



*Advent  
Guide*  
*Songs of the Season*



# Advent Guide

Some inspiration for this resource was taken from  
The Village Church, *Advent Guide*.  
[www.thevillagechurch.net](http://www.thevillagechurch.net)

All scriptures, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the  
*English Standard Version (ESV)*, Crossway Bibles.

For more information about Advent or Remedy Church visit:



## **Matthew 1.21-23**

**“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,  
for he will save his people from their sins.”**

**All this took place to fulfill what the Lord  
had spoken by the prophet:**

**“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel”  
(which means, God with us).**

# WHAT IS ADVENT?

## **Jesus has come and is coming.**

The first coming of Christ was long awaited by the people of Israel, having been foretold many times throughout their history. They waited for a savior who would rescue and restore them, and his anticipated coming was the hope of Israel.

Though his first coming was not as most of the Jews and their contemporaries expected, Jesus did come to rescue and restore. He came to save his people from their sins and restore them to God by his sacrificial death and resurrection. His death on the cross was the turning point in all of history, and he has saved a people for himself called the church. His birth, or his first coming, is what we celebrate at Christmas.

His second coming has yet to happen, but has been promised in Scripture. The church, the new people of God, wait with expectant longing for his final appearing, when he will conquer his enemies, put an end to all suffering and evil, and consummate his rule as king over all things.

Advent is from the Latin word meaning “arrival.” Advent is a season of anticipation and celebration of the coming of Christ. We remember the darkness and despair of sin, the promise of God to rescue, and the longing and expectancy that preceded that rescue. We celebrate because God fulfilled his promise by sending Jesus. And we look with anticipation toward Jesus’ second coming to restore all things. It is a season of jubilation and reflection, remembering and watching. It is a time to reflect on the fulfilled promises of God and look with hope and expectancy toward his sure fulfillment of more.

Advent officially begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues until Christmas Day. It is celebrated in a variety of ways from formal church services to families around the table. Whatever traditions and forms may be used, Advent is a season for the church to remember and celebrate the coming of her savior. It’s a season for the bride of Christ to look with longing expectancy toward the final coming of her groom.

## **Church, rejoice! Jesus has come and is coming!**

# USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to lead us together through the season of Advent. Its purpose is to remind us of the gospel, lead us to ponder and experience part of the longing and anticipation of Israel, and prepare our hearts to celebrate the coming of Jesus, our Savior, with profound joy and hope.

## **Our Hope**

This guide is intended to help you and your family connect deeply with the celebration of Christmas, moving past the busyness and materialism that can easily distract us during the holidays. We also hope that walking through this season as a church family will lead to a stronger community and a deeper love for Jesus and the gospel.

## **A Word of Caution**

The holiday season can quickly become stressful and busy as many things compete for our time, money, energy, and ultimately our hearts. If we're not careful and intentional we can lose track of time, and, before we realize it, the holidays are over and we've missed the beauty and purpose of the season.

We encourage you to think through what you want this Advent season to be like for you or your family. What things do you hope to cultivate? What things do you want to remember? What traditions do you want to start? What things do you want to value about the Christmas season? What plans do you need to make now to turn the focus to worshipping Jesus?

## **Plan Ahead**

To fully experience this season, we encourage you to read and plan ahead, starting right now. Read through the devotions beforehand and plan your time together. Be creative. Look for ways to engage others in your Missional Community or other friends, and look for ways to serve others. If you miss the Sunday messages, listen to the podcast.

## **Additional Resources**

We've included some additional resources at the back of this guide. Our hope is that they will be useful as you celebrate this season and will help you to remember the gospel and worship Jesus. One of the resources is a list of suggested activities to help you live on mission during this season. We encourage you to choose a few activities and intentionally find ways to engage and serve people as we experience the season together.

**We look forward to this season in the life of our Church. We pray God uses it profoundly.**

# WEEKLY OUTLINE & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We have provided a guide for family time and a guide for personal reflection for each week of Advent. The Sunday messages themselves will serve as guides for discussion in Missional Communities. We encourage you to use this guide, the messages from Sundays during Advent, and the additional resources to walk with your family and the Remedy family through this season.

