



advent

THE ONCE AND FUTURE
COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

FAMILY DEVOTION GUIDE

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great glory to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and is the traditional seasonal celebration of the first advent of Jesus in the humility and the anxious waiting of His second advent in glory. The first mention of Advent dates back as early as the 6th and 4th centuries, depending on the source.

The season of Advent is just that – a season of preparation and waiting: First for Christ’s second coming to judge the living and the dead, but also to celebrate Christ’s first arrival at Christmas. Think of Advent as the preparation before the celebration of Christmas. In much the same way that the Israelites awaited the Messiah to fulfill God’s promises from Genesis 3:15, so Christians await the return of Jesus the Messiah to make all things new and to “make every sad thing come untrue”.

The Advent season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues up to Christmas day. There are a variety of ways to celebrate the season: many people use an Advent calendar like the one we have provided for you, which counts down until Christmas and builds anticipation day by day. Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus being the Light of the World. Each week, a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The fifth candle is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus’ first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the gospel story.

Whether the season of Advent is relatively new to you or not, it is a significant time in which we have an opportunity to remember God’s promise to send One who would bring about the redemption of his people and his creation. God promised a savior, and He kept that promise perfectly.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

READ

For each week, there is a primary text to read on Sundays. Additionally, there are daily readings assigned to accompany the lighting of an Advent wreath, if you choose. If done weekly, use the reading for Sunday perhaps around the dinner table with friends and family.

REFLECT

After reading scripture, take a moment to reflect on what you have read. *Slow down.* Allow yourself to wonder about parts that surprised you or seemed mysterious. Ask questions and be prepared to think deeply about what you’ve just read. As Christians, we believe that God came to dwell among us as a baby. Let this scandalous miracle sit with you and allow yourself to feel the weight of it!

PRAY

Next, spend a few moments in prayer, bringing to God your thoughts, emotions, hopes, and frustrations.

ACT

When we truly receive the good news of the Gospel, we are motivated to embrace new habits and extend the good news to others. How will you put your faith into action in response to God’s word?

FAMILY WORSHIP

As we celebrate Advent with our families, we continue to wait, with eager anticipation for Jesus to come again and establish His kingdom here on Earth.

This booklet contains Scripture readings, devotional thoughts, and ideas for activities to celebrate Advent together as a family. Consideration has been taken into account for parents with very young children as well as older children. **Please note:** there is likely more provided here than you will have time for and your children will have the attention span for. Don't feel like you have to do it all or do it exactly in the same order. What follows is a weekly guide to celebrating Advent with intentionality, anticipation, and wonder alongside our children. Consider the following for times of weekly family worship during Advent this season:

SONGS

Prepare Him Room (by Sovereign Grace Music)

Away in a Manger

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Mary Consoles Eve (by Rain for Roots)

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

We have also created an Advent playlist on Spotify to help you feel and sing the themes of this special season with your children: tinyurl.com/HFCadvent20.

DECORATIONS

To help your family remember the birth narrative, consider placing a nativity set in a prominent place in your home. Many people light an Advent candle each week when they set aside time to read and pray together as a family which helps to build anticipation for Christmas Day, moving from darkness to light. Consider other ways you could tie in the dark-to-light theme through the decorations in your home: adding more lights/decorations to the tree each week, etc.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP TIME & MOMENTS

As noted, a good time to consider celebrating Advent is during the family dinner time meal. The Story of Jesus' birth is well known by many. But even still, take time to read the accounts in Luke. If you have young children, read them the stories "He's Here", "The Light of The World" and "A Dream From Heaven" from the Jesus Storybook Bible. Talk about what it must have been like where Jesus was born, what the shepherds must have felt, how God's promise to send Jesus as a baby gives us hope that He will keep His promise to one day return at His second advent. Try to avoid 'yes' or 'no' questions and instead ask open-ended questions that will provoke wonder and awe from your children. Questions like, "I wonder what that must have felt like to be there." or "I wonder why God would want to come to earth as a helpless baby?" etc.



MAKE YOUR OWN ADVENT WREATH

WHAT IS AN ADVENT WREATH?

