

ADVENT

SUNDAYS, BEGINNING DECEMBER 3



WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent is a celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and designed to remind us of our need for a savior. The Advent season lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these “last days” (*Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2*), as God’s people wait for the second return of Christ to consummate His eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf, leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward with eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that by looking back in celebration of what Christ has done already, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.

GIFTS

AN ADVENT GUIDE FOR JUBILEE CHURCH

Gifts...we all love to get gifts, don't we? It doesn't take very long for children to learn when their birthday is. Why is that? They are looking forward to their birthday because they know they are sure to receive gifts. It may be a special meal or time set aside with friends and family, but we learn our birth date early on because we have experienced the delight of getting wonderful surprises on that day.

There are few holidays that match the anticipation we have for our own birthdays; but Christmas is the biggest! Presents, decorations, special meals, familiar traditions, family, and friends all add up to some pretty amazing memories and wonderful stories. One of the ways that we maximize the delight of the holidays is that we begin preparations well in advance of the actual events. We begin dropping hints about things that we think would make wonderful gifts for us,...and for those we love, of course.

Advent is a time of anticipation. And our brains are hardwired to anticipate positive experiences that bring us joy. For centuries, followers of Jesus have spent the four weeks leading up to Christmas reminding themselves of the wonder and delight of the first Christians experienced when Jesus came 2,000 years ago. But this season is also a reminder to us that Jesus is coming again.

Over the next four weeks we want to build anticipation by considering some wonderful gifts that God gives to us.

WEEK 1

Beginning Sunday December 3, 2017
The Gift of Restoration

WEEK 2

Beginning Sunday December 10, 2017
The Gift of Repentance

WEEK 3

Beginning Sunday December 17, 2017
The Gift of Rejoicing

WEEK 4

Beginning Sunday December 24, 2017
The Gift of Returning

CHRISTMAS DAY

Monday December 25, 2017
The Gift of Presence

The Gift of Restoration

MATERIALS: Five candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white), matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

Things that are broken need to be restored. This is the Psalmist's prayer. His life is messy and out of control. When you're broken it's easy to feel that everyone is upset with you, especially God. Rather than experiencing His smile, we feel we are getting the hand, or that his back is turned toward us.

Christmas brings us the gift of restoration. Through Jesus, God smiles on us. His face shines toward us and we are saved.

STEP 1: Have a family member light one of the purple candles.

STEP 2: Have someone read the following:

*Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.*

*How long, Lord God Almighty,
will your anger smolder
against the prayers of your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.*

*You have made us an object of derision to
our neighbors,
and our enemies mock us.
Restore us, God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.*

PSALM 80:3-7

STEP 3: Have someone read "The Terrible Lie," pp. 28-36 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

STEP 4: Read the following quote:

"The message of Christianity is, ... 'Things really are this bad, and we can't heal or save ourselves. Things really are this dark—nevertheless, there is hope.'" –Tim Keller, Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ

STEP 5: Have a family member read the following prayer:

*God of justice and peace,
from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness,
that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder
before your marvelous deeds.
Raise our heads in expectation,
that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord
and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.*

STEP 6: Pray for a friend or neighbor who has not found hope in Jesus.

STEP 7: Sing a Christmas song together that speaks of the coming savior.

The Gift of Repentance

MATERIALS: Five candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white), matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

God made the first move to save us. We were a mess and couldn't do anything about it. We have believed wrongly that God is short of patience, that he simply wants to be rid of us and that his long delay in coming back for us must mean, 1.) He either doesn't exist, 2.) He doesn't care about sin as much as we thought or 3.) He does care, sin is big, but he is patiently waiting for us to return to him. Option 3 is where we are. Repentance is the gift of a changed mind concerning God and His patience toward us.

STEP 1: Have a family member light the candle from last week and another purple candle.

STEP 2: Have someone read the following passage. (If you have small children you may elect to read the highlighted portion only.)

*“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. **The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation...”