Our theme for this year is Songs of the Season. We will be talking about the biblical ideas and Christ-focused elements in some of our favorite Christmas carols.

## **Week 1: O Come, O Come Emmanuel**

The themes of sorrow and longing for a rescuer are common to all of our lives. This song captures those ideas and declares that there is hope: our Rescuer has come and is coming again.

## **Week 2: I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day**

This song is based on an old poem called “Christmas Day,” written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It has a rich story behind it, and the poem follows the up and down journey of a man from Christmas celebration, to sadness and despair at the state of the world, and finally to true celebration at the overwhelming victory of God over evil.

## **Week 3: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

This classic carol resonates with the deep theological ideas of incarnation and reconciliation. It talks about Jesus laying aside his Heavenly glory to live with us in order to reconcile us back to God, giving us new and eternal life with him. Glory to the newborn King!

## **Week 4: O Holy Night**

This song captures the joy and worship of a long-long-anticipated promise being fulfilled on the holy night that Jesus entered the world as a baby. His coming gives us a sense of purpose and worth, and it brings unity, freedom, and compels our worship.

## **Ways to Observe Advent**

## **Helpful Resources for the Season**

## **Advent Scriptures**

## **Ideas for Living On Mission this Advent Season**

# Week 1

## O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Oh come, oh come Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appears

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, oh Israel

Oh come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of Hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, oh Israel

Oh come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, oh Israel

# WEEK 1: DECEMBER 2-8

## WITH THE FAMILY

*By Jon and Rachel McLaughlin*

*Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14*

**Discuss:** Anticipation or excitement for a special occasion can be fun and sometimes overwhelming. What are some things you get excited about but must wait for? (Ex: Vacations, Birthdays, Christmas morning)

What do you do to pass the time while you are waiting? (Ex: Countdown Chain, Planning, Pictures)

How does this waiting make the thing or event more special?

**Story:** The nation of Israel knew all about anticipation! They hoped for a Savior to save them from their bondage, both physical (Roman control) and spiritual (sins payment). During this time, God spoke to Israel through the scriptures, prophets and, on special occasion, a burning bush! The Israelites spoke to God through prayers and sacrifices. Families would even get together for feasts (much like our Thanksgiving) where the older generation would tell stories of God's faithfulness and His promise of a Savior. These stories and their suffering made the anticipation of a Messiah grow! Then one day, God stopped speaking.....

SILENCE for 400 years!! (have your family try to remain silent for 1 minute)

THEN, at the right moment and in the right way, God began speaking as he prepared the way for the gift of His Son. He sent an angel to Mary (*Luke 1:30-31*) telling her not to be afraid that God had found favor in her, that she will have a son and his name will be Jesus. (Imagine being the mother that sings lullabies to a baby that has heard the angels sing.) Next, God used an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream (*Matthew 1:20-21*) telling him not to fear, Mary is having a son, Jesus, who will save his people from their sins. (Imagine being the father that holds the little hands that created the world.) Then to the shepherds, out in the fields, God sends a host of angel(s) with the message of His Son's long-awaited arrival! (Imagine God's plan for salvation and end of silence was so exciting to the angels in heaven no one wanted to stay behind) To top it off, he placed a bright star almost as a spotlight to show everyone who truly was searching.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, who Israel anticipated and hoped for, had arrived! He was worth the wait!

As we prepare our hearts for this Christmas season, we can give gifts with joy because God gave the greatest gift, his son Jesus, to save not only Israel, but the world. (*John 3:16*) We can anticipate the wonderful presents we will receive, but let's not forget to anticipate His presence with us during this season and every day!

**Activity:** As a family, using colorful paper, create a Christmas Countdown Chain. On as many of the links as you can, write a quality/characteristic of God. Each day, when you take off a link, discuss as a family how you saw that quality displayed that day or any day in your life.

**Pray:** As a family, pray that Jesus would be the center of your focus during this exciting time of anticipation and preparation for Christmas day. Thank God for sending his perfect gift, Jesus, who can always be celebrated in every season. Ask God to show us ways we can share the Hope we have in Jesus.

