

ADVENT | DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



INTRODUCTION | ADVENT

The sunsets in the Valley are some of the most beautiful portraits of God's work in creation. God's design in the beauty of the sky is remarkable and delightfully warm. The Psalmist says that the sky declares the glory of the Lord (*Psalms 19:1-2*). These Valley sunsets are a reminder of God's goodness and promises that He has not forgotten us, is at work within us, and that His grace is for us in our salvation and sanctification.

This fall, we preached through the book of Malachi where God, through His prophet, reminds the people of the son of righteousness, and that one day a true King will arrive. In His rule and reign, the wonder of His works will not go unnoticed, just like our sunsets. Yet, throughout Malachi, Israel's hearts are hardened in spite of God's reassurance in His promises, and at the end of Malachi, God goes silent for 400 years.

The beauty of Advent is that this season teaches us that though God may be silent in seasons, even long seasons, it does not mean that God is not at work in and through us. Second, Advent is the answer to His silence as the promised One, the Son, enters into time and history to save sinners.

Advent is a regular reminder of God's wonderful work and promises to those who He has called and is calling to Himself. As we embark on this Advent season, let us remember that though we've encountered troubling seasons or hardship, God's silence is not synonymous to His absence; He most clearly demonstrates this in the sending of His son, Jesus Christ.

For His glory,

Pastor Marco De Leon

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THE SEASON OF ADVENT

The season of Advent can be traced all the way back to the fourth century, but even then it's a bit murky. By the time we come into the fifth and sixth century, Advent is a more common practice within the pages of church history. The word "Advent" is Latin for "arrival." When we consider the liturgical calendar, its focus rests upon specific times in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. For instance, the season of Lent focuses on Jesus' life when He fasted in the wilderness and encountered temptation (*Matthew 4:1-11*). The Season of Holy Week emphasizes Jesus' final days that lead to His crucifixion and His resurrection. Similarly, Advent pays attention to the arrival of God into time, space, and history as Jesus Christ.

Historically, Advent has been a time when the church enters a season of fasting and prayer, remembering the arrival of Jesus. The season concludes with celebration knowing that Jesus not only came and died for our sins, was resurrected, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, but also that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead, to claim and gather His bride, the church.

Advent, like other seasons, has fallen on hard times. There are some churches that reject the season of Advent because it's clouded by the season of Christmas and the posture of consumerism. Other churches maintain the tradition and attempt creative ways to teach their congregations on the importance of this season.

For Storehouse McAllen, Advent is a season where we continue to focus on the person and work of Jesus because we're able to look back to the prophecy of Him throughout the Old Testament, the fulfillment of His coming through His virgin birth, and are encouraged to continue to worship Christ as we wait for His second coming one day. We are reassured that God keeps His promise of redemption and that He is making all things new and a most clear demonstration of this is in the arrival of Jesus Christ.

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COMMUNITY GROUPS

What Is A Community Group?

Community Groups are small gatherings of people that meet weekly for friendship, accountability, study and prayer, laughter, and occasionally tears. Community Groups (CGs) serve as the main vehicle of discipleship and care at Storehouse Community Church. In short, our CGs are a family of disciples making disciples of Jesus in ordinary life.

Each CG is unique and shaped by the people who attend and the city they meet in. At the heart of each CG is a desire to gather as family and friends, grow in our relationship with Jesus, and go into our cities on mission.

Why Should I Join A Community Group?

The Bible teaches us that God is relational, personal, and invested which, in turn, means that we are created for friendship and community. It is in community where we flourish through relationship and challenge. CGs are more than a weekly event, but a time to grow and cultivate a relationship with God and others.

Where Do Community Groups Meet?

CGs are strategically planted throughout McAllen and its surrounding cities in an effort to engage our city and community. Whether meeting at a home, local coffee shop, or college campus, we desire to see every aspect of our cities blessed by God's people.

How Do I Get Connected?

There are two ways that you can get connected: you can visit our Connect desk on Sunday and our volunteers will help you through the process or you can visit storehousemcallen.com/community to learn more and sign up!

