

2021

Advent Guide

to help you celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ



What is Advent and what's it all about?

The word "Advent" comes to us from the Latin for "coming."

The purpose of the Advent season is to remember the first coming of Christ to the earth and to long for Christ's second coming - His return.

It is a season that focuses on waiting and longing.

Acknowledging that life is full of beauty and sorrow, ease and difficultly, brokenness and wholeness, we remember the groundbreaking nature of Christ's dwelling with His people.

Advent leads us to be thankful for what Christ has done in his first coming - freeing us from Sin and Death - and to long for what He'll do in His second coming - restore and make all things new.

It's our prayer that this guide serve you, your friends, and your family as you patiently await Christmas day and all that it represents.

Advent is made up of four weeks

HOPE - Week of Sunday, November 28 written by Jon Wood

PEACE - Week of
Sunday, December 5
written by Chris Mixon

JOY - Week of Sunday, December 12 written by Lauren Luckey

LOVE- Week of Sunday, December 19 written by Daniel Wagner

HOPE

A Thrill of Hope, The Weary World Rejoices.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15

After God created the universe and all that is in it, He declared it all good. He then created Man in His own image and declared that very good. Men and women were created to live in harmony with God, to walk with Him, to enjoy His unveiled presence and to worship Him perfectly. But then, Eve sinned and her husband, Adam, along with her. They broke the fellowship that they had with God because they disobeyed Him and thought they needed more than God had offered them. From that terrible day forward, nothing has been the same. Sin has broken everything as it permeated all creation, and we feel its effects in every possible way. Adam and Eve's sin, however, did not catch God off guard, leaving Him to come up with Plan B. In fact, it was all part of God's plan to redeem a people for Himself, to show His glory and supremacy over all things by sending His Son, Jesus into the world as the Way, the Truth and the Life, apart from Whom no one is saved. And that is what Genesis 3:15 is all about. It is the first prophecy in the Bible about how Jesus will come to defeat Satan, how He will come to suffer, and how He will come to destroy sin and death. In the middle of one of the darkest parts of the Bible, God offers us hope.

It may seem strange to talk about creation and the Fall at Advent when we rightly focus on the hope, peace, joy and love surrounding the birth of Jesus. But understanding the Fall is precisely the reason we are hopeful at Christmas. Without the need for a Savior, there would not have been a manger. Without the manger, there would not have been a cross. Without the cross, there would not have been an empty tomb and without an empty tomb, there would not be the hope and promise of eternal life in our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the time of Genesis 3:15 forward, the people of God have looked forward to Jesus coming to defeat sin, death and the evil one. And Jesus did come. He came to succeed where Adam failed. He came to please the Father. He came to bear the punishment that our sin deserved. He came to bruise the head of the serpent, just like Genesis 3 promised. And this is our thrill of hope in which a weary world rejoices.

- What do you hope for most at Christmas time?
- In our broken world, how does the promise that Jesus has defeated sin and death for those who believe in Him offer you hope?
- Why can Genesis 3:15 be a verse that offers us hope during Advent?
- In what ways can you offer the hope of Christ to others this Christmas season?

PEACE

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; wand the government shall be xupon4 his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

Christmas can be a time of many emotions: happiness, nostalgia, and love. No matter what you may feel during the Christmas season, there's someone who can bring you eternal and lasting peace. This "someone" is named Jesus. The world was far from peaceful when Jesus arrived. He didn't pretend that everything was fine. He knew that things were bad and would get worse. And yet still, He preached peace. How?

In the last meal Jesus had with his followers—hundreds of years after Isaiah talked about a prince of peace, and decades after the angels talked about peace for all people—Jesus talked about a different kind of peace... Jesus wasn't talking about a peace that had to do with the right people being in power, the wrong people being out of power, and everything falling into place. Jesus was talking about a peace that wasn't based on circumstances at all. How do we know? Because Jesus told His disciples this hours away from His own arrest and death. If He were talking about a peace that only happened when everything worked out perfectly, He never would've said what He did. He knew what was coming and still, He looked His disciples in the eye and said, "You can have peace."

The peace that Jesus talked about was a peace that happened inside. Peace, as Jesus explained it, had nothing to do with experiences outside of His control. It had everything to do with how He faced them. He knew that no matter what happened, He could handle it because God was with Him. God was the source of His peace, and God never changes. When things were falling apart on the outside, God stayed the same and could be a source of comfort at the worst time. No matter what happens around us, peace is possible because God is with us and for us.

As unlikely as that sounds, the truth remains: Because of Jesus, peace is possible, no matter what is happening around us. This Christmas allow God to speak into your heart and look for peace in God. Remember the gifts that God has given you, maybe make a list. You may find this list long and extensive, you may realize that you can have peace in God alone because you can trust God to provide all that need for life. God sent Jesus to bring us peace on earth that doesn't change when our circumstances do. Peace that we could never provide to one another. Peace that lasts, forever.