# WEEK 1: DECEMBER 2-8

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

*By Aaron and Charity Clayton*

Our song for this week is “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” It’s a beautiful song that really captures the heart of Advent. There are so many great songs that point with power and joy to the coming of Jesus into the world, but this song in particular asks us to linger just a little in the longing for rescue that suffering and sorrow can bring.

For some among us, the holidays are a difficult time. Losses in the previous years, difficult family situations, or mourning the lack of ever having something that we really desire are all common places for people to be at this time of year. For others, our sorrow may not be holiday-induced, but we have walked a difficult road that has left us beat up, discouraged, afraid, or even hopeless. So a season that is “supposed” to be about joy just isn’t sometimes.

**Psalm 69.1-3** are the words of David expressing that very thing. Take a minute to read it and ask the Lord to press the words into your heart and give them life.

“I am weary of crying out. My eyes grow dim waiting for my God.” Do you ever feel like that? Like maybe God will never come, never intervene, or never fix what is broken.

The words of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” capture that sense of sorrow and longing. And at times the best thing we can do is acknowledge that we are there, laying down our effort and our masks, and baring our hearts to God and to others.

The glory and power of this song, though, are not wrapped up in the verses—they are captured in the chorus: “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel (‘God with us’) SHALL come you, O Israel.”

**Read 2 Peter 3.9.** It says that God is not slow in his coming, as we understand slowness, but his delay is his patience. Verse 15 says to count the Lord’s patience as salvation. His coming may feel delayed to us, but it is very intentional to him, and in the waiting, God is working our salvation.

Maybe he is doing something unseen in your heart or your circumstances to work that out in a way that you could not understand. Or maybe he is working it out for someone else and allowing you to wrestle through your own struggles so that you can be part of it. We don’t know the ways of God or his timing, or sometimes even his purposes, but we do know his heart. We know that he has loved us with an everlasting love (Jer. 31.3), and that his coming is sure (Rev. 21.3-4).

So rejoice in hope, even in the midst of your sorrow. Emmanuel has come, and he will come again!

### **Reflection & Response:**

- What things are troubling you or threatening your sense of hope in Jesus right now?
- What promises do we have that remind us that God is faithful and that he is for us?
- What things can you do this Advent season to focus your heart on the salvation and grace of God in Jesus?

## Week 2

### I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to men

I thought how as the day had come  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men

And in despair I bowed my head  
“There is no peace on earth,” I said  
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!”

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep  
God is not dead, nor doth he sleep  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail  
With peace on earth, good will to men

# WEEK 2: DECEMBER 9-15

## WITH THE FAMILY

*By Philip and Beth Johnson*

*When I say the word “Christmas,” what do you think of? What is your favorite thing about Christmas?*

There is a special feeling in the air this time of year. Many things bring us joy at Christmas, but lasting joy is found in the real meaning of Christmas—Jesus! The joy of Christmas is that Jesus came. He broke through the sin and darkness of this world because He wants to redeem you and me. He wants to rescue us from our sin, and to do that, He had to come.

### **Read Daniel Chapter 9: 15-17.**

In Daniel 9, we hear the prayer that Daniel was crying out to God. God’s people had been kicked out of their homes in Jerusalem. They weren’t kicked out because of something bad that someone else had done. No, they were kicked out because of their own sin. God let the Babylonians come and destroy the beloved Jerusalem—the very place He had given to His people after bringing them out of Egypt. He allowed the Babylonians to come and take the Israelites as prisoners and carry them out to a foreign land. Daniel was now living in this foreign land, and he wanted his people to be back in Jerusalem—the place that God had meant them to be. So, in Daniel’s prayer, we hear his cry for himself and his people as he confesses their sin and asks God’s face to shine on them.