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. [The Dawning of Indestructible Joy: Daily Readings for Advent by John Piper](#)

"The Christmas season is one of the busiest times of the year. But it is also a season of reflection and preparation for that special day when we mark Immanuel's coming—the arrival of our eternal God in our own frail humanity. This is the greatest of history's many wonders, something too stupendous to celebrate just on one day. Advent is a way of lengthening and intensifying the joy of Christmas."

2. [The Coming of the King: 25 Devotional Readings for Advent by JC Ryle](#)

"Advent means the coming of the special baby who was laid in a manger in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. But J.C. Ryle would also remind people of the 'Second Advent' when Jesus will come again. On that day, Jesus will return to our world, not as a baby but as the unmistakable King of kings and Lord of lords."

3. [The Advent of the Lamb of God by Russ Ramsey](#)

"A page in history was about to turn. Though Israel's world was in the throes of upheaval, it was only a matter of time before the sun of righteousness would rise. These people needed rescue, but they weren't waiting for the stars to align or for the political climate to change. They were waiting for God. They were on *his* timetable. He was sending his Messiah—Immanuel, God with us." For centuries God's people awaited the coming of a Savior. In the midst of a world of trouble, they hoped for one who would deliver them from evil and restore them to true life. Would God be faithful to his promises? Pastor Russ Ramsey narrates anew the greatest story ever told—the true tale of the coming of the Christ.

KIDS RESOURCES

1. [The Light Before Christmas: A Family Advent Devotional](#)

Machowski brings families into their devotional time, sharing the story of Christmas. Through a Bible study of light and darkness, readers will discover how the theme of light weaves its way through the Christmas story and God's plan of salvation. The Light Before Christmas contains thirteen devotionals--three for each of the four weeks of Advent and one more for Christmas. Each devotional includes a Scripture for the day, an object lesson, a focus Scripture, a question to discuss as a family, a song to sing together, and a prayer.

2. [Tracing Glory: The Christmas Story Through the Bible](#)

"In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, it can be difficult to find time together as a family to focus on Jesus. Thankfully, Sarah Rice has put together a creative and encouraging devotional book, *Tracing Glory: The Christmas Story Through the Bible* that allows families a wonderful way to understand how the entire Bible points to Jesus. This book is a welcome resource to help families keep Jesus at the center of our Christmas celebrations!"

3. [The Christmas Promise Storybook: A True Story from the Bible about God's Forever King](#)

This hardback storybook is a captivating retelling of the Christmas story, showing how God kept his promise to send a new King, a rescuing King, a forever King! Perfect for children aged 3 to 6. Superb illustrations by Catalina Echeverri and faithful, Bible-centered story-telling by Alison Mitchell combine to make this a book that both parents and children will love.

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DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK ONE

JOHN 1:19-28

DISCUSSION

- John the Baptist was sure of his role and identity. Can we be both confident and humble as we witness for Christ?
- C.S. Lewis once wrote that humility is not thinking of yourself as less than, but thinking less of yourself. In what ways does John the Baptist highlight this in his life and ministry? In what ways do you struggle to walk humbly?
- John the Baptist is very clear about his purpose: to make way for Jesus and step aside. Are there areas in your life where you keep others from seeing Jesus – whether in conduct or speech?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

- Read *Philippians 2:1-11* together. Jesus is our greatest example in showing humility and Paul is teaching us to be like Jesus through this passage. Ask your children to provide examples of ways they can be humble like Jesus. Encourage them to think of ways they can be kind and helpful to others in their everyday routine.
- Meditate on *Psalms 25:4-5* and *Psalms 25:9*. Pray with your children, asking God for forgiveness in any moment that pride presents itself. Ask that he would replace any pride in their hearts with humility. Continue your prayer using *Psalms 25:4-5 and 9* as a guide. "Please show ____ your ways, Lord, teach him/her your paths. Guide ____ in your truth and teach him/her, for you are God our Savior, and our hope is in you all day long. Thank you that you promise to guide the humble in what is right and teach them your ways."

