
ADVENT
2026 PERSONAL + FAMILY LITURGY

“Our default position in modernity has been to experience time as a flat timeline. But the church calendar gives us a way into *kairos*, presence, an upward cycle of feasting and fasting that brings us ever closer to Christ along with the saints who have gone before us.”

– Stephen Crotts

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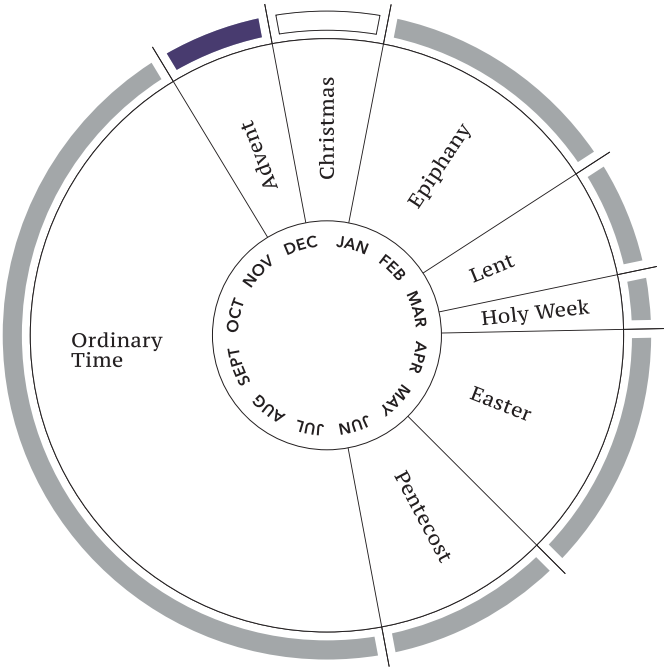


WHAT IS ADVENT?

While the season of Advent can be a sentimental time of year, it's so much more than a time where we work through a chocolate calendar… For the faithful, Advent is a season of preparation and worship.

Advent kicks off the Christian liturgical calendar. It dates back as early as the 4th century but its official, four-Sunday observance by western Christians lands around the 6th century. Advent is a Christ-centered tradition with ancient roots that we get to enter into today.

Advent is a time marked by yearning, longing, and anticipation for the Messiah who has come, and has yet to come again.

"Advent" is English for the Latin *adventus* which means "coming" or "arrival." It takes place during the four weeks leading up to Christmas Day—the celebration that the darkness of our world has been met by the great light of our Savior.

It's a season devoted to preparing the church for the coming of Christ into our world. We do this by *looking back* to meditate on the incarnation—when God himself stepped into the fragility of human existence to reclaim his world ravaged by the darkness of sin. However, Advent is also a time where the church *looks forward* in hope that Christ will return to cast out the darkness forever and usher in the kingdom of the new heavens and new earth.

Advent is a time marked by yearning, longing, and anticipation for the Messiah who has come, and has yet to come again.

What if this Advent you welcomed this tension? The tension that, as Christians, we sit between what *has happened* and what *has yet to take place*? How could this reignite gospel hope within you and reinvigorate you towards faithfulness? During Advent we are reminded that we take seriously the brokenness of our world, yet we don't live without hope! Allow this season to do its work, welling up gratitude, longing, and hope within your soul.

Advent is a time marked by yearning, longing, and anticipation for the Messiah who has come, and has yet to come again.

WHAT SHOULD OUR POSTURE BE?

For modern Americans, this season can be confusing. On one hand, it's a jovial time, filled with singing and celebration! Yet, on the other hand, we are anxious and stressed—moving at a frenetic pace to get all our holiday plans in order.

Every individual and family enters this season differently, with their own plans and traditions—for better or worse.

In the Christian calendar, Advent invites the believer to *slow down*: to rest in God and to contemplate the reality of God becoming man and the promise that Christ will return at his second advent. The posture that the Christian takes is absolutely one of celebration! But it's also one of contemplation, slowing down, and even confession.

