

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved shirt, is looking intently at a Christmas tree. The tree is decorated with a large, textured pinecone ornament and small white lights. The background is softly blurred, showing other people in a festive setting.

# ADVENT GUIDE

# Getting Started

## **Here is what you need:**

1. A wreath of evergreens and five candles, 4 of the same size and one larger, all placed inside the wreath.
2. Find a prominent place to put the wreath such as your coffee table or fireplace mantle.
3. Once a week, gather around the wreath with your family or roommates and intentionally use this time to be filled with the wonder of God's great love demonstrated through the birth of Christ.

## **How to begin:**

1. Turn off the TV, radio, or other distractions and enjoy some silence
2. Light the particular candle(s)
3. Read the scripture and discuss it
4. Pray together



# The Miracle of Joy

A Relationship with the King

The Christmas season is celebrated, commemorated, and on the calendar because it reminds us of the greatest miracle; God showed up on the scene. The connection between heaven and earth was lost, the relationship between God and man was forgotten, and the world was without joy. It was then God miraculously intervened. Jesus, fully God and fully man, was born by the Virgin Mary with the mission of restoring joy to us by reconnecting us with God.

Jesus' whole life was marked by miracles. From His birth, His ministry of healings, casting out demons, raising the dead, feeding huge gatherings of people from a sack lunch, all the way to His resurrection, Jesus' life was saturated with the miraculous. In light of this, in our journey of faith we need to pray for, believe for, expect, and anticipate miracles from God! The miracle I was led to emphasize this Christmas of '18, at Sunnyside Foursquare Church, is the joy of knowing Jesus, simply Him.

We pray this devotional guide will help you and your family do two things. One, let it help you stay centered on Jesus, the *Miracle of Joy* this season, during what can be a hectic time. Secondly, may it remind you to share the *Miracle of Joy*, Jesus, with others throughout this incredible season. We've been blessed with the joy of Jesus let's not let anything rob us of that joy this Christmas season. Use this guide weekly to be strengthened in God's joy!

We pray this Christmas is marked with the *Miracle of Joy* along with other miracles too!

Merry Christmas,  
Pastor DJ & Jenny

# Need for a Miracle | Prophecy Candle

Sunday, December 2nd

The prophecy candle reminds us that God is faithful to His Word and His promises are true. The birth of Christ shattered 400 years of silence between God and the nation of Israel. Our Heavenly Father has never spoken louder than through the miraculous arrival of His Son to the earth.

## Light one of the smaller candles

### Read Matthew 1:18 - 25 ( Isaiah 7:14 )

*“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”*

### Questions:

- Where in your life do you need God to follow through on one of His promises?
- Many of God's promises are conditional, which means we have a part to play. As you trust God to be faithful to His part, are you being faithful to yours?

### Together as a family

Share a time with your children where you saw God fulfill a promise to you.

Is there a promise that your child is waiting on? Talk about it and take a moment to pray over them.

### Pray.

# Joy is Born | Bethlehem Candle

Sunday, December 9th

The Bethlehem Candle reminds us that God loves to give grace to the humble (Prv. 3:34) and draw near to the broken (Isaiah 66:2). Christ's birth in Bethlehem fulfilled Biblical prophecy (Micah 5:2), took place in the town of King David, and brought dignity to an overlooked area. Bethlehem means "house of bread" and it is where Jesus, the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48), was destined to be born.

## Light two of the smaller candles

### Read Luke 2 : 4 - 7

*"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."*

### Questions:

- When was the last time you asked Jesus to help you with something? What was the result?
- Can you think of someone at school, work, or church who is overlooked? How could you reach out and encourage them sometime soon?
- Take turns sharing the condition of your life when you first gave your life to Jesus. What difference has He made in your heart and life?

### Together as a family

Do a random act of kindness! Bring coffee to your child's teacher, pay for the person behind you, or get creative to spread Christmas joy to someone! You never know how God will use that small action to make a difference in someone's life.

### Pray.

# A Reason to Sing | Angel Candle

Sunday, December 16th

Jesus was determined to reach everyone with the Father's love. He was not born in a sterile and clean environment, rather He was born in the equivalent of a cave, with animals present, and laid in a feeding trough ("in a manger" | vs. 7b). This unconditional, eternal, unending, miraculous love is so great that when it appeared on the scene it summoned a great company of hosts who spontaneously showed up praising God for sending His Son, the King.

## Light three of the smaller candles

### Read Luke 2 : 8 - 14

*"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."*

### Questions:

- When was the last time you sang with all your heart to God with gratitude for Jesus, the *Miracle of Joy*, who you're blessed to know?
- The Christmas season can be hectic, busy, and overwhelming. Be determined to fill your days with praise and don't let anything steal your joy.
- Who are you planning to invite to sing praises with you on Christmas Eve? Encourage each other to make those invites as soon as you can.

