



THE NAMES OF JESUS



A MIDTOWN FELLOWSHIP
ADVENT GUIDE



The Names of Jesus: A Midtown Fellowship Advent Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ADVENT SEASON	1
THE ADVENT GUIDE	1
LECTIO DIVINA	2
THE ADVENT WREATH	3
A NOTE TO PARENTS	4
WHAT ABOUT SANTA?	5
WEEK 1: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR	
SUNDAY	8
MONDAY	9
TUESDAY	12
WEDNESDAY	15
THURSDAY	18
FRIDAY	21
WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD	
SUNDAY	24
MONDAY	25
TUESDAY	28
WEDNESDAY	31
THURSDAY	34
FRIDAY	36
WEEK 3: PRINCE OF PEACE	
SUNDAY	40
MONDAY	41
TUESDAY	44
WEDNESDAY	46
THURSDAY	49
FRIDAY	51
WEEK 4: EVERLASTING FATHER	
SUNDAY	56
MONDAY	57
TUESDAY	60
WEDNESDAY	63
THURSDAY	66
FRIDAY	68
CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE	71
RULE OF LIFE	73

THE ADVENT SEASON

The English word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus* which means “coming.” Advent primarily focuses on the first coming of Jesus two thousand years ago. But Jesus’s second coming is also anticipated during the season. Advent begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve.

There’s no biblical mandate to observe Advent. It is a tradition that developed over the course of church history with the first clear reference to it documented in the 6th century. While very early on the emphasis was more on penitence and fasting, the season now predominantly centers on hope and expectation for believers.

We will use the season of Advent to journey through the truths of Scripture that point to the birth of Jesus and the love that our Heavenly Father demonstrated through the gift of His Son. We’ll study and celebrate that through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, we can be called children of God. We will look to the life-changing hope, peace, joy, and love that are available to us through Christ and we will ask how we should respond to these gifts.

THE ADVENT GUIDE

Isaiah 9:6

“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.”

Isaiah was writing nearly 800 years prior to Christ’s life and ministry. His prophecy gave the people of God hope that they desperately needed: a child would be born to be their Messiah, and he would be the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.” All of these titles find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and will reach their consummation at Christ’s second coming.

For this guide, we will look at each of these names found in Isaiah 9:6 and how they culminate in the person and work of Jesus.

On Sundays at the beginning of each week, we will light the Advent Candle. We'd encourage you to do this together with your family and/or LifeGroup.

On Monday - Friday, we will have Scripture passages connected to the theme for that week as we work through the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

LECTIO DIVINA

Our practice for this year's Advent Devotional Guide is based around the ancient spiritual discipline called lectio divina (Latin for "Divine Reading"). Lectio Divina¹ encourages a slow reading of the text, pausing to wait on the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through the Word of God. Here are the steps to follow each day for Lectio Divina:

1. Read

Read the passage slowly and out loud. What words caught your attention? What phrases stand out to you? What questions do you have about the text?

2. Reflect

Read the passage slowly a second time. Spend time reflecting on the passage. What does the text say about people? What does the text say about God? Ask the Spirit for wisdom and discernment.

3. Respond

Read the passage slowly a third time. What is the passage calling you to do, think, and believe? Where do you need to obey? Where do you need to repent? What do you need to pray?

4. Rest

After reading, rest and wait in His presence. Allow some time for His Word to sink into your soul. Before you're done with this practice, you might want to consider writing down what the Lord showed you as a reminder throughout the day.



1 Read more at midtowncolumbia.com/blog/meditating

THE ADVENT WREATH

Our weekly Family Worship Guides center around the lighting of candles on an Advent wreath. Utilizing an Advent wreath in your home can serve as a great visual reminder and marker during the season and we would encourage all individuals using this guide to consider incorporating one.

The Advent wreath represents the passage of time over the four weeks of Advent. It is typically a circular wreath holding five candles, four in the wreath itself and one in the center. One candle is lit each Sunday, until all of the candles, including the center candle, are lit on Christmas Eve. The candles symbolize the light of God entering the world through the birth of Jesus. The light from the candles reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World and He stepped into our darkness.