- Where in your life do you struggle?
- What part of your life needs peace?
- Is there tension, anger, or bitterness between you and anyone?
- How should Jesus' coming to bring peace change that situation?
- How can you be someone who brings the peace of Christ to the places you go and the people you meet this week?



Luke 2:8-11

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

On July 22, 2013, the eyes of the world were waiting to get a glimpse of baby George, the first born son of William and Kate, the famous British royals. Cameras and pageantry surrounded this baby's birth but even that grand occasion couldn't compare to the announcement that accompanied the birth of Jesus! Take a moment and think, use your imagination and wonder... what would it have been like to stand with these shepherds the night the message came?

The angel proclaimed with heavenly glory, "I bring you good news..." We have good news today because God has sent His Son Jesus to rescue us and be our Savior (John 3:16-17). But the angel didn't stop there. Instead he continued saying, "I bring you good news of great joy..." Sin, sadness and shame no longer have to define our lives. Because He is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23), we can experience life changing fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). The news is still good today! Would you let the joy of God's presence fill your heart this Christmas?

Joy to the World by Isaac Watts
"Joy to the world! The Lord is come
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing."

- Can you say that joy is a characteristic of your life today? Spend time praying and asking God to fill you with His joy (Psalm 51:12).
- How can you make space for joy in your life?
 Carve out time for activities that replenish your soul (Matthew 11:28-30).
- Joy is contagious! Think about ways you can share joy with neighbors around you (Matthew 22:39).

LOVE

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:5-7

In Christmas, we see Jesus Christ step down from heaven to "move into the neighborhood". We see Christ, that existed for eternity past and will exist forevermore, choose to live a life on earth for 30-something years. I can't image how nice heaven is. I think we all have our own pictures of what we think it'll be like. Streets of gold. Mansions. Angels flying around. Those are often the images that come to our mind. I do know this, living in heaven is better than living on the Earth. We know it's a place of perfection, rest, and joy. Try as hard as we may - even at Christmas - anyone reading this knows that even at it's best life on Earth can often come up short of constant perfection, true rest, and deep joy.

So why on Earth would Christ leave heaven? Only because of love.

It's a love that I cannot fully comprehend, but one that we can understand and grow to imitate more and more over time. Ephesians 3 invites us to pray that we "might have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

This divine love in Jesus's coming to Earth is a remarkable display of the sacrifice that pure love calls us to imitate.

Jesus left the place of greatest peace to experience ridicule and mockery.

He left the place of greatest rest to embrace human limits - to sweat and work and grow tired.

He left the place of greatest security to live without "a place to lay his head" and to eventually be murdered on a cross.

What is love if it's not costly?

Reflecting on Christ's love at Christmas should call us to see the true nature of love. Love is laying down your preferences, power, and pride for the benefit of another. Not just to love the people that are easy to love. Not just to love when it is convenient or beneficial for us. But to even love our enemies, the ones we ignore, and the ones in whom we see no reason to love. When we do this we are most like the Christ we see at Christmas.

- · Who is difficult for you to love?
- How can you love and serve them this week in a way that honors Christ?
- When is a time that selfless love has changed your perspective on something?

Resources for Families

here are some suggested activities for families with kids at home to do together each week of Advent!

HOPE

Make a Christmas card for someone who does not love and trust Jesus. Wish them a merry Christmas and use a Bible verse to remind them that Jesus came to save them.

Talk about how Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and then play hide and seek throughout your house.

People don't always hear our words, but they do notice our actions. Leave a tangible reminder for people as our way of sharing the love and hope of God. Do something like tape candy canes to ATMs or your neighbors' doors with a note that has a verse like this "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

PEACE

"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" Romans 14:19. show your neighbors that you care about them! Make your favorite cookies, bag them up with a short note and deliver them to your neighbors!

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" Romans 12:18. Make a new friend at school today, have a conversation with someone that you wouldn't usually spend time with!

JOY

John 8:12 tells us that Jesus is the light of the world and whoever has Him won't walk in darkness. Light attracts people and lights their way. Talk about how Jesus is the light of the world while you take your family on a drive to go see Christmas lights!

Spread some joy to your neighbors by going caroling with your family and friends!

LOVE

Loneliness is often hits people the hardest during Christmas. Take some time to love someone who is hurting by taking dinner to or eating dinner with someone who is lonely.

Write a letter to Jesus expressing your love by thanking Him for all of the good things He has given you throughout the year.



Join us on Christmas Eve!

Friday December 24 3:30pm & 5:00pm