If you move too quickly, you may miss the work that the Lord is doing in you and around you. We often forget that time and seasons are a major avenue by which God forms us. This is why Advent invites us to both contemplate the Gospel—the mystery of the incarnation—*and* invites us to celebrate and feast together. May this Advent recalibrate your soul and the pace at which you find yourself moving.

WHAT ARE BEST PRACTICES IN ADVENT?

Throughout church history, Christians have engaged in many practices that help orient us to the season of Advent. Such practices include singing, confession, fasting, wreaths, prayer, candle lighting, and more. Below are three practices for us to engage in this Advent that will help us slow down and welcome the season with intentionality.

SUNDAY WORSHIP: THE LORD'S DAY

During this busy time of year, let's make gathering with the community of saints a priority. During each Sunday gathering, we will have Scripture reading, candle lighting, and prayer as our way of calling attention to Advent.

FASTING

It may come as a surprise to many, but since Advent is a season of preparation for the coming of our Lord, it's therefore a season of fasting—known as the "mini-Lent"). Through Advent, pick a Wednesday or Friday to fast from one meal. If you are unable to fast, pick one delicacy to abstain from for the season (social media, TV, sweets).

GENEROSITY

It's easy to get caught up in our culture's consumeristic tendencies during Christmas. During Advent, find a non-profit or church to give to; instead of buying more that we won't use, donate clothes or furniture to one of our ministry partners in Portland.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to aid you in your time with the Lord by providing a short liturgy rooted in the themes and readings of Advent. You will contemplate one of the season's themes—hope, peace, joy, love—each of the four weeks in Advent. Each week provides prayer, confession, Scripture reading, time of silence, and optional questions to reflect on. Christmas Eve follows a different order and is intended to be a shorter reflection to use after our candlelight service.

In Advent, our aim is to *slow down* and sit in the joy and tension that comes with the Christmas story. There will be only one Gospel reading for each week with six questions to meditate or journal on Monday–Saturday. Each question is intended to take you deeper into the text.

Use this guide as it best suits you! You can use it individually, with a friend or spouse, with your whole family, or your Community Group! There might be some new elements in this guide that you aren't used to practicing. But we encourage you to lean in and give it a try, starting where you're at and not where you think you should be. Lastly, it's not about finishing or getting through the guide for the sake of completion. The point is *encountering the Lord Jesus*, allowing him to transform us this Advent.

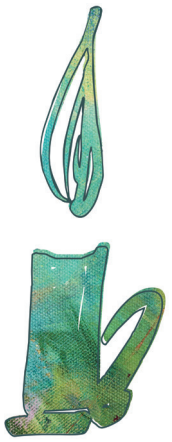
We hope that this guide gives you a helpful structure so you can enter this season with intentionality, slowness, and a posture of worship!

May we be a church family ready to receive our King.

With Grace and Peace,
Pastor Derrick

Hope

NOV 29 – DEC 5



OPENING + SILENCE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Then set a timer for 60 seconds and rest in silence.

OPENING PRAISE

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise: O come let us adore him!

CONFESSION OF SIN + FORGIVENESS

Slowly confess sins or wounds you may be carrying today. As you do, trust in the finished work of Christ and the Gospel. Then say the following:

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope… (Ps. 130:5)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:1)

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

THE REFRAIN

Come, O promised King, the hope of all the earth!

THIS WEEK'S READING | ISAIAH 9:6-7

Every day this week, read and reflect on this passage.

REFLECTIONS

Choose one or all of the following to reflect on each day this week. Meditating on the same passage for a week will unearth beautiful insights you didn't previously see!

1. What stands out to you today that you didn't notice before?
2. What might God be saying to you today—about himself, yourself, or others?
3. What will you carry with you today in application? Is it different from yesterday?