### Together as a family

Drive around and look at Christmas lights! Bundle up with blankets, bring some cocoa, and enjoy the time together.

### Pray.

# Joy to Share | Shepherd's Candle

Sunday, December 23rd

The Shepherd's Candle reminds us that Jesus, the *Miracle of Joy*, came for all people. Shepherds in this day were outcasts, considered unclean, and not a part of normal society. The reality that the shepherds were the first to hear of Christ's birth provides hope for all people no matter their color of skin, language, culture, where they're from or where they've been. God loves all people and Jesus came to be Savior to all.

## Light four of the smaller candles

### Read Luke 2 : 15 - 20

*"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.*

### Questions:

- Do you have a hard time believing that God loves you and that Jesus came for you? If so, why?
- Is there a particular person or people group that you dislike or are critical towards?
- Have you considered asking God to forgive you and to change your heart towards them.
- Commit to share the *Miracle of Joy* with that person/group during this season.

### Together as a family

Talk with your kids about a person they may dislike. Discover ways together that your child can be a light in that person's life this Christmas season.

### Pray.

# Miracle of Joy | Jesus Candle

Monday, December 24th

Jesus' life began with the miracle of the virgin birth, concluded with the miracle of His resurrection, and His entire life was marked with the miraculous (John 21:25)! We certainly serve the God of miracles and He does not change. He was, is, and forever will be the God of miracles! One of the greatest miracles, if not the greatest, is when Jesus, the *Miracle of Joy*, comes into our hearts and infuses our lives with joy regardless of our circumstances or the difficulties we face. Having Jesus in our hearts and being compelled to share the good news of God's love with others is the *Miracle of Joy*! Merry Christmas!!

**Light all of the candles.**

**Read John 5:11**

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

**Together as a family**

-Take a moment and express your thankfulness for your relationship with Jesus, the *Miracle of Joy*, with those you're with.

- For those of you with kids at home did you bake the Birthday Cake for Jesus yet? If not, do that and wish Jesus a Happy Birthday!!

- Wish as many people you can a Merry Christmas!!

**Pray.**

# Sunnyside Advent

visit [sunnyside4.org](http://sunnyside4.org) for more information

## **Mission: Give Joy**

*December 2nd-16th*

*Locally* - We are partnering with the Department of Human Services to gift under served students this Christmas Season. Grab a name tag & bless a kid!

*Globally* - Compassion First rescues girls from human trafficking & gives them new lives. Please stop by the info booth for the list of needs this season & find out how you can partner with this meaningful outreach

## **MIDWEEK Elf Night**

*Wednesday, December 5th @ 6PM*

The MDWK Annual Elf Night is back! We'll travel through the seven layers of the candy cane forest, compete in a Gingerbread House Contest, and watch a Christmas classic.

## **Meet + Greet**

*Sunday, December 9th following the service*

If you are newer to Sunnyside and/or looking to get connected you're invited to meet the staff, hear our vision, and discover how to grow in your faith here in this community! No RSVP is needed and children are welcome for this brief gathering right after service.

## **MIDWEEK Christmas Party**

*Wednesday, December 12th @ 6PM*

Grab your friends and an ugly sweater and join us for a MDWK Christmas! Cookies, games and a telling of 'Twas The Night Before Christmas!

## *Christmas Eve Service*

*Monday, December 24th @ 4PM and 6PM*

Join us for a traditional candle light service for the whole family.

Come anticipating dynamic worship, Christmas carols, a reading of the Christmas Story and time spent with family and friends! Kids Ministry will be available at the 4PM service for kids under 2 years.

## **Family Service**

*Sunday, December 30th @ 10AM*

Bring the whole family for our last service of the year! Our 1st-5th grade kids will be joining us in the service for worship with a fun and engaging message!

# JOIN US / December

<i>sun</i>	<i>mon</i>	<i>tue</i>	<i>wed</i>	<i>thur</i>	<i>fri</i>	<i>sat</i>
						1
2 Mission: Give Joy	3	4	5 MIDWEEK Elf Night	6	7	8
9 Meet + Greet	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Mission: Give Joy Ends	17	18	19 MIDWEEK Christmas Party!	20	21	22
23	24 Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas	26	27	28	29
30 Family Service	31					

## Mission: Give Joy

*December 2nd - 16th*

Locally-Department of Human Services | Grab a tag, bless a kid!

Globally -Compassion First | Visit [compassionfirst.org](http://compassionfirst.org) to give!

## Advent Begins

*Sunday, December 2nd*

We've been blessed with the joy of Jesus let's not let anything rob us of that joy this Christmas season. Use this guide weekly to be strengthened in God's joy!

## *Christmas Eve*

*Monday, December 24th*

Join us for a traditional candlelight service for the whole family with two service times at 4PM and 6PM!