### **Discussion:**

*How are we held as prisoners just like the Israelites?*

*How does our sin affect our relationship with God?*

*Why is it important to admit our sin before God?*

*How can God’s face shine on a people who are sinful?*

### **Read Daniel Chapter 9:20-23.**

In the middle of Daniel’s prayer, we see the angel Gabriel come and bring news to Daniel. He speaks of the Messiah and a righteousness that will last forever; he tells of One who will make an atonement for sin. Who was Gabriel talking about when he was speaking to Daniel? It was Jesus, the coming Messiah. This wasn’t the last time that Gabriel would come bringing an important message. About 540 years later, Gabriel delivered the next part of the message to a woman named Mary. He told her that she would have a son and He would be the Savior of the world.

**Activity:** Give everyone a piece of construction paper. Have each family member write and illustrate the good news of Christmas—that Jesus came for them. For younger children, have them draw a picture. When you are finished, roll up your paper and tie it together with string or ribbon. Place everyone’s paper roll in a basket and place it where you will see it each day. When you feel the need to be reminded of true Christmas joy, or when someone visits your home during this season and you want to share the joy of Christmas, pick a roll to unwrap and read.

**Family Prayer:** Thank God for the message He gave through the Angel Gabriel and for the hope that He brought to our world through the gift of His Son, Jesus.

Also, pray for someone in your Top 5, and look for a way to be a blessing to them.

# WEEK 2: DECEMBER 9-15

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

*By Shelby and Kaysie Hosiner*

*“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.” - Luke 2:10*

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” - Luke 2:14*  
(the King James Version says, “and on earth peace, good-will towards men”)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the American poet, who wrote the poem, “Christmas Bells,” on Christmas day in 1863, was undoubtedly longing for some good news of great joy. The lyrics for the Christmas carol, “I heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” came from this poem that Longfellow composed during the American Civil War. It is important to note, Longfellow’s son was severely wounded while serving in the Union Army, one month prior to Longfellow writing his poem. This devastating injury ended his son’s military career. Sorrowfully, two years before that, Longfellow lost his wife of 18 years, when her dress caught on fire. She died the next day from her burns. Longfellow must have felt like tragedy was surrounding him, especially when you consider his country was in the middle of a civil war. Surrounded by tragedy, death and war, he penned the 6th stanza of his poem, “Christmas Bells.”

*And in despair I bowed my head; “There is no peace on earth,” I said;  
“For hate is strong, And mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”*

Have you ever been there? Have you ever struggled to find peace and joy during the Christmas season? Have you ever found yourself in utter despair with no peace or joy to be found?

**Please prayerfully read Luke 2:8-14.** The Christmas season is a time that exclaims to us that God is not dead nor does He sleep! He is alive, and He is so good! He sacrificially sent his one and only son, Jesus Christ, into a world filled with discord, evil and sin, to rescue us from the punishment of our sins, which is eternal death and separation from God. He instead gives us eternal life through his death on the cross. Jesus is the “good news of GREAT joy that will be for ALL the people.”

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep; “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men.”*  
(last stanza from “Christmas Bells, Longfellow)

**Prayerfully read the following verses: Romans 15:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, John 14:25-27, John 16:13-14, Galatians 5:22-23.**

From whom does the Bible say our peace & joy come? Does it depend on our circumstances? Jesus gives us his very own peace. The same peace that carried him to & through the cross is available to us. The Holy Spirit will glorify Christ, and take what belongs to Jesus and declare it to you.

### **Reflection & Response:**

- Reflect on this quote from A. W. Tozer: “The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.”
- How does this quote hit you? Do you sense any truth in it?
- Are you spending time with the Lord each day reading his Word and in prayer?
- Prayerfully seek to eliminate any shallowness & hollowness you may have in your relationship with the Lord.

## **Week 3**

### **Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**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 angelic host proclaim “Christ is born in Bethlehem”  
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”**

**Christ, by highest heaven 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 with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”**

**Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!**

**Hail the Son 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!”**

# WEEK 3: DECEMBER 16-22

## WITH THE FAMILY

*By Donna Gilmore*

Twinkling lights, ornaments, cookies, cider and carols....the streets are lit up, houses are glowing, and our Christmas trees sparkle with light! What a celebration! So full of light.

When Charles Wesley wrote the familiar song Hark the Herald, he must have been well acquainted with the book of John. We sing this carol over and over in the Christmas season, but have we ever really noticed the message?

