

Advent Devotions for Family Worship



*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and
the government will be on his shoulders. And He
will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6

**This year, Advent begins on Sunday, December 3, 2017
and ends on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24, 2017**

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Advent Beginner's Guide:

What is Advent?

Advent means "Coming." Christians have used this term to refer to that period before Christmas where we wait for the coming of Christmas Day. Sometimes Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is called His First Advent, while Jesus' second future coming is called the Second Advent. Advent serves as a way of preparing for Christmas. Too often, we get distracted from the true meaning of Christmas and Advent is a good way to refocus Christmas on Christ. Our hope is that you use this booklet in your family devotion times as a way to focus as a family on Christ during the Christmas season.

What is the Advent wreath?

The advent wreath is a wreath that has three purple candles and one rose (pink) candle around the outside, as well as one white candle in the middle. If you do not have an advent wreath, you can purchase one at your local Christian bookstore or you can make your own by getting a wreath and placing the appropriate candles around the wreath and in the center.

When is Advent?

This year Advent begins on December 3rd and ends on December 24th.

When Do I light the Candles?

Candles are lit each day of Advent. Starting the first Sunday, light the first purple candle. Beginning the second Sunday, light the first candle and a second purple candle. Then, starting the third Sunday, light the two purple candles and the rose candle, and starting the fourth Sunday, light the first two purple candles, the rose candle, and the last purple candle. On Christmas Eve, light all the purple and rose candles, plus the white candle in the center. Each candle carries with it special significance, the first candle is "the light of Hope," the second "the light of Love," the third "the light of Joy," and the fourth the "the light of Peace." The white candle in the middle is called "the light of Christ."

What do the wreath and candles mean?

The wreath symbolizes the endless nature of God's love for His people. The purple candles symbolize faithful expectation, and the rose candle symbolizes joy. The white candle symbolizes the purity of Christ.

How do I use this booklet?

For each Day of Advent, this booklet provides a brief family devotion including discussion questions and prayer points. After you light the candles, take some time to read and discuss the passage for that day and close in a time of family prayer before you blow out the candles. In addition, you will find a Christmas hymn for each week that you can incorporate in your family devotion time. Whether you are an empty nester or the parents of preschoolers, every family can benefit from taking time out of their busy day to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Week One: The Light of Hope

During this week, we will contemplate the expectation of the coming Messiah both in His first and second coming. The Messiah's birth was not an unplanned event but a long hoped for plan of God. Jesus came into this world as the long-expected Savior. Just as the Old Testament saints eagerly looked for His first coming, so too, we should look forward to His second.

Each day this week, light the first purple candle to symbolize the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Do this as part of your family devotion and read and discuss the verses for each day. In addition, we have included a Christmas Hymn for each week to help enrich your devotion time



Hymn for Week One:



Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus #77

*Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.*

Sunday, December 3rd:



Read Romans 15:12-13

Advent is the time of year where we show others the hope we have in the Christ of Christmas. In these verses, Paul is quoting from the Book of Isaiah where Isaiah describes Jesus as the coming descendent of David who will rule over all the earth. Paul's readers have already seen Jesus come and die to save them from their sins and are now awaiting his return to rule over all men. Paul then follows up this quote with a prayer for peace, joy and hope in the life of the believer. As we contemplate the coming of Christ we should have joy over what he has done for us, peace that he has created in our heart, and hope that we know that He is a God who keeps his promises.



As you think about both the first and second coming of Jesus, what do you see that fills you with joy or peace? Does that joy and peace produce hope in your life?



As you pray, ask that God will give you true joy and peace this advent season and that it will produce hope in your life.

Monday, December 4th:



Read Genesis 12:1-3

From the very beginning God planned to send his son into the world and he planned to do that through a particular people. Here, we see God's promise that all peoples of the world would be blessed through Abrahams line. This prophecy points to Jesus who came not to be merely a Jewish king but to be the King and Savior of the whole world.



Jesus came to be a blessing to the whole world. How can you be a part of that mission?

For young kids: How does Jesus bless the whole world?



As you pray, thank God for His great plan of salvation and that Jesus came to bless the whole world.

Tuesday, December 5th:



Read Micah 5:2-5

Throughout the history of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, God made promises about the coming Savior. In these verses, it is predicted that the coming Messiah will be born in the lowly town of Bethlehem. This coming Savior is then identified as the “Shepherd of His flock.” Jesus is the good shepherd who cares for His sheep and guides them in the way of truth. As we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate the coming of one who will care for us and guide us in a dark and confusing world.



How does Jesus care for you in your daily life?



