

## *Gifts Of Christmas Sermon Series | Session 1: The Gift Of Hope*

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This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

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This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

**A Prayer Before You Prepare |** Heavenly Father, all glory, honor, and praise belongs to You alone! You are worthy of all of my adoration. You alone formed the world and called what you created "good." Thank you for being who you are. Thank you for creating me in Your likeness. Thank you for your abundant mercy and grace. Every good gift, including your Word, is a gift to me. Today, I want to worship you! Let my life be for you and your glory. Lord, please give me your wisdom and insight now as I approach your Word. Help me to discern the truth of this text. Help me not to rely on my own understanding. Remove my ego, wants, and selfish desires. Guide and direct me as I prepare to teach the truth of your holy scriptures to the students whom you love and have placed within my care for such a time as this. May the words I speak be those you want to be spoken, may the words they hear be those you want to be heard, and may Your name be glorified through it all. Amen!

**Series Snapshot** | *Gifts Of Christmas* is a four-session series that will help your students understand the gifts God gives us through the incarnation of Christ that we celebrate at Christmas: hope, peace, joy, and love.

**Series Overview** | We live in a world that is filled with hopelessness. A place where peace is often fleeting, war is common, and conflict is constantly lurking around the corner. We live in a world where joy is lost in the hustle and bustle of life. Our world is one where love can feel empty. This is the world in which God sent His Son Jesus to come and save us from sin—to give mankind hope, peace, joy, and love. *Gifts Of Christmas* will remind us that because of the greatest Gift of all, we can have life and know how to share His hope, peace, joy, and love with the world. Each of these four sessions of this series will represent one of the traditional advent themes found in the story of Christ’s birth, life, death, and resurrection.

- **Session 1 – The Gift of Hope** (Genesis 3:8-15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:25-32, Luke 2:36-38, Romans 5:1-5, Titus 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 15:19-20, Matthew 28: 19-20, 1 Peter 3:14-15) | In the beginning, when Adam and Eve first sinned, all seemed hopeless because of the consequences of sin. But God foretold of a hope that was coming to save the world. This hope was born thousands of years later in Christ’s birth. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we too can have hope when all things seem lost.
- **Session 2 – The Gift of Peace** (Genesis 3:1-6, Luke 2:8-14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 59:2, Romans 1:18, Romans 5:1, 8-10, Ephesians 2:14, Romans 12:18) | One of the consequences of sin is that it separates us from God. Our flesh is at war with God, and there is no peace. Throughout history, humankind has strived for true peace. But this peace is not a political peace but a peace that God gives us in the reconciliation that Jesus makes possible through His death and resurrection.
- **Session 3 – The Gift of Joy** (Luke 2:8-20, John 9:1-24) After Jesus’ birth, Angels appeared to shepherds and told them of the birth of Christ. After the shepherds found Jesus, they hurried to tell the town about the Messiah who had come. Their joy could not be contained, for the Savior had come.
- **Session 4 – The Gift of Love** (1 John 4:7-12) | This is love: that God sent Jesus to live, love, die, and rise from the dead to save us. And we show this by loving one another. God’s love has been poured out to all through Jesus. As we look to Him, that love transfers to how we are to love others.

### Gifts Of Christmas Series | Session 1

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | We live in a world where hope is in short supply. It can seem like everywhere we turn, there is a reason to be defeated or feel hopeless. The truth of the Gospel is that there is always hope. Always! In this session, we will examine how Jesus’ birth personified this ultimate hope.

**Key Takeaway** | In a world full of hopelessness, God sent the gift of Hope to us through Christ.

**Scripture Focus** | Genesis 3:8-15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:25-32, Luke 2:36-38, Romans 5:1-5, Titus 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 15:19-20, Matthew 28: 19-20, 1 Peter 3:14-15

**What You May Need** | *Optional Illustration:* Best Gifts (Personal Story). *Optional Illustration:* Hopeless (Personal Story). *Optional Illustration:* Resurrection of Hope (Personal Story).