**Read John 1:1-14.** Then read the lyrics of Hark the Herald.

Can you find at least four verses from John 1 that are put to song in similar words in the carol?

Why would God, the Creator of this world, leave his perfect home to come to earth and live with the people who had rejected Him?

**Read John 3:16 and 17.**

He came to “reconcile” with humans. Reconcile means to bring together again. Jesus is the only one who can do that.

**Read Romans 3:23-24 and I Timothy 2:5.**

We ALL need Him. Because everyone of us have disobeyed (sinned), we need to be brought back together (reconciled) with Jesus.

**Activity:** Place 2 magnets next to each other so they repel each other. Try to push them together. This is like people before we accept Jesus’ gift to reconcile us to Him.

Now turn one magnet, and let them come together. Reconciliation!

Singing Christmas carols together is even better knowing that they are worship for our gracious Savior who brought light back into this world because He loved us!

**Pray:** Pray together, thanking God for sending us Light even though we have disobeyed Him. Thank Jesus for being willing to leave his perfect home to come live with us and die for us. And thank God for the wonderful reminder of who Christ is through all of the lovely lights of Christmas.

**Take a few minutes this week to pray for someone in your Top 5 and invite them to be your guest at our Christmas service on December 23rd.**

# WEEK 3: DECEMBER 16-22

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

*By Philip & Beth Johnson*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1.14*

As December 25 draws near, the hearts of many believers are turned toward the incarnation. That's a fancy word that literally means 'in-fleshing'. God the Father came to our world, put on our flesh and blood, and began His mission to rescue the hearts of men and women.

God, in His full completeness and fellowship with the trinity, decided to launch the biggest rescue mission the world had ever seen. In the middle of complete peace and unity, he entered our chaos and darkness.

The older I get, the deeper my heart ponders at Christmas. I often wonder what it must have been like for God the Father to look at heaven and say, "We're going in." What did the angels think? Did a quiet hush come over the heavenly hosts or did they quickly turn to each other with expectant excitement on their faces. And then there's Mary...would I have responded as she did? Would I have said it is well with me, do as you wish?! And Joseph... would I have doubted that angel visit and passed it off as a weird reaction to something I ate? What if I had been a shepherd? Would I have kept that news to myself or would I have run to find the Christ Child and worship Him?

I take all those thoughts and turn it to my life now. Am I living each day in light of the incarnation? Do I remember that God came, dwelt among us, and is continuing to dwell here, even now? Am I constantly looking for Him in my daily life, even expecting it?

In John 14:12, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father." Jesus isn't saying that we in our own strength will do things greater than Him, but He's letting us know that because He will still be among us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that He will be at work around us in miraculous ways...even greater ways than we read about in the Bible.

### **Reflection & Response:**

- How different would my days be if I truly grasped the concept that God incarnate is constantly at work in my life?
- How would it change the way I interact with my family, those I'm around often, and strangers?
- Thinking over the past few days of your week, how might you have missed God at work around you?

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to give you an expectant heart to see Him at work around you. Ask for opportunities to partner with Him in those 'greater works' promised in John 14 and pray for the eyes and heart to know when God is moving you in a certain direction. Pray the Lord will help you live in a daily awareness of the incarnation, that God left heaven to rescue your heart, and pray for the opportunity to share that with others this Christmas season.

# Week 4

## O Holy Night

O, holy night!

The stars are brightly shining  
It is the night of our dear savior's birth  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining  
'Til he appeared and the soul felt its worth  
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees  
Oh hear the angel voices  
Oh night divine  
Oh night when Christ was born  
Oh night divine, Oh night divine

Truly he taught us to love one another  
His law is love and his gospel is peace  
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother  
And in his name all oppression shall cease  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we  
Let all within us praise his holy name

Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we  
His power and glory ever more proclaim  
His power and glory ever more proclaim

# WEEK 4: DECEMBER 23-25

## WITH THE FAMILY

*By Bryan and Gina Wooten*

**Scripture Reading:** Have someone in your family read Luke 2.1-14.

Listen to *O Holy Night* together as a family. Here is a version from Austin Stone:

<https://youtu.be/RmPCqjNjP-w>

**Discuss:** In the first verse of the song we sing, “Long lay the world in sin and error pining.” Discuss as a family how we all sin and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3.23), and that the punishment for our sin against our glorious creator God is death (Romans 6.23). Take a moment to confess sin to each other as a family reminding each other that Jesus came to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us of our unrighteousness (1 John 1.9).