As you pray, thank God for the guidance that He gives us as the Good Shepherd.

Wednesday, December 6th:



Read Zechariah 9:9-12

Jesus' coming was predicted long before His birth. God promised a king who would come to free the captives, bring peace to the nations, and establish a new covenant of blood. The Israelites were to hope in this coming king and rejoice in His coming. Jesus has come and He is the King both of the whole world and of our lives. As you celebrate Advent this year, realize that we are celebrating the birth of our mighty King and not just the birth of a little baby.



How do you make Jesus King of your life? How should we celebrate his coming this Christmas?



As you pray, ask God to help you make Jesus the true king of your life.

Thursday, December 7th:



Read Psalm 89:1-8

In these verses, the psalmist praises God for His great faithfulness. God has a love that will never let us down. God is always there for us and the sign of that great love is the coming of a King that will reign forever. Though the psalmist had not yet seen this forever King, yet his hope of a coming king allows him to sing for joy. Because of God's faithfulness, we too can hope in Jesus as the forever King of this world and should praise God for his faithfulness.



How do you see God's faithfulness in your life?

For young kids: These verses talk about a promise that God made to David that he kept by sending Jesus. Do you always keep your promises?



As you pray, thank God for his faithfulness and pray that you will put your hope in His promises.

Friday, December 8th:



Read Acts 1:6-11

The word Advent means “coming.” It speaks to a hope of a coming king. Just as Old Testament believers waited expectantly for the first coming of Jesus, so too should we wait expectantly for His second coming. Jesus will come again and establish permanently His glorious kingdom on the earth. Until that time, we are to be His witnesses working for Him here on earth. As we celebrate Christmas and the first coming of Jesus, we must continue to hope in His future promises.



What are things that you hope for this Christmas season?

What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus?



As you pray, praise Jesus for coming the first time and pray eagerly for His second coming.

Saturday, December 9th:



Read Isaiah 61:1-4

Christmas is a season of hope. As we celebrate Jesus' first coming where He died as our savior, it should encourage us to look ahead with expectation to His second coming when He will make all things new. In this passage, we see a prophecy that looks ahead to a day when Jesus will restore his people, when he will put right a broken and fractured world. The hope of Christmas is a hope in a Savior who can restore us in our own personal brokenness, and who will one day make all things just as they should be, restoring our broken world.



How will things be different when Jesus comes again?



As you pray, praise Jesus that he will restore our broken world one day and seek his restoring power in your own life.

Week Two:

The Light of Love

During this week, we will contemplate the amazing love that was shown by God in sending His Son to be Savior of the world and the amazing love shown by Christ in coming and dying for us. Though many of the verses studied this week are not usually thought of as Christmas verses, they serve to show the great sacrifice that Jesus gave by becoming man and dying for us.

Each day this week, light two purple candles to symbolize the amazing love that is demonstrated by God becoming man and dying for us.

 Hymn for Week Two: 
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing #88

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

*Christ, by highest Heav’n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

*Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

Sunday, December 10th:



Read 1 John 4:7-11

God is love, and Christmas is a time of year that reminds us God's greatest act of love, the sending of Jesus. God sent His son to die for us, to take our penalty and that is the ultimate act of love. Because we have been loved so greatly, we can then seek to show love in return. This passage reminds not just of God's love for us but also that we should love other because of the love we have been shown.



How can you show the love of Jesus to others this Christmas season?



As you pray, thank God for the great love that He shows us and ask that He help you to love others.

Monday, December 11th:



Read Matthew 1:18-25

Here we read Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus. In this story, we see that God loved us enough to come down to earth and become one of us. Notice that Jesus is called "God with us" in this passage. Because of sin, there is separation between us and God, but Jesus came to reconcile that relationship so that God can be with us. The Christmas we should be reminded of the love that Jesus showed by coming to earth to become one of us so that he could save us from our sins.



Jesus is called "God with us." What does that mean?



As you pray, thank Jesus for loving us enough to come and be God with us.

Tuesday, December 12th:



Read John 1:1-14

These verses introduce Jesus as God Himself, the Creator of all things. Yet despite this, Jesus is concerned with the plight of His lowly creation. This almighty Creator is described as the “Light of Men.” He cares about humanity and seeks to show them the right way to live. God loved us enough to become one of us. As you think about the coming of Christ this Christmas, think about the amazing love shown in the ruler of the universe caring for His lowly creatures who reject and despised him.



Jesus is described as the “Light of Men.” How do you see Jesus guiding you in your life?

For young kids: What does a light do?
How is Jesus like a light?



As you pray, ask Jesus to be the light in your life, guiding everything that you do.

