

Hope



Peace



Joy



Love



ADVENT

STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The term 'Advent' simply means coming or appearance. This season offers a chance to pause and reflect on the first advent of Jesus, God Himself taking on flesh and being born into the lowliness of His own creation, as well as our ongoing anticipation and hope for His second coming when He will fully usher in every aspect of our salvation.

Advent is traditionally marked with reflections and devotions tied to the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. This guide is intended to help you remember and reflect on the promises of God to bring these very things to His people through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

For each week of Advent, this guide will provide a brief reflection over the theme, a reading passage, questions for personal reflection and family discussions, a song suggestion for family worship, as well as a simple family activity to complete together. Additionally, you will find other resources at the back of this guide to encourage and support your pursuit of Christ in this season.

Week 1:

HOPE

Read: Isaiah 9:6-7

The birth of Christ assures us of His second coming. God has always been and will always be faithful to fulfill His promises. The partially-fulfilled promises of Isaiah 9:6-7 are the foundation for our hope. Even in the midst of trials in this life, which can threaten to overwhelm at times, we can have a faith-fueled confidence that looks beyond any circumstance to the promised gifts that Jesus will bring when He comes again. Jesus serves even now as the bearer of these titles and will one day perfectly and finally usher in the reign of His Kingdom of peace. And so we wait with eager expectation for that day to come.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. In what areas of your life are you struggling to see or believe God's faithfulness to you?
2. What would it look like for you to trust the Lord today to be faithful to you in every way?
3. What would it look like for hope in God's future promises to more robustly inform and impact your emotions, thoughts, and actions?

Pray: Father, lead me to trust in your faithfulness and to live filled with hope for that day when Christ comes again and fulfills every promise.

Week 1:

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Activity: Bake a dessert together and talk about what it feels like to wait with diligence and expectation.

God promised to send His Son and He did just that when Jesus was born. But the people of God waited thousands of years for that to happen. God has also promised us that Jesus will come again and that He will be our perfect king. Now, we are the ones waiting on God and trusting Him to fulfill that promise. Waiting with confident expectation is what it means to have hope and that hope plays a big part in our lives even now.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. How does the birth of Jesus help us to have hope that He will come back again?
2. What do these verses promise that Jesus will do when He comes again? What do you think that will be like?
3. How is hope for our future with Jesus helpful for us today? Why is that hope important?

Pray: Father, help me to be content in the life you give me now and to look forward with hope to what Jesus will do when He comes again.

Rejoice: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Week 2:

PEACE

Read: Micah 5:2-5a

Enormous amounts of our energy are spent seeking to arrange a sense of peace in our lives; everyone wants it. These verses remind us of two things, though, that should give us pause in how we pursue peace. (1) You cannot have peace until you are at peace with God, which comes through Christ alone as your redeemer and shepherd, and (2) that Jesus Himself will be your peace. Nothing in this life will ever be 'enough' and nothing will satisfy your heart until you rest totally and completely in the gospel of peace that Christ alone delivers.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. What created thing has your heart been seeking to bring you peace?
2. How might the gospel free you from the exhausting pursuit of trying to orchestrate peace on your own?
3. What would it look like for you to trust Christ to be your peace?

Pray: Father, forgive me for all the ways I have sought to create my own peace with you and in my life. Teach me to look to Christ instead.

Week 2:

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Activity: Spend time listing everything you can about Jesus that gives you peace.

Sometimes we assume that having Jesus as our shepherd will mean that He always leads us to greener pastures, that He will make our lives peaceful. But these verses tell us that Jesus Himself is our peace. Having peace in your heart is not about currently having a peaceful life; it comes only by trusting Jesus and knowing that He is what you need most of all.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What in this world would make you feel most at peace?
2. What does it mean to be at peace with God? How does Jesus bring us that?
3. What does it mean to have peace in your heart?
4. How is the peace that Jesus brings different from peace we find in other ways?

Pray: Father, teach me to find all my peace in Jesus instead of in the circumstances of my life.

Rejoice: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Week 3:

JOY

Read: Luke 1:39-55

Paul exclaims in 2 Corinthians 9:15, "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!" Faith in Jesus is inseparable from delight in Him. Every person listed in these verses responds to Jesus with excitement. And yet sometimes we let Christ become 'old news' to us, dimming our joy and rejoicing in Him. Consider the gift of Jesus in your life this Christmas. What all has He done for you? What all has He brought to you? Let that list lead your heart into rejoicing as you consider the joy of your salvation.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you associate following Jesus with delight?
2. What about Christ brings you particular joy?
3. What might it look like to rejoice more fully in Jesus and what He has done? How should you express your joy in the Lord?

Pray: Lord, may you help my heart to delight in Christ by faith and to rejoice openly and fully to Him.

Week 3:

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Activity: Surprise someone with an unexpected gift and discuss the joy of giving as a celebration of others.

John, the baby in Elizabeth's womb, Elizabeth herself, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, all instinctively respond excitedly to the Lord. Sometimes church activities and holiday traditions can feel a little boring or routine, but they really should be joyful, exciting occasions. Jesus came to bring joy to the world and He is worth celebrating! Like Mary, we should be careful to remember all the wonderful things we can about God and let that lead our hearts to rejoicing.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What do you feel when you think about Jesus?
2. What about Jesus gives you the most joy when you think about it?
3. What do we see in these verses that teaches us about rejoicing in the Lord? What might rejoicing in God look like in your life and in your family?