Imagine being the people of God longing for the Messiah, a Savior, to rescue them from their sin. John 1.12-13 tells us, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Discuss as a family why Jesus wants each person in your family to receive Him, believe in His name and be a child of God.

**Activity:** Using a sheet of construction or printer paper, draw and color a picture as a family depicting verses 8-14. Have each person in your family draw a different aspect of the scene. Find a prominent place in your home to display your family drawing as a reminder of the holy night when Christ came as save us from our sin.

**Discuss:** As you draw and color, discuss what the shepherds must have been thinking and feeling. In the chorus of *O Holy Night*, we sing, “Let all within us praise His holy name.” Discuss how the angels praising God when Jesus was born moves us to praise God for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin. John 1.14 tells us, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus coming to us fulfills our deepest longing to be known, forgiven, and accepted by God. This is great cause for celebration and praise during the Christmas season!

**Pray:** Pray together as a family: thanking and praising God for the great gift of Jesus, confession your need for Him today, and asking Him to glorify Him name in and through your family.

# WEEK 4: DECEMBER 23-25

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

*By Nathan and Brooke Daves*

Long my most favorite Christmas carol, when hearing O Holy Night, it inevitably compels me to sing as boldly as possible, with all my heart, as if I were Andrea Bocelli performing in the Teatro La Scala. If I'm honest, my vivid and overactive imagination takes over quickly, and I'm there on stage, often. But seriously, who would not be deeply moved by these powerful words:

“O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appeared and the Spirit felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, the night when Christ was born;  
O night, O holy night, O night divine!  
O night, O holy night, O night divine!”

And yet, there is another scene that these powerful words evoke. It's a distant event not left to the imagination, but one that actually happened.

Can you imagine? Can you, just for a moment, put yourself there in that simple, yet so glorious scene? The setting was not so different than any other night. Just your average shepherds, out in a field, watching their flock, probably overwhelmed by the night sky and feeling, at least, somewhat insignificant. Maybe they pondered their purpose in life. Maybe they were consumed by how they would put the next meal on their family's table. Just maybe they had given up. The oppression of the Roman government was just too much for them. Where was God in any of this? After all, their people had not heard from him in over 400 years. But in a single flash of a moment, it would change eternity. In one abrupt, brilliant moment these seemingly insignificant men would be thrust into the very story that would alter history forever.

### **Read Luke 2:8-15.**

I love this common story where God uses common men to fulfill His uncommon purpose. Insignificant they may have felt, but to God their significance would begin to alter the course of the world. God was going to write His story beginning with them. They would run to see that God had become flesh, to dwell among them and His glory upon glory, full of truth and grace (John 1:14). They were not forgotten. They were deeply valued. They were far from insignificant.

It astounds me that God uses the most unlikely of people all throughout history. Much is the same of this carol. When Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure was asked by a French clergyman to write a poem for the Christmas service, he was an unlikely choice.

### **Reflection & Response:**

- Do you ever feel insignificant? In what ways?
- How has God worked through your insignificance to bring glory to Himself?
- How can you lay aside your own feelings of inadequacy to let God shine through your life?

## **1 Peter 1.8-13**

**Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

**Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.**

**Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

# WAYS TO OBSERVE ADVENT

There are a number of ways to observe and celebrate Advent. The most important thing is to find ways that make sense for your family, remind you of the gospel, and help you reflect on the hope that Jesus brings. Here are a few suggestions:

## Advent Wreath and Candles

An Advent wreath is typically made of evergreen branches, either real or fake, arranged in a circle. Both the evergreens and the circle represent the never-ending nature of God, his constant presence with us, and the never-ending life that Jesus offers.