A common practice that many Christians over the centuries have found to be helpful during this season is the lighting of an Advent wreath. Historically, the earliest records of Christians using an Advent wreath date back to about the 16th century. Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, the lighting of a candle can be accompanied by a Bible reading, devotional time and prayers. An additional candle is lit during each subsequent week until, by the last Sunday before Christmas, all four candles are lit. Many Advent wreaths include a fifth candle, often referred to as the “Christ Candle” which is lit at Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ❖ 96” (8 feet) evergreen roping – real or artificial
- ❖ 16” diameter green foam ring
- ❖ three 10” purple (or white) taper candles
- ❖ one 10” pink (or white) taper candle
- ❖ one 2”x6” white pillar candle with holder or white jar candle
- ❖ aluminum foil, heavy duty
- ❖ knife or apple corer
- ❖ hot glue gun

INSTRUCTIONS

Lay the foam ring on a protected work surface. With the sharp knife or apple corer, cut out four holes in the ring equal distances apart to fit the four taper candles. Be careful to cut the holes slightly smaller than the candle diameter. Hot glue the candles into the holes making sure they are perfectly vertical.

Wrap the evergreen roping along the foam ring gluing it to the ring as you go. The 8-foot length should be plenty to cover the outer and inner circumferences of the foam ring. The goal is cover the ring completely. Set your wreath on a table and place the pillar candle in the center. Remember to protect the surface of the table underneath the wreath from dripping wax.

“The lack of mystery in our modern life is our downfall and our poverty.

A human life is worth as much as the respect it holds for the mystery.

We retain the child in us to the extent that we honor the mystery.

Therefore, children have open, wide-awake eyes, because they know that they are surrounded by the mystery. They are not yet finished with this world; they still don't know how to struggle along and avoid the mystery, as we do.

We destroy the mystery because we sense that here we reach the boundary of our being, because we want to be lord over everything and have it at our disposal, and that's just what we cannot do with the mystery....

Living without mystery means knowing nothing of the mystery of our own life,

nothing of the mystery of another person, nothing of the mystery of the world;

it means passing over our own hidden qualities and those of others and the world.

It means remaining on the surface, taking the world seriously only to the extent that it can be calculated and exploited, and not going beyond the world of calculation and exploitation.

Living without mystery means not seeing the crucial processes of life at all and even denying them.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas

WEEK 1 | NOV 29 – DEC 5

THE FIRST GOSPEL



“Advent begins in the dark.” –Fleming Rutledge

CALL TO WORSHIP

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Isaiah 40:3

**The first Advent candle is lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sunday | Genesis 3:13-15 | <input type="radio"/> Thursday | John 12:20-26 |
| <input type="radio"/> Monday | Luke 1:26-55 | <input type="radio"/> Friday | Acts 2:32-41 |
| <input type="radio"/> Tuesday | Genesis 12:1-4 | <input type="radio"/> Saturday | Isaiah 2:1-5 |
| <input type="radio"/> Wednesday | Isaiah 11:1-5 | | |

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“The Terrible Lie” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* [pp.28-36].

REFLECT

- Consider the words from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: ‘It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I’m going to do battle against the snake. I’ll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I’m coming back for you!’” **God presents himself as a promiser maker & keeper, discuss what making and keeping promises means and wonder aloud about God’s promises kept.**

PRAY

Oh God, give all of us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to everlasting life; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Use “The Christmas Promise” Advent calendar this week
- Set out a Nativity but add a new piece each day, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Make an Advent wreath

WEEK 2 | DEC 6 – DEC 12

A LIGHT TO THOSE IN DARKNESS



“The good news of Advent is not that we are faithful in our waiting (we often aren’t) but that God is faithful in his coming.” –Rich Villodas

CALL TO WORSHIP

“For you have rescued my soul from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.”

Psalm 56:12

**The first and second Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sunday | Luke 1:68–79 | <input type="radio"/> Thursday | Isaiah 11:1–10 |
| <input type="radio"/> Monday | Isaiah 9:2–7 | <input type="radio"/> Friday | 1 John 1:5–10 |
| <input type="radio"/> Tuesday | Isaiah 60:1–7 | <input type="radio"/> Saturday | Rev. 21:22–27 |
| <input type="radio"/> Wednesday | Ezekiel 7:24–28 | | |

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“Son of Laughter” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* [pp.56–61].

REFLECT

- Consider the words from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “One day, God would send another baby, a baby promised to a girl who didn’t even have a husband. But this baby would bring laughter to the whole world. This baby would be everyone’s dream come true.” **Discuss with your children.**

PRAY

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Use “The Christmas Promise” Advent calendar this week
- Set out more nativity pieces, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Go on a walk at dusk and note the increasing darkness that will eventually give way to dawn.