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DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK TWO

HEBREWS 4:14-16

DISCUSSION

- The author of Hebrews makes a great point, whereas the priests from Malachi's day who were apathetic and sinful (*Malachi 1:6-10, 2:1-9*), Jesus is both sympathetic and sinless. We can approach God through Him. How does this truth affect the way we view our hardship? Our sin? Our attitude in prayer?
- What does it look like practically for Christians to "draw near" toward God rather than shrinking back?
- What is significant about Jesus being the "great high priest" rather than just another priest (See *Hebrews 2:14-18*)?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

- Sing together: "[Nothing but the Blood](#)" by Reawaken Hymns
- Activity: "Sins as scarlet/white as snow." Materials needed: water, red food coloring, bleach, alka-seltzer, clear glass or bowl. Teach the children that like this glass of water, we come into the world pure, but everyone makes mistakes and everyone sins. When we sin, we become unclean. Have kids name some of the things they do wrong and their sins. Add drops of red food coloring for each sin. Talk more about choices and actions that cause us to become unclean, such as being unkind to others, being dishonest, using bad language, lying, stealing, etc. What can we do to become clean again? We can ask the Savior to help us to overcome our mistakes. Jesus Christ paid a great and eternal sacrifice for our sins, making it possible for us to repent and come back to Him. We can call on Christ to help us and to take away our sins. Add a cup of bleach. Then add an Alka-Seltzer to the water. Watch the change before your eyes. Soon the water will be clear and pure once again. Talk about the steps of repentance and share your own or other repentance stories.

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DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK THREE

ROMANS 5:18-19

DISCUSSION

- Based on your church background or life experience, how do you feel when you hear words such as “obey” or “obedience”? Why?
- Every day we wake up to a world full of laws. We obey work laws, city laws, state laws, and federal laws. Often, these laws can be a burden to us to the extent that we feel “forced” to obey them. Looking at verses such as *John 15:10-14*, *2 John 6*, and *Mat. 11:28-30*, how should our obedience to God be different from the obedience we show toward our everyday laws?
- When we are saved, God gives us a new heart and a new mind that allows us to resist sin and freely obey Him (*Ezek. 36:26*, *Eph. 4:23-25*). Therefore, obedience to God is evidence (fruit) of our salvation. There are many who would disagree and say that we must first obey to be saved. This places obedience as the root of salvation and not a fruit. Looking at Romans 5:19, through who’s obedience are we saved? Ours or Christ’s?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

- Search and discuss together: What is being compared in this text (also see *Romans 5:12-17*)? How do you know Jesus was obedient (*John 6:38*, *Hebrews 5:8*, *Philippians 2:8*)? Do you think it was hard for Jesus to obey God’s commands His way, right away, all the time?
- During bedtime this week, have an open conversation with your child on the question, “How’s my obedience?” For you as a parent, tell your child who you have to obey each day (Bosses, laws, taxes, etc.). Give examples from a day when obedience was easy or hard for you. Ask your child how he/she thinks they are doing with obeying too. Ask God to help each of you live in a humble and repentant way that points you back the gift of grace in Jesus.

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DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK FOUR

2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

DISCUSSION

- In your own words, define what the faithfulness of God is. Do you let the faithfulness of others affect the way you see God's faithfulness?
- Have you ever been guilty of basing God's faithfulness on your happiness or material possessions? How is God still faithful to us even when we are going through tough seasons (*1 Thess. 4:3, Rom. 8:28*)?
- If we look at God's faithfulness throughout the Bible, there seems to be a strong relationship between His faithfulness and our patience (*Rom. 8:25*). What is the importance of being patient while we are waiting for God to intervene or respond to something that we've been praying for? What are the dangers that we can encounter if we don't wait patiently?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

- Sing Together: [Faithful](#) - Kingdom Kids (Official Lyric Video)
- Faithfulness Treasure Hunt - Grab a huge sheet of paper or poster board. Tell your kids they are going on a "faithfulness treasure hunt." They can use any resources they want to find where God is faithful and the attitudes and behaviors God wants to see in us when we have faithfulness. This is a great practice to help your kids learn how to search for scriptures on specific topics. Older kids may be interested in taking a first look at Bible dictionaries and concordances; younger kids can draw pictures depicting God's faithfulness. When you think you have uncovered all of the information you can, take a look at it and ask, "What would a person who has faithfulness "look like" today?" Additionally, what can be found on and seen as faithlessness from your treasure hunt?
- Read *Galatians 2:20* together. How does this help us understand *2 Timothy 2:13*? How does it encourage us through our good days and our challenging days?