If you'd like to create an Advent wreath, be sure to gather your supplies and assemble your wreath before December 1. *(For a tutorial with pictures, check out how one LifeGroup turned this into a group activity and made small Advent wreaths for under \$5 at our [blog](#))*

- 1. A round wreath (any size)**

You can also get greenery and assemble into a circle yourself.

- 2. A plate (or base of some sort)**

A base of some sort on which your candles sit, surrounded by the wreath.

- 3. 5 candles**

Typically the Christ candle is larger and sits in the center of the wreath while the four other candles are placed in the wreath itself

- 4. A lighter**



A NOTE TO PARENTS

The Advent season is a gift to Christian parents because it gives a focused opportunity to talk to our children about the most important things in life. All of the questions that this season addresses will be asked and answered by our children in some way:

- What is the season about?
- Why did Jesus have to come?
- What is it that I need?
- How will those needs be met?
- Who am I and what is my life about?
- How is it that I am supposed to live?

Culture will answer these questions and provide one narrative this season. As parents, we must recognize the false story that we (and our children) are exposed to all around us. This false story tells lies about who we are and what we need. It points to feelings, personal pleasure, and consumerism as the ultimate treasures to be stored up this holiday season.

We get to tell (and show!) our children a greater and truer story, and we tell them over and over again: We share the good news of great joy we've received. We rejoice in our Savior. We treasure Him above all else and we pray that our children will grow in their understanding of and love for Jesus Christ.

Teaching our kids God's truth and centering our lives around His great story does not mean that we don't engage in traditional American Christmas festivities. But it does most likely mean that we have additional conversations about what parts do and do not reflect the gospel.

We also want to remember that we can't expect our children to fully rejoice in the faith when they are still learning to understand Christ. It's quite possible that, despite all our efforts this Advent season, our children are going to be more excited about presents than they are about Jesus. Don't shame them; teach them. Teach them that gifts are fun (and they can even serve as reminders of God's giving love!), but the joy that they provide is temporary. Point your children to the everlasting joy available to them in Christ. Strive to model that message through

your own life this Advent season. Our children will hear our words, but they will also look to how we live our lives for their answers to what this season is about, what they need, and what matters most.

WHAT ABOUT SANTA?

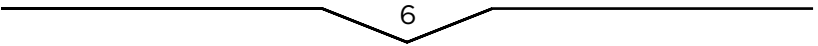
The question comes up often around families at Midtown. Should they do Santa? Not do it? Do it with qualifications? There are faithful members in our church who fall into all three of these categories. (For a point of reference, six pastors' families incorporate Santa to some degree into their family's traditions and three do not.) The choice to include Santa is not a closed-handed issue for followers of Jesus, so we want to guard against treating it as such or becoming self-righteous toward parents who've taken a different approach than we have.

Instead, as parents who are a part of one body of Christ, we focus on the larger goal of putting Jesus and His beauty and worth on display to the children in our church family.

With that goal in mind, we do think it's wise to be intentional about your gift giving and what your practices could be communicating to your children. In her excellent article, "3 Christmas Pitfalls for Parents," Lindsay Carlson gives a helpful perspective for parents:

No child deserves presents. While Santa makes a "naughty" or "nice" list, Jesus doesn't. He gave His life for those in sin. He didn't dangle His redemption over our heads as a "behavior modification" tactic. God gave us the gift of Christ—his birth, death, and resurrection—by grace. All gifts we place under the tree or in the stockings should be given in the same manner that we receive Christ: freely.

Whether you choose to make Santa a part of your Christmas traditions or not, at the right time, we would encourage you to share with your children where the tradition of Santa Claus comes from: a real man, St. Nicholas, who followed Jesus and whose life was marked by the way he loved others.



WEEK ONE

"Wonderful Counselor"

**IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, A COUNSELOR WAS
PORTRAYED AS A WISE KING, GIVING
GUIDANCE TO HIS PEOPLE. THE BEAUTY OF
CHRIST IS THAT HE IS NOT JUST A KING WHO
RULES OVER US, HE IS ONE WHO HAS LIVED
AMONG US AND WALKED THROUGH WHAT WE
WALK THROUGH. JESUS CAME FOR PEOPLE
WITH PROBLEMS AND HE OFFERS US WISDOM
BEYOND WHAT THIS WORLD CAN OFFER.**

Listen to the Hope playlist here: bitly.ws/ujtR



FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

Sunday, November 27

LIGHT THE FIRST “HOPE” CANDLE.