2 PETER 3:8-15a

STEP 3: Have someone read “The Present” pages 62-69 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

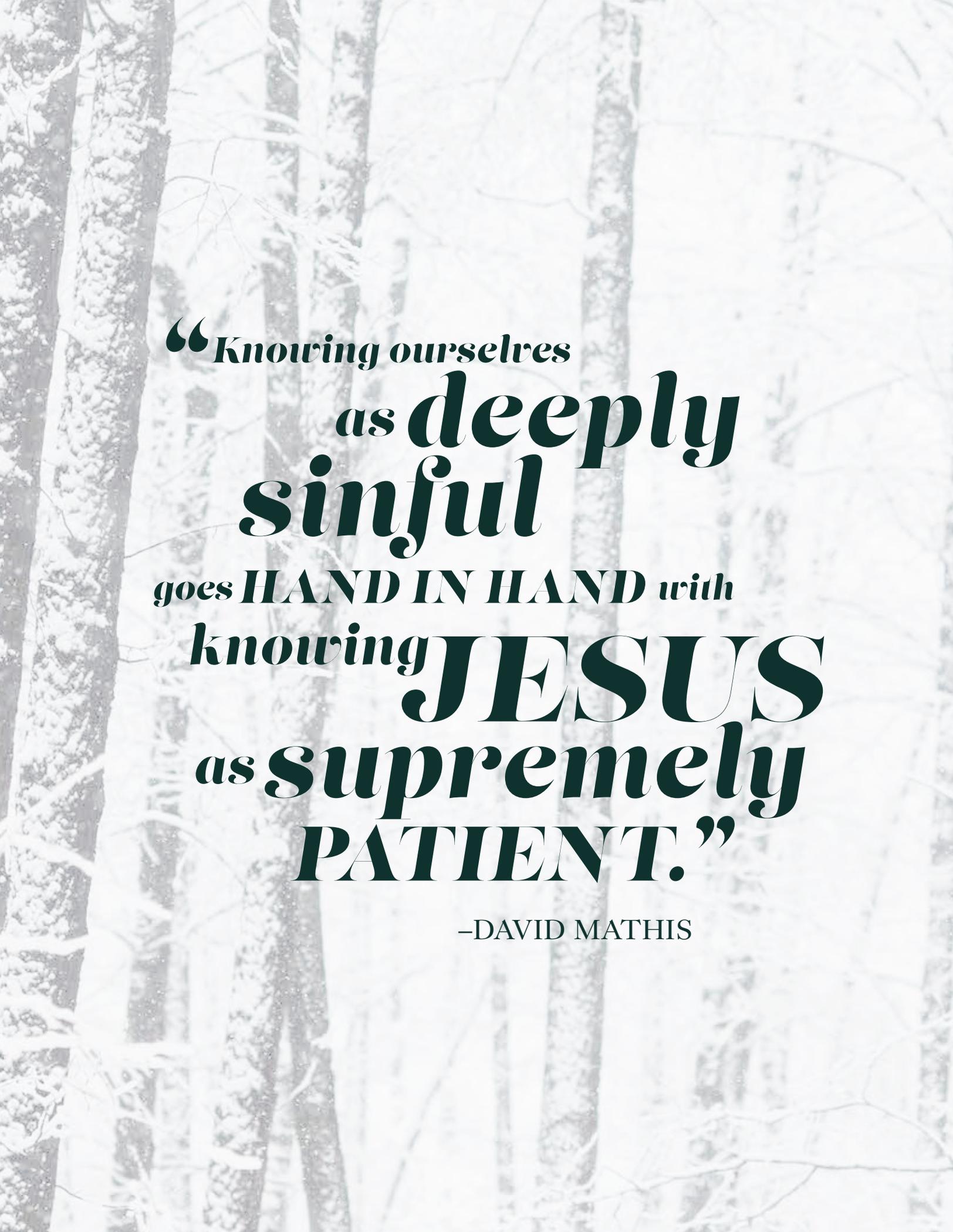
STEP 4: Read the following quote out loud:

“Knowing ourselves as deeply sinful goes hand in hand with knowing Jesus as supremely patient.”
–David Mathis, www.desiringgod.org/articles/perfect-patience-with-the-worst-of-sinners

STEP 5: Have a family member read the following prayer:

*“God of timeless grace,
you fill us with joyful expectation.
Make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen”*

STEP 6: Ask each family member who they are going to invite to the Christmas Eve service on December 24th.