### I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to the first session of a new series we're starting called *Gifts Of Christmas!*
- B. One of the things I look forward to the most each year at Christmas is the gifts, both the giving and the receiving of them.
  - 1. **Optional Illustration: Best Gifts**
    - a) **NOTE: Share a personal story about one of the best/worst gifts you've received. If you have any images to support it with, display them to your group.**
    - b) **Or bring a present on stage with you, and talk about the mystery of gifts. That box wrapped in paper is full of so much potential – maybe it's the best or worst gift you could ever gift. But with each wrapped gift comes the anticipation of what it could be.**
- C. The Bible tells us about four great gifts that are a part of the Christmas story. Each year, Christians across the world celebrate the Advent of Christ.
  - 1. You might not be familiar with the word "Advent." Advent is a word that comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival."
  - 2. In the Christian church, Advent refers to a four-week season of remembering and preparation leading up to Christmas, where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Earth **AND** His expected return.
  - 3. Advent begins on the Sunday closest to November 30<sup>th</sup> and ends on December 24<sup>th</sup>.
  - 4. Each week of Advent focuses on a different theme— hope, peace, joy, and love.
- D. In this series, we are going to be intentional about slowing down during the lead-up to Christmas and spending some time focusing on four gifts that Jesus' birth gives us. In each session, we will be unwrapping one of the four gifts celebrated with the season of Advent (hope, peace, joy, and love) to learn more about why each of these gifts is so important. Along the way, we will be reminded that because of the greatest Gift of all (the gift of Jesus), we can have life and know how to share His hope, peace, joy, and love with the world.
- E. Let's pray before we jump into the gift of hope.

### II. Tension

- A. We live in a time when mental health has become a national crisis. Many of us have friends or family members who are battling with mental health issues. Anxiety and depression are especially on the rise in young people. I wouldn't be surprised if there are some of you who are sitting here right now who are struggling with anxiety, depression, or some other issue. And you wouldn't be alone...
  - 1. ACCORDING TO HHS.GOV, "MANY ADOLESCENTS EXPERIENCE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH, BUT AN ESTIMATED 49.5% OF ADOLESCENTS HAVE HAD A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES."  
Source: <https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/mental-health-adolescents>

2. SUICIDE IS THE 4<sup>TH</sup> LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG 15-29 YEAR OLDS.  
Source: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide#>

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3. APPROXIMATELY 32% OF TEENS HAVE ANXIETY DISORDER, AND 13% OF TEENS HAVE DEPRESSION.

Source: <https://opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/mental-health-adolescents>

- B. In a time when more and more people are connected virtually, isolation, depression, loneliness, and hopelessness are on the rise.
1. **Optional Illustration: Hopeless**
    - a) ***NOTE: Think of a time when you felt hopeless and did not know how you were going to get out of your mess. Try to capture and communicate your feelings when it felt like you didn't have a solution for your predicament.***
- C. Just like when I found myself hopeless, we can all feel hopeless. The good news is that the Bible shares how we can find hope. As we will see, THE FIRST GIFT OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS HOPE. We're going to look at a few verses and learn four different truths about hope that we learn from Scripture.

### III. Scripture

- A. We are going to begin our deep dive into hope by looking at the first book of the Bible: The Book of Genesis. Here are a few things to know about Genesis to get us started.
1. While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
  2. It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC
  3. Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.
- B. In Genesis Chapter 1, we learn that God created the heavens and the earth. At the end of seven days, God looks back at what He created and said that it was very good! In Chapter 2, we find ourselves learning about Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. After God made man, He gave him specific instructions. He told Adam to eat all the fruit of the Garden of Eden but told him not to eat of the tree of Good and Evil.
- C. In the beginning of Chapter 3, Eve is tempted by Satan to eat of the fruit. She takes of the fruit and eats it. Adam eats it as well. The Bible tells us that when they did that, sin entered the world and death through sin. What was once a perfect and glorious time came to ruin over sin. What were once two creations who knew no death, now (for the first time since being created) Adam and Eve were now faced with death, pain, and

uncertainty. Obviously, this changed everything for Adam and Eve (and for you and me). For the first time since the creation of the world, hopelessness and fear crept in.