READ

Because of God sending His Son Jesus, we know God keeps His word to save us and be with us. How does God being with you give you hope?

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

ASK

This passage is about God sending His Son Jesus to save His people. It was written 700 years before He was born.

As a family, how can we remember and celebrate the good news that Jesus brings us hope this week?

PRAY

God, thank you for sending us Jesus, God in the flesh. Thank you for the hope we have in Christ. Help us to have hope and comfort in You even when times are hard. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK 1: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

MONDAY

November 28

Isaiah 11:1-5

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

*²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

*He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,*

*⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

*⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

Read through the passage a third time. Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling? Where are you resistant or want to push back? What do you need to pray for?

REST

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for what He's shown you today in His Word. Resolve today to put what you learned from God's Word today into practice.

TUESDAY

November 29

Proverbs 2:1-6

*My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
²making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
⁵then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding*

READ

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WEEK 1: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

WEDNESDAY
November 30

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

READ

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THURSDAY

December 1

1 Corinthians 1:23-29

but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

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WEEK 1: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

FRIDAY

December 2

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

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WEEK TWO

"Mighty God"

THIS TITLE, WHICH IS REFERENCED REGULARLY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, CAPTURES THE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS COME TO RESTORE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF AND HAS THE POWER TO DO SO. GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSE HAS THE LAST SAY IN HIS WORLD; THERE IS NOTHING MIGHTIER THAN HIM THAT COULD PREVENT HIM FROM CARRYING OUT HIS PLAN. JESUS BRINGS US HOPE THAT GOD IS RENEWING AND RESTORING HUMAN SOULS AND ALL OF CREATION, AND NOTHING CAN THWART HIM.

Listen to the Peace playlist here: bitly.ws/ujub



FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

Sunday, December 4

**LIGHT THE FIRST CANDLE AND THE SECOND
“PEACE” CANDLE.**

READ

Through Jesus, we now have peace. We are made right with God now!

Luke 2:13-14

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host
praising God and saying,
“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

ASK

When do you feel afraid? Because Jesus is our peace, what can you do
when you are afraid?

As a family, how can we remember and celebrate the good news that
Jesus brings peace this week?

PRAY

*God, thank you that we have peace with you because of Christ. Because
of Jesus, you are pleased with us. Help us to rest in that peace this
season. In Jesus’s Name, Amen.*

WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD

MONDAY
December 5

Deuteronomy 10:14-17, 20

Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. ¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

²⁰You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

Read through the passage a third time. Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling? Where are you resistant or want to push back? What do you need to pray for?

REST

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for what He's shown you today in His Word. Resolve today to put what you learned from God's Word today into practice.

WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD

TUESDAY
December 6

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

READ

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WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD

WEDNESDAY
December 7

Luke 1:34-37

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.”

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

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WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD

THURSDAY
December 8

Romans 8:37-39

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

READ

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WEEK 2: MIGHTY GOD

FRIDAY
December 9

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

READ

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WEEK THREE

"Prince of Peace"

IN ANCIENT ISRAEL THIS TITLE WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS A RULER WHO COULD REMOVE OPPRESSION, BRINGING EQUITY, PEACE, AND JUSTICE BETWEEN PEOPLE IN SOCIETIES. THE BIBLE PAINTS A PICTURE OF A FUTURE MESSIANIC AGE WHERE GOD WILL BRING ABOUT A PEACE THAT IS SUPERNATURAL AND COUNTER TO HOW THE WORLD CURRENTLY IS. JESUS WENT TO WAR WITH SATAN, SIN, AND DEATH— ESTABLISHING THE ULTIMATE PEACE IN BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Listen to the Joy playlist here: bitly.ws/ujuj



FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

Sunday, December 11

LIGHT THE FIRST TWO CANDLES AND THEN THE THIRD “JOY” CANDLE.

READ

Because of Jesus we now have great joy. We are forgiven our sins! We are adopted into the family of God!

Luke 2:8-11

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

ASK

How has Jesus been good news in your life specifically?

Do you ever find yourself forgetting that Jesus is who we celebrate at Christmas?

What can we as a family do to make sure we are celebrating Jesus above anything else this Christmas season?

