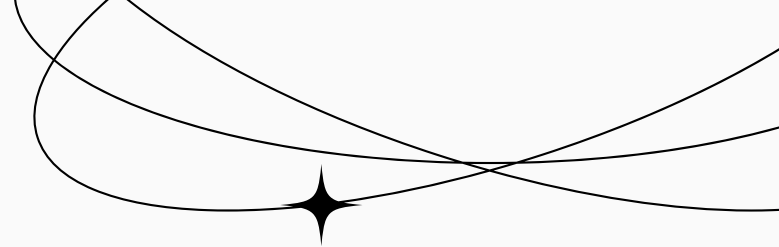

Agape love is not primarily a feeling that happens to people. This kind of love is a choice to act in ways that offer well-being to others. Using Paul's definition of love from **1 Corinthians 13:1-7**, consider how Jesus loves us. How is Jesus patient, kind, humble and selfless towards us? How does this kind of love challenge more popular modern notions?



Week 4 - Day 6 - Saturday, December 23

Jesus says the ultimate standard of authentic love is how well you treat the person you can't stand – your enemy. Let that settle in as you read **Luke 6:27-36**. Notice how God shows kindness to ungrateful, dishonest and violent people. What does this say about God's character? Consider how verse 36 describes God. How do you think love and mercy relate to one another?





**We hope you and your family can
join us at one of our Christmas Eve
services!**

10:00 am	Morning Worship
3:00 pm	Kid/Family Friendly Service
5:00 pm	Candlelight/Communion Service
11:00 pm	Candlelight/Communion Service



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