There are typically five candles, four arranged around the circle and one in the center. Three of the candles are traditionally purple and represent royalty. The fourth candle is pink and represents joy. The fifth candle, in the center, is white and represents purity.

The first candle is typically lit on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and another candle is lit each week to represent the growing light that Jesus brings into the world. This helps us to remember and reflect on the growing hope and anticipation that preceded Jesus' first coming. The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day and represents Jesus' coming into the world. Just as the white candle represents Jesus' purity, so we too, in Jesus, are purified of our sins and given his perfect righteousness.



You may choose to read a scripture each week and light the candles as a family. You might also want to light the candles during dinner and eat with nothing but the candlelight, giving a visual picture of the growing light that Christ brings. Kids will enjoy lighting the candles.

Noel Piper, in her book *Treasuring God in our Traditions*, suggests also using a nativity as part of the setup if you have smaller kids. She notes that the symbolism of the candles could easily be lost on smaller kids, and the nativity will help them to remember the reason for the celebration.

Using a nativity or not, what you use for the wreath, how many candles, or what color aren't as important as the symbolic reflection and the reminder that it brings.

## Advent Calendars

Many families use Advent calendars to count down the days to Christmas. Most calendars start the first day of December and lead up to Christmas Day. They usually include 24 windows, pockets, or drawers that are opened to reveal a scripture, story, picture, or small gift.

There are many kinds of Advent calendars, some Christian and some secular. You can find several at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com). The point of the calendar is that as each window is opened, the anticipation of Christmas grows, similar to the anticipation and longing for the Messiah that Israel experienced. If you decide to do your own scriptures, you can choose scriptures that start with prophecies about the Messiah and lead up to the birth of Jesus. You can also choose scriptures that talk about Christ's power to save his people from their sins.

## Advent Tree or Jesus Tree

Some families set up an Advent tree in addition to or in place of a traditional Christmas tree. (Christmas trees are a cultural part of celebrating Christmas, and we are not advocating that you not set one up. An Advent tree is simply another option and a way to draw the focus of the Christmas season to Jesus intentionally).

You can get a regular tree, a small tree, or even a tree branch from outside. Anything will work. The idea of an Advent tree is that you decorate it over the course of the month with reminders of who Jesus is and the hope he brings.



You may choose to read scripture together or have a family devotion related to the Advent season and afterward allow the kids, (and the parents, if you're so inclined), to add something to the tree that reminds them of Jesus or God's salvation. Some examples are things that represent the Christmas story (manger, shepherds, stars), things that relate to Jesus' life (carpentry tools, a fish, bread), symbols of who Jesus is in scripture (a lion, a lamb, a father), or anything else.

This is a great way for kids to be creative. You can use actual Christmas ornaments, items you find around the house, or you can make your own ornaments. Ask the kids to say what it is about the item that reminds them of Jesus before they hang it. It could even be something light-hearted, like a man snoring to represent Jesus sleeping in the boat. The Advent tree is a great way to reflect and have fun with your family.

John and Noel Piper have some good ideas for items to put on the Jesus tree in their blog post at Desiring God. It can be found here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/jesus-tree>.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR THE SEASON

## Playlists

If you have a Spotify account you can search for “RemedyChurch” and find two playlists we have created to help you observe this season. One is called “Songs for Advent” and is filled with songs that will help you worship and reflect on the truths of the Advent season. Many of the songs are favorites that you will recognize.

The other playlist is called “Advent at Remedy” and will feature songs that we are singing on Sundays at our worship gathering during the Advent season. Becoming familiar with these songs will help you participate when we gather.