SILENCE

Spend another 60 seconds in silence, sitting with what you just read and reflected on. ***After the silence, spend a moment praying for yourself and others.***

THE REFRAIN

Come, O promised King, the hope of all the earth!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Almighty God,
Empower me with your grace to leave behind the ways of darkness and to live in your light. As I remember how Jesus came to us in humility, help me follow His way in my life today. And when He comes again in glory to make all things right, may I anticipate the resurrection life to come! I ask this through Jesus Christ, my Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Peace

DEC 6–12



OPENING + SILENCE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Then set a timer for 60 seconds and rest in silence.

OPENING PRAISE

The earth is the Lord's for he made it: O come let us adore him!

CONFESSION OF SIN + FORGIVENESS

Slowly confess sins or wounds you may be carrying today. As you do, trust in the finished work of Christ and the Gospel. Then say the following:

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me of my sin!(Ps. 51:2)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (Jn. 3:16)

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

THE REFRAIN

Emmanuel, God with us, be our peace.

THIS WEEK'S READING | MATTHEW 1:18-25

Every day this week, read and reflect on this passage.

REFLECTIONS

Choose one or all of the following to reflect on each day this week. Meditating on the same passage for a week will unearth beautiful insights you didn't previously see!

1. What stands out to you today that you didn't notice before?
2. What might God be saying to you today—about himself, yourself, or others?
3. What will you carry with you today in application? Is it different from yesterday?

SILENCE

Spend another 60 seconds in silence, sitting with what you just read and reflected on. ***After the silence, spend a moment praying for yourself and others.***

THE REFRAIN

Emmanuel, God with us, be our peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Merciful God,
You sent your prophets to call us to repentance and to prepare the way for your salvation. Give me grace to listen to their message and turn from sin, that I may welcome with joy the coming of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. I pray this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Joy

DEC 13–19



OPENING + SILENCE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Then set a timer for 60 seconds and rest in silence.

OPENING PRAISE

The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: O come let us adore him!

CONFESSION OF SIN + FORGIVENESS

Slowly confess sins or wounds you may be carrying today. As you do, trust in the finished work of Christ and the Gospel. Then say the following:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me; for apart from your grace I cannot make myself whole.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Mt. 11:28)

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

THE REFRAIN

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

THIS WEEK'S READING | LUKE 2:10-19

Every day this week, read and reflect on this passage.

REFLECTIONS

Choose one or all of the following to reflect on each day this week. Meditating on the same passage for a week will unearth beautiful insights you didn't previously see!

1. What stands out to you today that you didn't notice before?
2. What might God be saying to you today—about himself, yourself, or others?
3. What will you carry with you today in application? Is it different from yesterday?

SILENCE

Spend another 60 seconds in silence, sitting with what you just read and reflected on. ***After the silence, spend a moment praying for yourself and others.***

THE REFRAIN

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

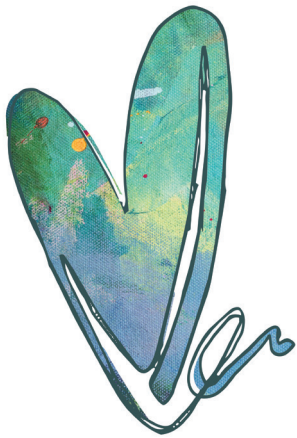
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

O Lord God,
Come among us with your great love and power. Because my sin so often holds me back, pour out your grace and mercy to help and empower me. For you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son. Lord, I believe in your only begotten Son! I pray in His name, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Love

DEC 20–24



OPENING + SILENCE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Then set a timer for 60 seconds and rest in silence.

OPENING PRAISE

Worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness: O come let us adore him!

CONFESSION OF SIN + FORGIVENESS

Slowly confess sins or wounds you may be carrying today. As you do, trust in the finished work of Christ and the Gospel. Then say the following:

Lord, in your mercy forgive what I have been, help me amend what I am, and direct what I shall be so that I may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Holy Name. Amen.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 Jn. 1:1b-2)

GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

THE REFRAIN

In great love, God has drawn near; let all the earth rejoice!