### D. HOPE SPARKED

1. God found Adam and Eve hiding in the garden because of their guilt, hopelessness, and fear.
2. READ GENESIS 3: 8-13.

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

  - a) Before God stated the consequences of their actions to Adam and Eve, He shared some hope.
3. READ GENESIS 3:14-15

*The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

  - a) Theologians call the verse where God tells the serpent about the *enmity* (which means a deep-rooted hatred) He is placing between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring the PROTOEVANGELIUM. This big word means "the first Gospel." It's the first foreshadowing of the Gospel. A Savior was to come that would crush Satan. So, even though things seemed hopeless with the fall of Adam and Eve, there was a spark of hope.
  - b) Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God continued to speak to the world and His people prophesying about the Savior of the world that was to come. One of the prophecies is found in Isaiah 9.
    1. The prophet Isaiah wrote this during a gloomy time in the history of Israel when other nations were coming to destroy them.
4. READ ISAIAH 9:6-7.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

  - a) God is bringing light into darkness and delivering people from darkness. Hope is sparked and the people of Israel are looking forward to the coming Hope of the World.

### E. HOPE ARRIVED.

1. Luke 2 starts off with the story of the Birth of Christ. The Savior of the world has finally come after thousands of years of waiting.
  - a) We are going to talk more about this in a few weeks.
2. After Jesus is born, the angels appear to shepherds and proclaim to them the birth of Christ. The shepherds go and see baby Jesus and go about rejoicing in the arrival of the Messiah.
3. Eight days after His birth, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to the Lord according to the Law. It is there that we are introduced to a man named Simeon that had hope. It's worth pausing here to look at Simeon.
4. READ LUKE 2:25-32.

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*
5. The interesting thing about Simeon is that we hardly know anything about him. We don't really know what Simeon did for a living, nor do we know anything about his family.
  - a) We know that he was described as "righteous and devout," someone who was devoted to God and lived out his faith in a powerful way.
  - b) We know that Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." In other words, Simeon wanted to see God's people restored to a right relationship with God.
  - c) Simeon lived his whole life faithfully to God. Simeon served day in and day out, waiting for the Lord to send a Savior. He never gave up hope. And he eventually had his faithfulness rewarded and his hope fulfilled. God not only came through with His promise of a Messiah, but He was also faithful in rewarding Simeon's service, hope, and prayer by allowing Simeon to meet Jesus face to face.
6. Let's continue reading about another person who had hope.
7. READ LUKE 2:36-38.

*And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

  - a) God also answered Anna by allowing her to also meet Jesus face to face. She faithfully served God for many years, and immediately after she met Jesus, she spoke to all about the Hope that was born.

8. READ ROMANS 5:1-5

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

- a) In Romans, Paul talks about the peace of God that comes into our lives through Jesus Christ.
- b) By faith in Christ, we have hope in the glory of God. This means that we will see God's glory in heaven because of Christ. As we endure life, God gives us hope to make it through life's difficulties. The hope will not disappoint, but God will give us His love through the Holy Spirit.

F. HOW CAN WE HAVE HOPE?

1. We can have hope by admitting that we are sinners in need of a savior (Romans 3:23), believing that Jesus died and rose again (Romans 10:9), and confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9).
2. After Christ's resurrection, we see how Hope grows.

G. HOPE GROWS

1. In the book of Acts, we see the Gospel spreading throughout the whole world.
2. READ TITUS 2:11-14.  
*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*
3. Our hope comes in Christ's future return for us and our home in heaven. This hope for life with Jesus gives us hope here right now through any pain that you are going through.

