



Advent and Evangelism Series



Alexander Sunday Bible Study – Christmas Season

Lesson #1 – HOPE | November 30, 2025

To end the Year 2025, we're conducting a 4-week series by studying the traditional advent wreath and a series on evangelism. We'll explore the Romans Road, which is a wonderful Biblical resource for sharing the Gospel. As we do each week there will be a lesson, a little homework (questions in GREEN), and lots of great discussions.

Listed below are the four candles associated with the Advent Wreath and the sequence of lighting.

- **First Sunday:** Light the first purple candle (**Hope** or Prophets' Candle).
- **Second Sunday:** Light the first purple candle again, along with the second purple candle (**Peace** or Bethlehem's Candle).
- **Third Sunday:** Light the first two purple candles and the pink candle (**Joy** or Shepherd's Candle).
- **Fourth Sunday:** Light all three previously lit candles plus the final purple candle (**Love** or Angel's Candle).
- **Christmas Day:** A fifth, white candle (Christ Candle) is often lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent the arrival of Jesus.



Introductory Remarks

I am really excited about this series for several reasons. First, it's always bothered me that I did not know all of the candles of the Advent Wreath (and not knowing things bothers me!). Second, I think it's easy in the United States because of our vast wealth as a nation to forget why we celebrate Christmas. As followers of Jesus, Christmas should be a time to recognize God's greatest gift to us and humanity in the birth of His Son in an obscure feeding trough located in Bethlehem. My prayer is that this series ignites in us a renewed and sustained focus on the importance of Jesus' birth and His answer to the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love we all desperately want in our lives. Jesus literally is the Reason for the Season!

The first of the Advent Candles is HOPE. I am not sure there is any human emotion more important than hope. Throughout humanity hope has built nations, but the absence of it has kept people in darkness and brought discouragement to countless millions. Hope is the answer to the following riddle. I can almost hear Gollum asking Frodo and Samwise Gamgee this riddle in their quest to destroy the ring in the fires of Mount Doom in Mordor!

Small as a word, towering in might; what drives the weary to walk through the night?

1. In what ways did Jesus bring hope into the world?
2. How important is hope in your life? Is there an area of discouragement you're currently facing where you are in need of hope?

The HOPE brought by Jesus' birth

The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi, which was written around 430 BC. It is the final book of the Minor Prophets and was written during the post-exilic period, after the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple. Like all of the other books of prophecy, Malachi spoke of the coming Messiah and God's promise of a Savior for His people. Unfortunately, the Jewish people would have to wait 430 years before they could see His arrival.



To provide a little context, 430 years ago is 1595. Listed below are a few things that were going on in 1595:

1. **The Age of Exploration Was in Full Swing:** European powers (Spain, Portugal, England, France, the Netherlands) were exploring and colonizing the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Trade routes were expanding, and global contact was increasing dramatically.
2. **Elizabeth I Ruled England:** Shakespeare was actively writing and performing plays. England was establishing itself as a major naval power after defeating the Spanish Armada (1588).
3. **Scientific and Cultural Advancement:** The Renaissance was moving toward the Scientific Revolution. Galileo was formulating early ideas (he would publish major works shortly after). Art, literature, and philosophy were flourishing in Europe.
4. **North America Before Large-Scale English Colonization:** The Roanoke Colony had disappeared just a few years earlier (late 1580s). Jamestown would not be established until 1607.
5. **The Protestant Reformation Aftermath:** Europe was still deeply divided between Protestant and Catholic regions, but the Bible was playing a major role in creating change across the continent. Religious conflict was shaping politics and wars across the continent.

Provided in the table below are 12 Bible passages that speak of the HOPE associated with the promise of the coming Messiah.

