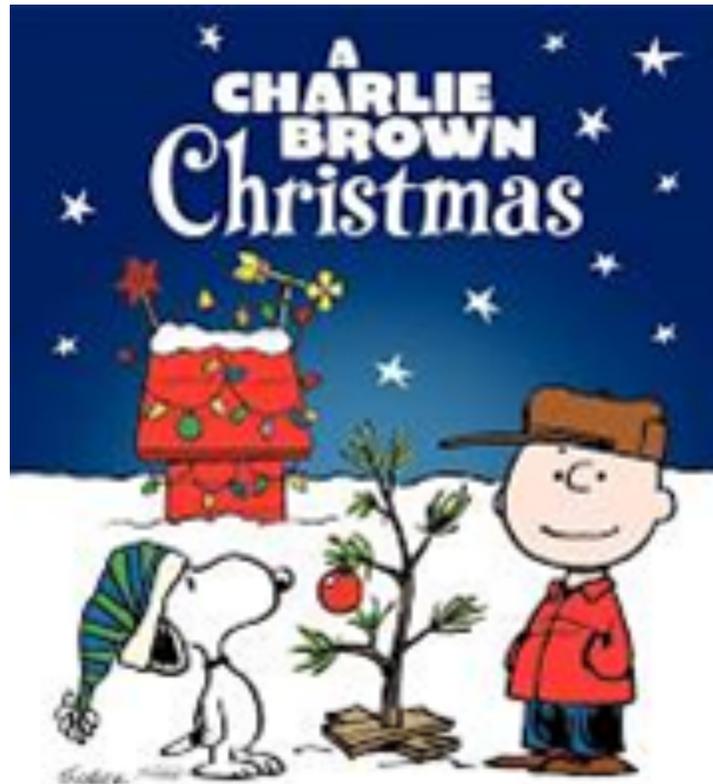


Week 1

# Hope



***Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.***

**Isaiah 40:1-2**

These words were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Isaiah was giving God's people hope, reminding them that, even in captivity, God was with them and that there would be better days ahead. Hope is such a powerful force. It's the belief in something happening and the confident expectation that it will.

Let's watch a classic Christmas movie that embodies hope – "A Charlie Brown Christmas".

### After-Movie Discussion:

- The great moment of hope comes when Charlie Brown and Linus go to a Christmas tree lot and Charlie sees the small, dried up Christmas tree. He sees potential in it, even when the normally-optimistic Linus isn't sure it's a good idea.
- Charlie Brown's heart is stirred. He sees something in the tree worth saving, worth investing in.
- How do the others respond when Charlie Brown brings back the little tree? They criticize Charlie Brown, mock him, and laughed at him.
- This almost causes him to lose hope, until Linus recites the Christmas story. This is a powerful reminder that, just as we have our own hopes, so does everyone else. We must be kind in treating one another's often-fragile hopes with care.
- After Linus recites the Christmas story, we see Charlie Brown's hope once again restored. What does he do next? He takes the tree home and tries to decorate it, but it collapses.
- At this point, it might seem like all hope is lost, not just for the tree, but for Charlie Brown feeling fulfilled. But his act of hope inspired all the others. They follow him home, and what happens? They decorate the tree and it seems to spring to life. Then they all wish Charlie Brown a Merry Christmas as they sing a Christmas carol together.

**Prayer:** Loving God, We have you, And there is hope. We have each other, And there is hope. We wait for Jesus, With confident expectation, And there is hope. Amen.

Adapted from Worship Designs Studio

Week 2

Love



*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one.*

**Ezekiel 36:26**

Let's watch a movie that captures the essence of this lovely Bible verse, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (animated version).