PRAY

God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the joy that comes from knowing we are secure in Christ. Help us to be joyful even when circumstances are hard, knowing that we have everything we need in you. In Jesus’s Name, Amen.

WEEK 3: PRINCE OF PEACE

MONDAY

December 12

Isaiah 11:6-11

*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.*

*⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the
adder's den.*

*⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.*

*¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a
signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire,
and his resting place shall be glorious.*

*¹¹In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second
time to recover the remnant that remains of his people,
from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush,
from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the
coastlands of the sea.*

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

Read through the passage a third time. Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling? Where are you resistant or want to push back? What do you need to pray for?

REST

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for what He's shown you today in His Word. Resolve today to put what you learned from God's Word today into practice.

WEEK 3: PRINCE OF PEACE

TUESDAY

December 13

Ephesians 2:13-14

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

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WEDNESDAY

December 14

Colossians 2:13-25

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. ¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. ²⁰If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²²(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

READ

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REST

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for what He's shown you today in His Word. Resolve today to put what you learned from God's Word today into practice.

WEEK 3: PRINCE OF PEACE

THURSDAY

December 15

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

Read through the passage a third time. Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling? Where are you resistant or want to push back? What do you need to pray for?

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WEEK 3: PRINCE OF PEACE

FRIDAY

December 16

Luke 2:8-14

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

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WEEK FOUR

"Everlasting Father"

FINALLY, ISAIAH 9:6 DESCRIBES CHRIST AS AN EVERLASTING FATHER, AS A BENEVOLENT PROTECTOR. THIS IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST CARES FOR HIS PEOPLE— IT IS CHARACTERIZED BY WARMTH, GENTLENESS, COMPASSION, MERCY, AND GRACE. JESUS HAS COME TO RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD, AND IT BRINGS HIM ABSOLUTE JOY TO DO SO.

Listen to the Love playlist here: bitly.ws/ujup



FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

Sunday, December 18

**LIGHT THE FIRST THREE CANDLES AND THEN
THE FOURTH CANDLE, THE “LOVE” CANDLE.**

READ

Real love is shown by God sending His Son Jesus as a gift to us. This is what Christmas is all about.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

ASK

How did God show His love for the world?

If Christmas is the celebration of God’s love, how can we celebrate His love for us during this season?

PRAY

Father, thank you for loving us enough to send your Son to die for our sins. Help us to know and experience your love for us always. Help us also to love others in the same way you have loved us. In Jesus’s Name, Amen.

WEEK 4: EVERLASTING FATHER

MONDAY

December 19

Isaiah 12:1-6

You will say in that day:

*“I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.*

*²“Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the Lord God is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”*

*³With joy you will draw water from the wells of
salvation. ⁴And you will say in that day:*

*“Give thanks to the Lord,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.*

*⁵“Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.*

*⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”*

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

Read through the passage a third time. Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling? Where are you resistant or want to push back? What do you need to pray for?

REST

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WEEK 4: EVERLASTING FATHER

TUESDAY

December 20

Isaiah 62:2-5

*The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.*

*³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.*

*⁴You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;*

*for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.*

*⁵For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.*

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

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WEEK 4: EVERLASTING FATHER

WEDNESDAY

December 21

Zephaniah 3:14-17

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;

shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵*The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;*

he has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;

you shall never again fear evil.

¹⁶*On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:*

“Fear not, O Zion;

let not your hands grow weak.

¹⁷*The Lord your God is in your midst,*

a mighty one who will save;

he will rejoice over you with gladness;

he will quiet you by his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

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REST

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THURSDAY

December 22

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

Read through the passage a second time. What does this passage reveal to you about God? What does this passage reveal to you about people?

RESPOND

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REST

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WEEK 4: EVERLASTING FATHER

FRIDAY

December 23

John 10:11-15

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

READ

What words or phrases stood out to you? Feel free to read the passage out loud and/or paraphrase the passage in your own words.

REFLECT

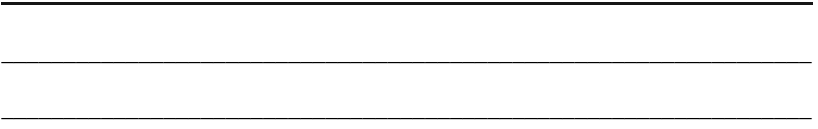
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REST

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CHRISTMAS EVE¹

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE

Saturday, December 24

Throughout Advent, we have studied and celebrated the promises of God that were made true in Jesus.