Passage	Promise
Genesis 3:15 — <i>He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.</i>	The first promise of a Savior that is the earliest prophecy foretelling a Deliverer who would defeat evil, and specifically Satan.
Genesis 12:2–3 — <i>All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.</i>	God promises Abraham that a descendant will bring hope to the entire world. This is an important element from the Abrahamic Covenant.
Deuteronomy 18:15 — <i>The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me... you must listen to him.</i>	Jesus would be a prophet Like Moses; a future, greater Prophet who would speak God’s words perfectly.
2 Samuel 7:12–13 — <i>I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.</i>	God tells David his descendant will reign eternally by pointing to the messianic King. This is the essence of the Davidic Covenant.
Psalms 16:9–10 — <i>You will not let your Holy One see decay.</i>	Used in the New Testament to point to the Messiah’s resurrection.
Isaiah 7:14 — <i>The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.</i>	A promise of God “with us” through the virgin birth, which is the ultimate hope during crisis.
Isaiah 42:1–7 — <i>Here is my servant... He will bring justice to the nations.</i>	Hope through a gentle, justice-bringing Messiah. This is clearly a passage that was not filled in the lifetime of Jesus and is most likely a reference to the future.
Ezekiel 34:23–24 — <i>I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David.</i>	A promise of a coming Shepherd who will rescue and rule faithfully.
Daniel 7:13–14 — <i>One like a son of man... his dominion is everlasting.</i>	A heavenly Messiah who receives eternal authority and a kingdom.
Micah 5:2–5 — <i>Out of you, Bethlehem... will come one who will be ruler over Israel.</i>	A humble birthplace for a ruler who brings hope and peace.
Zechariah 9:9 — <i>See, your king comes to you... gentle and riding on a donkey.</i>	A peaceful King offering salvation that points to Palm Sunday, a time known as the Triumphal Entry.
Zechariah 12:10 — <i>They will look on me, the one they have pierced...</i>	Hope through a Messiah who suffers for His people, with a specific reference to the piercing of Jesus’ hands, feet, and side on the Cross.



3. Place yourself in history as a Jew living 100 B.C. under Roman occupation. Which of the above verses would have brought the greatest HOPE to you?

4. The 400 years that preceded Jesus' arrival are often referred to as the "silent years" because God had no revelation as reflected in our Bible (the Apocrypha books in the Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant Bible were written between around 200 BC and 100 AD). Why do you think God chose to be silent and what were some of the outcomes? Think in the context of HOPE.

The HOPE brought by Jesus' reign in our lives

What would a Bible lesson be without a little math?! I deeply appreciate the combination of the four candles: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love and have come to believe that hope is a **product** (i.e., multiplication) of peace, joy, and love in our lives. Absent peace, joy, and love it is very difficult, if not impossible, to experience hope.

$$\text{HOPE} = \text{PEACE} * \text{JOY} * \text{LOVE}$$

Provided below are five New Testament (NIV) verses on hope.

- Romans 15:13 – *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*
- Hebrews 6:19 – *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*
- Romans 5:5 – *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*
- 1 Peter 1:3 – *He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*
- Titus 2:13 – *While we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

5. How has knowing Jesus and appreciating God's power and His sovereignty brought hope to your life? Consider the above verses in developing an answer.

HOPE through Evangelism

Provided in the table below is a comprehensive version of *The Romans Road* that integrates eight (8) verses from the book of Romans. The key is to make the interaction conversational and let the Holy Spirit speak through you. Most of us tend to get stressed and feel pressure to say the perfect things. We do need to be prepared, but the key is a willingness to share and a love for the person to whom you're speaking.

The Romans Road – the Path to Salvation

Step	Observation	Verse
1	Everyone has sinned.	Romans 3:23 – <i>For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.</i>
2	No one is righteous on their own.	Romans 3:10 - <i>There is no one righteous, not even one.</i>
3	Sin has a penalty.	Romans 6:23 (a) – <i>For the wages of sin is death...</i>
4	God offers a free gift.	Romans 6:23 (b) – <i>...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.</i>
5	Christ died for us.	Romans 5:8 – <i>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.</i>
6	We must confess and believe.	Romans 10:9–10 – <i>If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...</i>
7	Salvation brings peace and acceptance.	Romans 5:1 – <i>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.</i>
8	Nothing can separate us from God's love.	Romans 8:38–39 – <i>Neither death nor life... nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God...</i>

6. Using the "Observations" list above, develop a question (or series of questions) you could use to ask a person related to HOPE that can open a conversation with someone for sharing the Gospel?