After-Movie Discussion:

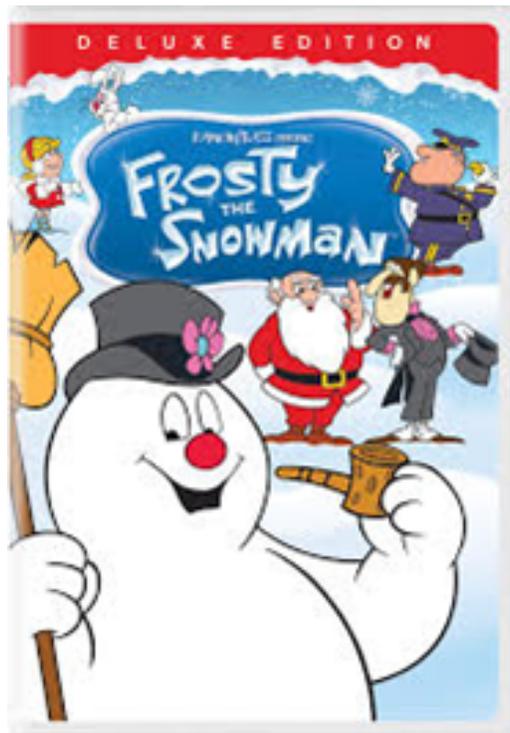
- The Grinch tried to keep Christmas from coming. Can anything really stop Christmas? No. Not a Grinch, not a virus, nothing can keep the great gift of love that is Christmas from coming.
- When the Grinch's heart grew, what else changed? He found the strength of ten grinch...plus two!
- Love is the strongest force in the world. When we open our hearts to love, and then share that love with others, we find a strength we never knew we had.
- Christmas is not about things. When we let go of what we think Christmas is "supposed" to look like, what Christmas is "supposed" to sound like, we open our hearts to what Christmas already is – an amazing gift from a God who loves us very much.

**Prayer:** Loving God, Thank you for the gift of Christmas. Thank you for the gift of love. Thank you for the gift of you. Amen.

Adapted from Worship Designs Studio

Week 3

# Joy



***Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my Savior."***

**Luke 1:46-47**

Mary has just learned that she is going to be the mother of Jesus, and she is overcome with joy. Joy is more than happiness. It goes deeper. When we're happy, we smile with our faces. When we have joy, we smile with our hearts. Because joy runs so deep, it helps us get through the ups and downs of life.

Let's look at some examples of real joy in a classic Christmas movie "Frosty the Snowman".

After-Movie Discussion:

- What were some examples of characters reaching out to help others?
- Hocus Pocus, the rabbit, brings the magic hat back to the children.
- The children help Frosty get on the train so he can go to the North Pole.
- Frosty and Hocus Pocus take care of Karen when she's shivering in the refrigerated boxcar.
- The woodland animals build a fire for Karen.
- Santa ensures that Frosty stays alive by not allowing Professor Hinkle, the magician, to bully Karen and Frosty.

Reaching out and caring for (and about) others is one of the best ways to find joy. In fact, the one character who continues to think only about himself until the end is Professor Hinkle. And he is clearly the least joyous character in the movie.

When was a time you did something for someone else? How did that make you feel?

**Prayer:** Loving God, Thank you for the gift of joy – For the joy of simplicity, For the joy of working together, For the joy of helping others, For the joy of being alive! Amen.

Adapted from Worship Designs Studio

Week 4

Peace



***A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.***

### **Isaiah 9:6**

This week we will explore peace through the full-length movie “The Muppet Christmas Carol”. Along the way we will find that peace isn’t necessarily about being “nice and quiet.” There is an outer peace and an inner peace that only come when we do as Micah 6:8 would remind us – *do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.*

#### After-Movie Discussion:

- When we see Scrooge on Christmas morning, what has changed? He realizes there is a chance for healing and for reconciliation.
- We learn from Charles Dickens (Gonzo) that “What made Scrooge happiest of all was that his life lay before him, and it could be changed!”
- What are some of the things he does that show us he has changed? Here are some examples: He speaks kindly to others, wishing them Merry Christmas. He donates to the charity he had refused the day before. He receives a scarf for his donation, and accepts it with real gratitude. He sings. He leaves gifts for his workers. He brings gifts to his nephew Fred and Fred’s wife. He brings gifts to his old mentors. He buys food for the needy. He brings cheese to the mice (mouses). He surprises the Cratchit Family with a feast, gifts, and gives Bob a raise.
- One thing we can’t change is the past. But we can change what we do today and throughout our life when we choose to live a life of hope, love, joy, and peace.

**Prayer:** Loving God, We choose to live in hope, In love, In joy, In peace. God bless us everyone. Amen.

Adapted from Worship designs Studio