Pray: Father, teach me to rejoice in you and to have joy in my heart because of knowing Jesus.

Rejoice: "Angels We Have Heard On High"

Week 4:

LOVE

Read: 1 John 4:7-12

Love flows entirely from God. He loves us, proving it by sending Jesus, and by knowing His love we are able to love others. We often think of love as a sort of warm feeling, but this passage points to the concrete actions of Christ's incarnation birth and sacrificial death as the definition of God's love. There is no better example of love than what Jesus has done for you. Those who belong to Christ are loved beyond measure. Understanding and receiving that, when we stop to stare at it, should have a tremendous impact on how we relate to God, how we see ourselves, and how we then love others.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Stop and reflect on the depth of God's love for you as proven through the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Are you believing His love for you?
2. Being loved immeasurably by God, how can you demonstrate the same self-sacrificing, initiating love of God to others?

Pray: Father, help me to see and believe the depths of your love for me and then lead me to love others out of the abundance of your love for me.

Week 4:

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Activity: Find one simple way to serve someone this week without expecting anything in return.

God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to be born as a human baby and grow up to die as punishment for our sins. That is true love. When we love others it should look something like God's love for us, sacrificial and selfless. But the only way we can really do that is if we first know and trust that God loves us. And knowing God's love first and foremost means personally trusting in Jesus as your savior.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What do other people do that makes you feel the most loved by them?
2. What has God done that proves how much He loves us?
3. What can you do to remember how much God loves you?
4. How might you love others this week without seeking anything in return?

Pray: Father, help us to know how much you love us and to love others because you have first loved us.

Rejoice: "O Holy Night"

Christmas Day:

HE IS HERE!

Read: Luke 2:8-14

The announcement of Jesus' birth was not like that of a newborn with height and weight and balloons. It was an announcement that the King had arrived! Your response to Jesus this Christmas should entail more than admiration; He demands allegiance. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. The question for us is will we do that willingly by faith? Pause this Christmas Day and answer whether Jesus is Lord in your life? Perhaps you know that He is already and in that case ask yourself if you are living that out? The King has come and may His will be done in your life as it is in heaven.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the parts of your life which are not fully submitted to the Lordship of Jesus. Repent and ask Him to help you loosen control, submitting fully to Him.
2. What would it look like for you to fully trust in Jesus for all your needs and to walk with Him by faith?
3. In what ways is the Lordship of Jesus good news to you?

Pray: Lord, grant me the grace to walk with you by faith and live trusting wholly and completely in Christ as Lord.

Christmas Day:

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Activity: Have parents share their story of deciding to follow Jesus.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to see so many angels in the sky?! They showed up to announce that the King of all creation had been born on earth. It was the most important moment that had ever happened! Everyone has to decide for themselves how they will respond to this news about Jesus. No one gets to simply think of Him as a little baby born in a manger. Will you follow Him by faith and trust Him as your Lord and Savior?

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that the angel called Christ the savior?
2. What does it mean that the angel called Christ the Lord?
3. Who do you say that Jesus is? Do you have faith in Him as your Savior and Lord?

Pray: Father, help us to believe what the angels have said and trust Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Rejoice: "What Child Is This?"

ADVENT READING GUIDE

Read one passage per day and reflect on the work of God in Christ as you prepare for Advent. The selected readings move generally through the promises made and kept, our new life in Christ now and forever, and the birth of Jesus.

- Day 1: Gen. 3:14-15
- Day 2: Gen. 12:1-3
- Day 3: 2 Sam. 7:8-16
- Day 4: Isaiah 42:1-4
- Day 5: Isaiah 9:6-7
- Day 6: Isaiah 53:1-6
- Day 7: Romans 8:1-4
- Day 8: Philippians 2:5-11
- Day 9: Hebrews 1:1-4
- Day 10: John 3:16-18
- Day 11: Gal. 4:1-7
- Day 12: Romans 6:1-14
- Day 13: Ezekiel 36:25-27
- Day 14: Eph. 4:17-32
- Day 15: Rom. 12:1-2
- Day 16: Galatians 5:13-26
- Day 17: Revelation 19:5-9
- Day 18: Revelation 21:1-7
- Day 19: Revelation 7:9-17
- Day 20: John 14:1-3
- Day 21: Luke 1:5-25
- Day 22: Luke 1:26-38
- Day 23: Luke 1:39-56
- Day 24: Luke 1:57-80
- Day 25: Luke 2:1-21

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

If you are looking for additional resources to use during this season, we would suggest these as beneficial helps for your worship and devotion.

- “Joy to the World” by John Piper. Daily devotionals for Advent.
- “Love Came Down at Christmas: Daily Readings for Advent” by Sinclair Ferguson.
- “A Jesus Christmas: Explore God's Amazing Plan for Christmas” by Barbara Reaach. Children's daily devotional.
- “Advent Longing / Christmas Joy” playlist by TGC. 100 songs for the season.

ADDITIONAL FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- Make a paper chain with 25 links and hang it up. Tear away one link each day and discuss what it's like to wait for Christ with anticipation.
- Make homemade Christmas cards and take them with you to visit a nursing home.
- Make your own Advent wreath as a family, making space for 5 candles. Light one candle each week while you talk about the theme for that week.
- Listen to a different Christmas Carol each day, or when you can, and talk about what the words really mean.
- Read one story each night in the Jesus Storybook Bible and discuss how the whole Bible really does point to Jesus.

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