Wednesday, December 13th:



Read Luke 1:26-38

In this passage, Mary is told of the amazing news that she will conceive and bear a child. The King that was coming to reign would not be born to royalty but instead to lowly parents. The long-awaited King who would save his people came in the form of a servant. As we think of the Love of Christmas, realize that God loved us enough to take on the form of a servant so that he could show the world what a true king was. And like Mary we should also seek to be servants, serving the one true God.



What can we learn from how Mary responds to the Angel's good news?

For young kids: The Angel came to give Mary good news. What was the good news he gave her?



As you pray, thank God for sending His Forever King at Christmas and pray that you will have a servant's heart.

Thursday, December 14th:



Read Philippians 2:5-11

It is amazing to think of what Christ gave up in becoming a man. Jesus was with God and was God. He enjoyed the riches of heaven and the power of the divine, and yet He was willing to become a man. He left Heaven for a lowly manger for us. This is an unimaginable act of love, and we cannot fully comprehend the true price Jesus paid in becoming man. Jesus made a great sacrifice by coming the first Christmas and God calls on us to have that same willingness to sacrifice for our fellow man.



The love Jesus shows us is a sacrificial love. How do you show sacrificial love towards others?

For young kids: Jesus gave up a lot to be born on Christmas. Why do you think Jesus gave up all those things?



As you pray, thank Jesus for the sacrificial love He showed in coming the first Christmas.

Friday, December 15th:



Read Romans 5:6-11

In this passage, we see the great love of God for us in truly amazing form. God sent His Son to earth on Christmas day in order to save those who were the enemies of God. God has demonstrated love beyond our ability to understand in sending His Son. Man had already rebelled against God and was His enemy, yet Christ came for us. Christ coming at Christmas is the greatest gift ever given because we are so far from deserving it.



How does God show his love for us?

How should we respond to this great love shown us by God?



As you pray, thank God for sending His Son to die for us while we were still rebelling against Him.

Saturday, December 16th:



Read 1 John 3:16-18

Christmas is a time of year that reminds us that God loves us. God sent His son to die for us and that is the ultimate act of love.

This great love then should propel us to want to love others and love them in practical ways. God calls us to love in our actions as well as our words. As we think about the amazing gift of love we have been given at Christmas, we should look around to see who we can show the love of Jesus in practical ways.



How can you show the love of Jesus to others this Christmas season?



As you pray, thank God for the great love that He shows us and ask that He help you to love others.

Week Three:

The Light of Joy

During this week, we will contemplate the joy that comes to us because Jesus has come into this world. We will explore the way that Jesus' first coming was received with joy by those who experienced it and be reminded of the joy that we all have in Christ.

Each day this week as part of your family devotion, light the two purple candles and the rose candle to symbolize the joy that we experience in Christ our Savior.



Hymn for Week Three:



How Great our Joy #108

*While by the sheep we watched at night,
Glad tidings brought an angel bright.*

How great our joy! Great our joy!

Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

There shall be born, so He did say,

In Bethlehem a Child today.

How great our joy! Great our joy!

Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

There shall the Child lie in a stall,

This Child who shall redeem us all.

How great our joy! Great our joy!

Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

This gift of God we'll cherish well,

That ever joy our hearts shall fill.

How great our joy! Great our joy!

Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

Sunday, December 17th:



Read Luke 1:39-45

We see in this passage what happens when Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth. As Mary nears Elizabeth, the un-born John the Baptist leapt for joy in his mother's womb because he knew that the un-born Messiah was near. The mere presence of Jesus, even before He came out of the womb, was the cause of great rejoicing. The infant John, who had never seen the outside world, knew of the greatness of the one who was in the womb of Mary. May we all likewise praise God, from the youngest among us to the oldest.



How do you show the joy you have in Christ this Christmas season?

For young kids: Why was the baby John the Baptist jumping for joy in his mom's belly?



As you pray, praise God for sending the Messiah and pray that we might all display great joy as we contemplate Jesus' coming to earth.

Monday, December 18th:



Luke 1:46-55

In this passage, Mary magnifies God as she contemplates the miracle of her coming Son. She rejoices to see God's promise to His people fulfilled in her womb. She sees how God shows mercy to His people and refuses to abandon them. This produces in her this song of great joy. We too, as we see God's great mercy and unfailing love, should rejoice and magnify the name of God this Christmas season.



What has God done in your life that you can praise Him for today?

In today's story, Mary sings a song to God. What is your favorite song to sing to God?



As you pray, thank God for what He has done in your life and praise Him for the mercy He showed in sending Jesus.