## Albums

Glory in the Highest, Chris Tomlin  
A Worship Initiative Christmas, Shane and Shane  
A Day of Glory, Austin Stone Worship  
Christmas, Francesca Battistelli  
All I Really Want For Christmas, Steven Curtis Chapman  
Rose of Bethlehem, Selah  
Oh For Joy, David Crowder Band  
Songs for Christmas, Phil Wickham

## Songs

Oh Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
Oh Holy Night  
What Child is This?  
Come Thou Long Expected Jesus  
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing  
Hallelujah! What a Savior (Christmas Version), by Aaron Ivey  
Oh Little Town of Bethlehem  
Joy to the World  
Go Tell It on the Mountain  
I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day  
Oh Come All Ye Faithful

## Books

Treasuring God in Our Traditions, Noel Piper  
Song of the Stars: A Christmas Story, Sally Lloyd-Jones  
Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones  
Jotham’s Journey: A Storybook for Advent, Arnold Ytreeide  
God is in the Manger, Bonhoeffer & Riess  
Unwrapping the Greatest Gift & The Wonder of the Greatest Gift, Ann Voskamp

# ADVENT SCRIPTURES

## **Promises of God**

Isaiah 7.10-14; 9.2-7; 11.1-16; 52.13-53.12  
Jeremiah 31.31-34; 33.14-16  
Ezekiel 36.22-32  
Micah 5.1-5

## **Longing for Redemption**

Psalm 69.1-3  
Isaiah 64.1-12  
Hebrews 11.13-16  
1 Peter 1.10-11

## **Anticipating the Fulfillment of the Promises**

1 Samuel 3.1  
Amos 8.11-12  
Matthew 1.20-23; 2.1-10  
Luke 1.26-38, 39-56; 2.8-15

## **Fulfillment of God's Promises in Jesus**

Matthew 1.18-25; 2.11  
Luke 2.1-21, 22-38  
John 1.1-14  
2 Corinthians 8.9  
Philippians 2.5-11  
Colossians 1.15-22

## **Awaiting the Second Advent of Christ**

Acts 1.6-11; 17.30-31  
Romans 7.24-25; 8.18-25  
1 Thessalonians 3.11-13  
Hebrews 10.23-25; 11.39-12.3  
1 Peter 1.3-9  
2 Peter 3.1-14  
1 John 2.28

# SUGGESTIONS FOR LIVING ON MISSION

The celebration of Christmas is that Jesus came to us, sent by the Father, bringing good news of great joy for all the people. Once he accomplished his purpose and went back to Heaven, he sent his Spirit and is now making his appeal through us, his people (2 Cor. 5.20). The Advent season is a perfect time to invite people into your lives and to explore the true significance of Christmas.

These are a few suggestions for living on mission this Advent season. Our challenge to you is to choose a handful of ideas from this list, or come up with your own, and put them into action during the weeks of Advent as ways to do life together, have gospel conversations, and show people the love of Christ, who is our celebration at Christmas.

1. Rake leaves for a neighbor.
2. Put up Christmas decorations for (or with) an older couple or a busy family.
3. Do some of the Advent Guide activities together with friends, neighbors, or extended family.
4. Take Christmas cookies to neighbors, co-workers, or friends.
5. Recruit some neighbors to go caroling in your neighborhood or at a local nursing home.
6. Invite friends or neighbors over for coffee and dessert.
7. Host a cookie exchange - 5-6 people make cookies, get together, and exchange cookies.
8. Discuss, pray, and give to our Christmas Challenge (info at [Remedy-Church.com](http://Remedy-Church.com)).
9. Hand deliver Christmas cards rather than mailing them.
10. Invite friends with kids to watch a kids' Christmas movie together. Make hot chocolate or cider and let the kids wear their pajamas.
11. Invite friends and neighbors to watch an appropriate adult Christmas movie.
12. Plan a night to look at Christmas lights with friends or neighbors. Carpool or walk together.
13. Host a Christmas-themed dinner party. Invite 1-2 people/couples from your Missional Community and 1-2 people/couples who are not part of a church.
14. Serve at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or some other needs-focused ministry. Invite neighbors and friends to join you.
15. Invite a family or friend to join you for Christmas dinner.
16. Invite a friend to join you on the Candlelight Tour of Homes in Waxahachie. Buy their ticket.
17. Adopt a family in need - buy gifts, clothes, food, etc.
18. Host a football watching party and invite people from your Missional Community and other friends and neighbors.
19. Host a s'mores party in your front yard. Set up a fire pit and provide hot chocolate and coffee.
20. Invite family, friends, and neighbors to be your guest at our Christmas service and to coffee or dessert afterward to discuss their thoughts about the meaning of Christmas.