We've celebrated that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor.²

LIGHT THE "HOPE" CANDLE.

We've celebrated that Jesus is our Mighty God.

LIGHT THE "PEACE" CANDLE.

LIGHT THE "JOY" CANDLE.

And this week, we've celebrated that because of Jesus, we now have an Everlasting Father.

LIGHT THE "LOVE" CANDLE.

Today we celebrate that the waiting is almost over! Today we celebrate Christ and that in Him, all the promises of God come true! Let's read the story of Jesus's birth together! As a family, take turns reading these excerpts from the *Jesus Storybook Bible*.

¹ Note: Today's reading is taken from Sally Lloyd Jones' *Jesus Storybook Bible*: "He's Here." Animated readings of the *Jesus Storybook Bible* can be found on YouTube: "He's Here -Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2y2FJqsv_8

² Listen to The Christmas Experience playlist here:



READ

Now, Mary and Joseph had to take a trip to Bethlehem, the town King David was from. But when they reached the little town, they found every room was full. Every bed was taken. “Go away!” the innkeepers told them. “There isn’t any place for you.” Where would they stay? Soon Mary’s baby would come.

They couldn’t find anywhere except an old, tumbledown stable. So they stayed where the cows and the donkeys and the horses stayed. And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his beautiful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby Son. Mary and Joseph wrapped him up to keep him warm. They made a soft bed of straw and used the animals’ feeding trough as the cradle. And they gazed in wonder at God’s great gift, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, Emmanuel—which means “God has come to live with us.”

Because, of course, he had.

LIGHT THE “CHRIST” CANDLE.

That same night, in amongst the other stars, suddenly a bright new star appeared. Of all the stars in the dark vaulted heavens, this one shone clearer. It blazed in the night and made the other stars look pale beside it. God put it there when his baby son was born—to be like a spotlight. Shining on him. Lighting up the darkness. Showing people the way to him: the Promised Child. Heaven’s son. The Maker of the Stars. A baby sleeping in his mother’s arms. This baby would be like that bright star shining in the sky that night. A light to light up the whole world. Chasing away darkness. Helping people to see.

Emmanuel—God has come to live with us.

ASK

What do you think it would have been like to be Mary and Joseph? What about the shepherds?

What does Emmanuel mean? (*Answer: God with us*)

Why is God being with us good news for you?

PRAY

Thank you Jesus for coming to live with us and be our rescuer! Help us to celebrate you well and to see you as the best gift of all. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

RULE OF LIFE

Our hope with this Advent Guide was to teach us how to be with Jesus daily in Scripture reading and prayer. In fact, one way followers of Jesus structured their time around being with Jesus was through developing what's called a "Rule of Life."¹ Generally, a Rule of Life is structured around three main categories:

Abiding: how you will spend time with Jesus (Bible reading, prayer, confession, singing)

Community: how you will spend time with others (family, LifeGroup, missional friendships)

Resting: how you will rest (sleep, Sabbath, exercise)

Now that the Advent Guide comes to a close, spend some time asking yourself the following questions to discern how you might continue being with Jesus after Christmas and into the new year:

1. What was particularly encouraging in your walk with Jesus over the last four weeks? How did you see Jesus at work through committing to the practice of Lectio Divina?

2. How would you like to see yourself grow as a follower of Jesus this year? Where do you or where are you tempted to direct your worship at someone other than God or at a lesser view of God? Where do you or where are you tempted to see worship as something separate from your everyday life?

¹ Learn more about Rule of Life here: midtowncolumbia.com/blog/developing-a-rule-of-life



3. Think about the categories we offered above: abiding, community, and resting. What's one thing you can do in each category to daily and intentionally be with Jesus?

4. Are there any other practical ways you can abide in Christ more this coming year than the last? What spiritual practices draw you into His presence and His love? How can you practically love others the way you've been loved?

PRAY

Spend some time sitting and praying over these goals. How might God want to use your upcoming week? Spend some time praying and listening. Go ahead and plan out when you will pray (even set those alerts on your phone), what you will study, what Bible verses you want to teach your children, and who in your sphere of the world you want to be intentional about reaching out to, etc.



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