**“Knowing ourselves
as deeply
sinful
goes *HAND IN HAND* with
knowing **JESUS**
as supremely
PATIENT.”**

—DAVID MATHIS

WEEK 3

Beginning Sunday December 17, 2017

The Gift of Rejoicing

MATERIALS: Five candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white), matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

There isn't a lot of good news in this world, but what God has done for us is the best news we could possibly receive. He didn't just send anyone to rescue us: he is our salvation. When Jesus appeared, he made salvation a possibility for everyone. This good news brings the gift of joy to all who hear and receive it!

STEP 1: Have someone light the candles from the last two weeks plus the pink candle.

STEP 2: Have someone read the following passage. (If you have small children you may elect to read the highlighted portion only.)

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.*

*Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us;
we are glad.*

*Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like streams in the Negeb!*

*Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!
He who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
bringing his sheaves with him.*

PSALM 126

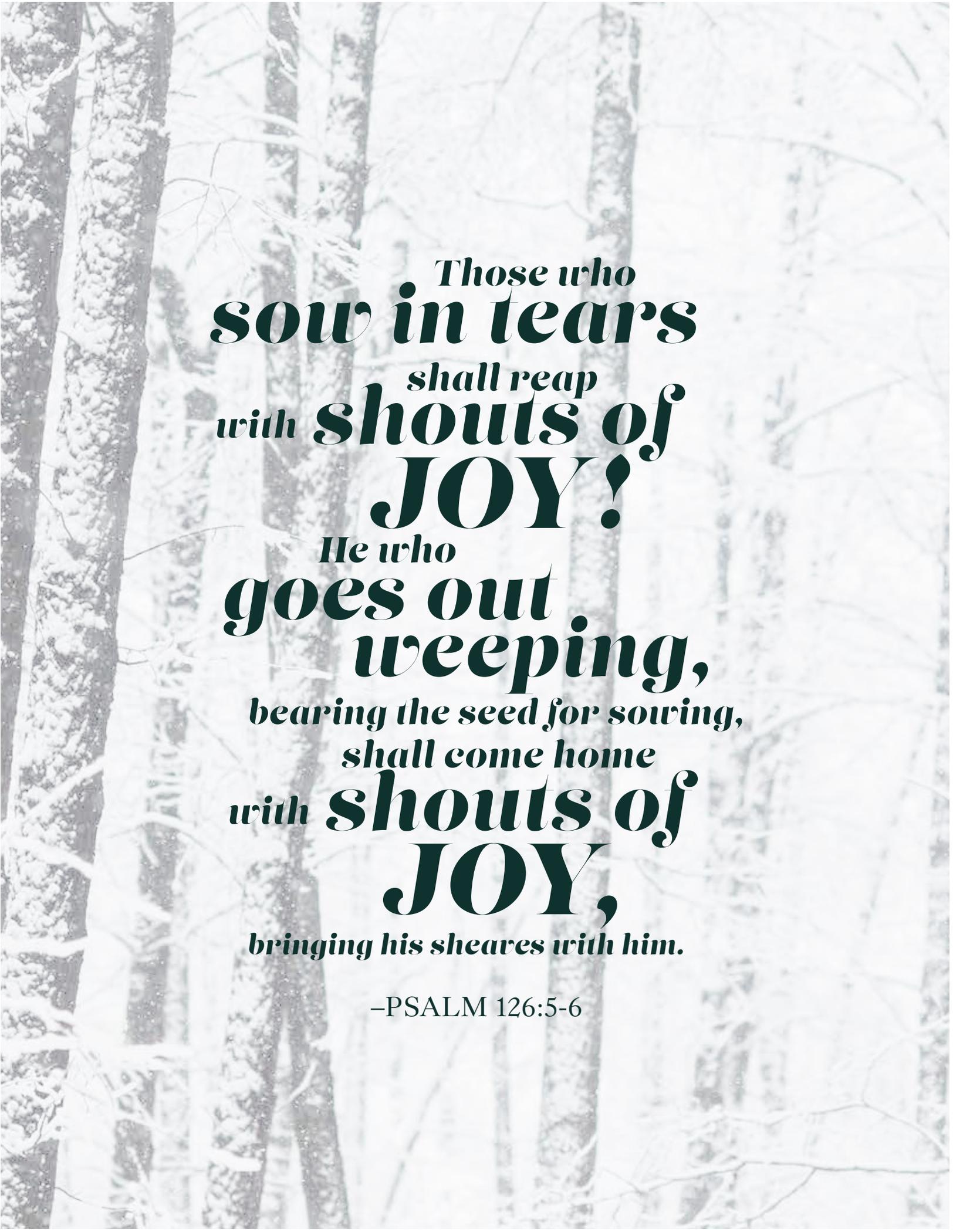
STEP 3: Have someone read "Running Away!" pp. 272-279 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