WEEK 3 | DEC 13 – DEC 19

GLORY TO GOD, PEACE TO MEN



“In Advent, we think our way back to the ancient people of God, to the call of Abraham and his family as the start of God’s rescue operation for a world in ruins and a human race in chaos. We follow the story of Israel’s hope, a hope that refused to die no matter what terrible things happened; a hope that the first Christians believed had become human in the baby Jesus.” –N.T. Wright

CALL TO WORSHIP

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, because of your love and because of your faithfulness.”

Psalm 115:1

**The first, second, and third Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sunday | Luke 2:14 | <input type="radio"/> Thursday | John 18:33–38, 19:16–22 |
| <input type="radio"/> Monday | Genesis 49:8–12 | <input type="radio"/> Friday | Philippians 2:5–11 |
| <input type="radio"/> Tuesday | Hebrews 1:1–8 | <input type="radio"/> Saturday | Isaiah 35:1–10 |
| <input type="radio"/> Wednesday | Romans 15:8–13 | | |

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“Get Ready!” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* [pp.170–175]

REFLECT

- Consider the words from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “The time had almost come for the best part of God’s Plan. God himself was going to come Not to punish his people – but to rescue them. God.” **How does Jesus fit into God’s plan? How do we fit into God’s plan? Wonder aloud.**

PRAY

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Grant us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Use “The Christmas Promise” Advent calendar this week
- Set out more nativity pieces, remembering to wait to put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day!
- Have your child(ren) draw a picture during or after you discuss today’s story. Discuss it afterward

WEEK 4 | DEC 20 – DEC 24

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD



“To be a Christian is to live every day of our lives in solidarity with those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, but to live in the unshakable hope of those who expect the dawn.” –Fleming Rutledge

CALL TO WORSHIP

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.”

Psalm 67:1

**The first, second, third, and fourth Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|--|---------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sunday | Luke 2:8-13 | <input type="radio"/> Wednesday | Psalm 97 |
| <input type="radio"/> Monday | Isaiah 62:6-12 | <input type="radio"/> Thursday | Isaiah 55 |
| <input type="radio"/> Tuesday | Psalm 96 | <input type="radio"/> Friday | Malachi 3:1-4 |

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“The Light of The World” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* [pp.184–189].

REFLECT

- Consider the words from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “The time had almost come for the best part of God’s Plan. God himself was going to come Not to punish his people – but to rescue them. God.”

PRAY

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and as we are sorely hindered by our sins from running the race that is set before us, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Use “The Christmas Promise” Advent calendar this week
- Move Mary and Joseph into the barn of the Nativity, but don’t put baby Jesus in the manger just yet (unless you celebrate on Christmas Eve – then go ahead and put him in!)
- Sing or play a version of *O Little Town of Bethlehem* or *Oh Light* (feat. Gungor and All Sons and Daughters) on any streaming service or Youtube.
- Try a number of different tasks with the lights off and then with the lights on and discuss the difference between being in the dark and being in the light. Was it preferable to be in the light?

CHRISTMAS DAY

JOY TO THE WORLD



“The Birth of Christ is the ‘eucatastrophe’, [the sudden good turn of events] of Man’s history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many skeptical men have accepted as true on its own merits.” –J.R.R. Tolkien

CALL TO WORSHIP

“The watchmen shout and sing for joy, for before their very eyes they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 52:8

**The first, second, third, fourth, and fifth Advent candles are lit.*

READ

The assigned reading for the day is read.

- Matthew 1:18-25
- Luke 2:1-7

Have one family member read the following out loud:

“He’s Here!” from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* [pp.176–182].

REFLECT

- Consider the words from *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, ‘Emmanuel’ – which means ‘God has come to live with us.’ Because, of course, he had.” **This is meaning of Advent and Christmas – that God himself has come to be with us and to rescue us from our sin and bring us into his kingdom – and it all starts with a baby in a manger. Wonder aloud with your child(ren) at just how this is truly the greatest news of all time.**

PRAY

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Use “The Christmas Promise” Advent calendar this week
- If you have a Nativity set, finally bring out Jesus together and place him in the manger. Consider singing *Away In A Manger* or *Joy to The World*.
- Set an hourly timer to remind you today that God is with you.

FURTHER READING

ADVENT RESOURCES



- “Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ” - Fleming Rutledge
- “Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus” - Marty Machowski
- “Christmastide: Prayers for Advent Through Epiphany” - Phyllis Tickle
- “The Advent of the Lamb of God” - Russ Ramsey
- “Love Came Down at Christmas: Daily Readings for Advent” - Sinclair Ferguson
- “Come Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional” - Paul David Tripp
- “The Christmas Promise” - Alison Mitchell
- “The Littlest Watchman” - Scott James



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