Tuesday, December 19th:



Read Luke 2:1-7

As we read the account of the birth of Jesus, we should notice that this is the birth of a king. Rather than being born in a palace, He is born in a place where livestock are kept and cows eat. Yet it is this lowly humble birth that is the cause of the great joy of Christmas. The cause of our joy at Christmas is not lights or show but instead should be the child who was born in a lowly stable and came to die for our sins. At Christmas it can be easy to be distracted by presents and lights, but we must never forget the true joy of Christmas is the Christ who came and was born for us.



What do you find joy in this Christmas?



As you pray, thank God for the fact that He sent Jesus to be our King and marvel at the amazing way that He came here to earth.

Wednesday, December 20th:



Read Luke 2:8-14

In these verses, we see the great announcement to the shepherds of the Savior's birth. The angels proclaimed that Jesus coming that first Christmas is good news for all people. God cares for all people and makes a way for them to have peace with God. Like the angels, we should proclaim this good news with great joy so that others may hear and know. From the richest to the poorest, all need to hear the Angel's message this Christmas.



Why should it be a joy to tell other people about Jesus?

For young kids: Angels announced the birth of Jesus. What made Jesus such a special Baby?



As you pray, ask that God will give you boldness to proclaim the joy of Christ's coming.

Thursday, December 21st:



Read Luke 2: 15-20

As a result of the good news that they had heard, the shepherds went right away, found Jesus, and rejoiced. When we hear the good news of Christmas, we should have the same urgency to find this coming Messiah. When we discover that Jesus has come for us, we too, like the shepherds, should go away rejoicing. Joy is the natural outflow of interacting with the true Messiah. As you think about the joy of Christmas, know that it is the joy of encountering our Lord and Savior.



How did you react when you first accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

For young kids: Why do you think the shepherds wanted to tell others about meeting the Baby Jesus?



As you pray, thank God for the joy that comes from knowing Jesus, and pray for opportunities to share that joy with others.

Friday, December 22nd:



Read Luke 2:21-38

In these verses, we see the joy of Simeon and Anna as they meet the newborn Jesus in the temple. Both were old and waiting to see the coming Messiah. As Simeon praises God, he tells of how meeting the Messiah has brought him true satisfaction as he sees the fulfillment of God's promise to his people. And in Anna, we see how this joy produces thanksgiving. The joy of Christmas should produce in us both satisfaction and thanksgiving as we remember that through Jesus we now can be made right with God.



What are you thankful to God for this Christmas Season?



As you pray, thank God for sending Jesus and giving us true purpose and fulfillment.

Saturday, December 23rd:



Read Matthew 2:1-12

In these verses, we see two different responses to the coming of the Messiah. On the one hand, the wise men eagerly searching for Jesus, and when they find Him, they worship at His feet. On the other hand, when Herod heard the news of Jesus, he became angry and sought to harm Jesus. Some men are joyful because of the message of Christmas and seek to worship like the wise men and others reject God like Herod. God loves all men, but not all men who have heard of God's King respond the right way. This Christmas we should seek to respond like the wise men and worship Jesus as King



Why do some people reject Jesus as King?

For young kids: Why did the wise men want to find the newborn King?



As you pray, thank God for sending His Son and pray for those who have rejected God's King that they may come to know Him.

Week Four: The Light of Peace & The Light of Christ

During this week, we will contemplate the peace that Jesus brought to this world and Jesus as the Light of the World. The peace that Jesus brings is peace between God and man. Jesus came to save us and to light the way and show us how we should live. As you read this week, think about how the Jesus we celebrate this Christmas is the true Prince of Peace and Light of the World.

Each day this week, light the first two purple candles, the rose candle, and the final purple candle which symbolizing Jesus as the peace that surpasses all understanding. Also make sure to light the center white candle. This is the Christ candle which represents Jesus as the light of the world



Hymn for Week Four:



It Came Upon a Midnight Clear #93

*It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold;
“Peace on the earth, good will to men,
From Heaven’s all gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.*

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife
And hear the angels sing.*

*For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing*

Sunday, December 24th:



Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Long before He was born, Jesus' birth was prophesied in the Bible, and these verses provide an amazing description of Jesus the coming king, the Messiah. Take time to contemplate each of the titles of Christ used in this passage. These verses speak of a child that will be born and show His people the way. He will be a great ruler and be God himself living among His people. He will make a peace between God and man and point the way for all things to be made new. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas, we are celebrating the coming of the one true King.



Pick two of the titles for Christ in these verses and share what they teach you about Jesus.



As you pray, ask God to help you make Jesus the true King of your life.