STEP 4: Have someone read the following:
"So throughout this psalm laughter, singing and rejoicing often are the evidence of a salvation to which the recipients have contributed nothing but subsequent joy. We took no part in it. It was done for us—we woke up to find it was true." –Alec Motyer

STEP 5: Who is the first person you shared the gospel with? Why is it important to tell others the good news of Jesus?

STEP 6: Encourage each other to share the seed of the gospel with others.

STEP 7: (optional) Consider Christmas caroling in your neighborhood or in a friend's neighborhood. Invite those you sing to to join you as you visit the next house.



Those who
sow in tears
shall reap
with **shouts of**
JOY!

He who
goes out
weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home
with **shouts of**
JOY,
bringing his sheaves with him.

-PSALM 126:5-6

The Gift of Returning

MATERIALS: Five candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white), matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

This final Sunday before Christmas we are reminded of two amazing gifts. The first is that Jesus came the first time to bear our sins. The second gift is that he is coming again to bring us to our ultimate home: the new heavens and the new earth!

STEP 1: Have a family member light the candles from the past three weeks and the remaining purple one for this week (the white one is lit on Christmas Day).

STEP 2: Have someone read the following. (If you have small children you may elect to read the highlighted portion only.)

Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said:

“I have granted help to one who is mighty;

I have exalted one chosen from the people.

I have found David, my servant;

with my holy oil I have anointed him,

so that my hand shall be established with him;

my arm also shall strengthen him.

The enemy shall not outwit him;

the wicked shall not humble him.

I will crush his foes before him

and strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him,

and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

I will set his hand on the sea

and his right hand on the rivers.

He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father,

my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’

And I will make him the firstborn,

the highest of the kings of the earth.

PSALM 89:19-27

STEP 3: Have someone read “A Dream of Heaven” pp. 342–348 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

STEP 4: Have someone read the following:

“Waiting is a period of learning. The longer we wait, the more we hear about him for whom we are waiting.”

–Henri J. M. Nouwen

STEP 5: While Christmas is a celebration that Jesus came, let’s also celebrate with eager anticipation that the one who bore our sins will come again to take us to our ultimate home!

My
faithfulness
and my
steadfast
LOVE shall be
with him...

He shall cry to me, 'You are
my Father,
my GOD &
the ROCK *of my*
salvation.'

and I will make him the firstborn,
THE HIGHEST
of the kings of the earth.

-PSALM 89:24-27

The Gift of Presence

MATERIALS: Five candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white), matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, by Sally Lloyd-Jones (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

STEP 1: Have a family member light the candles from the past four weeks and the white one for Christmas Day.

STEP 2: Have someone read the following. (If you have small children you may elect to read the highlighted portion only.)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

JOHN 1:1-14

STEP 3: Have someone read “The King of All Kings” pp. 192–198 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.

STEP 4: Have someone read the following:

“This is one truth that we have found hidden in every Christmas passage. In every other religion the founder points to eternal life, but because Jesus is God come in the flesh, he is eternal life. To unite with him by faith, to know him in love, is to have this life. Period, full stop. There is nothing else for you to achieve or attain.”
–Timothy Keller, *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ*

STEP 5: Read through, or sing, “Joy to the World”.

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room
and heaven and nature sing.
Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let men their songs employ
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy.
No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found.*



JOYto
the world!
The LORD
is come:
let EARTH
receive
her KING!

GOD of
justice &
peace, from the
HEAVENS

you rain down

mercy &
kindness,

that all on earth

may stand in awe

and **WONDER,**

before your

MARVELOUS **DEEDS.**

