

A D V E N T



Advent is a season of expectant waiting. It is a time where we remember the waiting of Israel for the Messiah - the one who would deliver Israel and bring healing and restoration to all creation. As Christians, we remember that Jesus is the one who fulfilled this expectant waiting in the past, but we also look to the future. Jesus promised his disciples that he will one day come again. Thus, Advent is a season of expectant waiting where we fix our eyes on Jesus, remembering he is the fulfillment of the past and is the future.

Traditionally, Advent moves through four different themes as we come to the celebration of Christmas - Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The material of this Advent devotional is structured to follow these themes. Each week will focus on a theme and present scripture, a prayer practice and opportunities for reflection. The material is meant to last the whole week but there are different ways you could go through it. The scripture and prayer practice could be done every day of the week or done once for the whole week. The reflections could be personal or done with your family or community group. Let the Holy Spirit guide you as to how you might utilize this material this Advent season.

Our prayer is that this material would help you deeply know that Jesus is our Hope, our Peace, our Joy, and our Love.

READ

Psalm 130

A song of ascents.
Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.
If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

Luke 2:25-32

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

ADVENT

Week 1

November 27 - December 3

HOPE

Prayer Practice: Meditation on Psalm 130

1. Read through Psalm 130.
2. Read it again, this time slowly and out loud. Make the psalmist's words, your own.
3. Read it again. This time replace the name Israel with your name.
4. Take a few moments to express your gratitude for the gift of Jesus's arrival to this earth, but also in your life, while looking to the future when He comes back again to make all things new.

REFLECTION

Consider memorizing Psalm 130 over the course of this week.

What does it look like to tangibly put your hope in Jesus?

What circumstances in your life are diminishing your hope?

What circumstances in your life are creating hope?

ADVENT

Week 1

November 27 - December 3

HOPE

READ

Isaiah 9:1-7

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 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. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

ADVENT

Week 2

December 4 - December 10

PEACE

Prayer Practice: Silence & Solitude

Try to find a space to be alone for 2 minutes. Set a timer if that is helpful. Breathe slowly and try to quiet your thoughts. After the 2 minutes of silence, invite Jesus to join you right where you are. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Ask Him to meet you in the areas where you are in need of peace.

REFLECTION

One of the titles Isaiah gives to the Messiah is Prince of Peace. When the angels make their announcement of the Savior being born, they declare God's peace has come to earth. Why do you think God is so concerned with peace?

Are there circumstances in your life that are making it difficult for you to experience God's peace?

What are the things in your life that currently bring you peace?

Philippians 4:7 tells us that the peace that comes from God "transcends all understanding" and it will "guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." What do you need your heart and mind to be guarded from?

ADVENT

Week 2

December 4 - December 10

PEACE

READ

Isaiah 51:1-8

"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many. The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing. "Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail. "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction to heart: Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations."

Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

ADVENT

Week 3

December 11 - December 17

JOY

Prayer Practice:

Joy Journal: What are things in your life that bring joy?

Write those things down then go through the list reflecting on each item by thanking God for those individual things.

REFLECTION

What does Isaiah tell us about God's character?

How do the Isaiah and Matthew passages relate? If you are having trouble, focus on Isaiah 51:6,8 and Matt. 1:21.

What is the difference between joy and happiness?

How can someone have joy even through challenging times?

ADVENT

Week 3

December 11 - December 17

JOY

READ

John 3:16 (NIV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NET)

For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Luke 6:27-36

But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

ADVENT

Week 4

December 18 - December 24

LOVE

Prayer Practice:

**Think of someone
that God has placed
in your life that He is
calling you to love.**

REFLECTION

Many of us are familiar with the NIV translation of John 3:16. Compare the NIV translation with the NET translation. How does the NET translation make you see this verse with new eyes?

What do you think the true definition of love is?

How does God's love for us transform the way we see other people?

What does this type of love require of us?

ADVENT

Week 4

December 18 - December 24

LOVE

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