- H. We have learned how hope sparked, how hope arrived in Jesus, how we can have hope, and how hope grows in us as we look forward to His coming. But how are we to respond to hope right now?

## IV. Application

A. HOPE RESPONDS

1. If we are believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, it's impossible for us to live without hope in our lives because of where our hope is found.
  - a) In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul writes to the church in the city of Corinth about our hope in the resurrection.



- b) READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-20  
*"If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead."*
  - 1. Because Christ has risen from the dead, we have hope.
  - 2. Our hope is alive because Jesus Christ is alive.
- c) **Optional Illustration: Resurrection of Hope**
  - 1. **NOTE: Share a story of how the resurrection of Christ has given you hope in your life.**
- 2. If we are believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, it should be just as impossible for us not to share this hope that we have with others.
  - a) READ MATTHEW 28: 19-20  
*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
    - 1. In Matthew 28, Jesus gives us a command to go into the world making disciples of all nations. This is not a command for a large mass of people to gather to hear the Gospel, rather it speaks of each of us going and making disciples of Jesus.
  - b) READ 1 PETER 3:14-15  
*But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...*
    - 1. Here, in these verses, we are told that we shouldn't be afraid to share the hope that is in us. In fact, we should always be prepared to provide those around us who inquire with the reasons for our hope.
- 3. AS WE ARE GOING ABOUT OUR LIVES, WE ARE TO ALWAYS BE READY TO SHARE THE REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT WE HAVE WITH OTHERS AND BE ACTIVE IN SHARING THE HOPE OF JESUS WITH THEM.

## V. Gospel

- A. You can't share about a hope in Jesus that you, yourself, don't have.
- B. In fact, you may be sitting here, hearing all of this for the first time and wondering what this hope in Jesus is all about. You may have never heard of sin, God's love, or being saved through Jesus. You may even be asking, "Who even is Jesus?!" Let me fill you in.
- C. Every person on this earth shares the same great need. We all need a Savior in our lives, and His name is Jesus.
- D. God's design, when He created us and our world, was absolutely perfect. His plan was perfect. But, as we talked about at the beginning when we looked at Genesis, this thing called sin (essentially anything you think, say, or do that displeases God or goes against His commands) entered our world and created an impassable gap between Him and us.

Like Adam and Eve, we have all sinned. And because of that sin, we are spiritually separated from God. God can't be anywhere near sin. And since God is the only source of true life, spiritual separation from Him means we're spiritually dead.

- E. But God is a good God. And He didn't want us to be left alone, spiritually separated from Him. So, in His infinite grace and mercy, God the Father sent us a Savior named Jesus, God the Son. Jesus came to earth, lived a sinless life, and died a sacrificial death on our behalf to free us from the burden of sin. But the story doesn't end there! Jesus then rose again from the grave, conquering sin and death itself, and gave us access to a full life with God.
- F. We have the hope of no longer having a spiritual separation between us and God. All we have to do is confess that Jesus is God's promised Savior, acknowledge our need for Him, and repent of (turn away from/ask forgiveness for) the sin in our lives that separates us from God. It's by God's grace through our faith that we are forgiven of our sins and given eternal life in relationship with God. Then, we choose to live our lives according to God's will and tell others about Him.
- G. If you've never made that decision for your own life, I encourage you to do it right now.

## VI. Conclusion

- A. We live in a world where hope is in short supply. It can seem like everywhere we turn, there is a reason to be defeated or feel hopeless. The truth of the Gospel is that there is always hope.
- B. Jesus is the hope of the world and the greatest gift of all. Due to Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, and His offer to restore our broken relationship with God, we should never be people without hope.
- C. JESUS GIVES US THE GIFT OF ULTIMATE HOPE. And because we are people who have experienced His gift of ultimate hope during this holiday season (and every season), we should strive to share the hope of Jesus with as many hopeless people as we can.
- D. Let's pray.