THIS WEEK'S READING | LUKE 1:39-56

Every day this week, read and reflect on this passage.

REFLECTIONS

Choose one or all of the following to reflect on each day this week. Meditating on the same passage for a week will unearth beautiful insights you didn't previously see!

1. What stands out to you today that you didn't notice before?
2. What might God be saying to you today—about himself, yourself, or others?
3. What will you carry with you today in application? Is it different from yesterday?

SILENCE

Spend another 60 seconds in silence, sitting with what you just read and reflected on. ***After the silence, spend a moment praying for yourself and others.***

THE REFRAIN

In great love, God has drawn near; let all the earth rejoice!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

Heavenly Father,
Examine my heart today, Lord, and purify me by your love and forgiveness. At the coming of your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, may he find in me a mansion prepared for himself. In his Name—who lives and reigns with you, in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Gospel of Great Joy!

CHRISTMAS EVE



OPENING + SILENCE

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Then set a timer for 60 seconds and rest in silence.

OPENING PRAYER

Faithful God,
I have waited for you to come. On this Christmas Eve, I am reminded of your faithfulness once again, that Christ has come, he has died, risen, and will come again. While I await his glorious, second advent, fill me afresh with your Spirit, that I may grow in grace and be found prepared for your coming. Amen.

TONIGHT'S READING | LUKE 2:8-21

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EVE PRAYER

This prayer comes from page 7 of Ken Gire's book *Intimate Moments with the Savior: Learning to Love*. Invite your family, friends, or roommates to gather around, and pray this aloud over them.

Dear Jesus,
Though there was no room for you in the inn, grant this day that I might make abundant room for you in my heart. Though your own did not receive you, grant this hour that I may embrace you with open arms. Though Bethlehem overlooked you in the shuffle of the census, grant me the grace, this quiet moment, to be still and know that you are God. You, whose only palace was a stable, whose only throne was a feeding trough, whose only robes were swaddling clothes.

On my knees I confess that I am too conditioned to this world's pomp and pageantry to recognize God cooing in a manger.

Forgive me. Please. And help me understand at least some of what your birth has to teach—that divine power is not mediated through strength, but through weakness; that true greatness is not achieved through the assertion of rights, but through their release; and that even the most secular of things can be sacred when you are in their midst.

And for those times when you yearn for my fellowship and stand at the door and knock, grant me a special sensitivity to the sound of that knock so I may be quick to my feet. Keep me from letting you stand out in the cold or from ever sending you away to some stable. May my heart be warm and inviting, so that when you do knock, a worthy place will always be waiting …

Amen.

Christmastide

DECEMBER 25 – JANUARY 5

WHAT IS "CHRISTMASTIDE"?

For centuries, Christians have observed Christmas as a season in the Church Calendar, spanning from December 25 - January 5. This is where "the 12 days of Christmas" comes from! On January 6, the Church Calendar transitions to the Epiphany. Some of these days are considered "feast days," which remember an important figure or moment in Scripture. Advent is a season of preparation with fasting, so Christmastide is a season dedicated to feasting, remembering, and celebrating.

Christmastide is a season marked by celebrating the God who has come near in Jesus Christ and is presently ushering in his Kingdom for the renewal of all things.

HOW TO OBSERVE CHRISTMASTIDE

There are many creative and fun ways to spend each of the Twelve Days that you can find online! If possible, we encourage you to do so by spending that time with family, friends, or roommates.

For the purposes of this guide, there won't be a full liturgy like there was in Advent. But provided here is the theme of each day, a Scripture reading, and prayer focus.

We may be used to taking down our Christmas tree immediately after opening gifts. But we encourage you to begin seeing Christmas as a worshipful season that forms us as disciples rather than a single, sentimental day that might direct our hearts towards consumerism.

Christmastide is a season marked by celebrating the God who has come near in Jesus Christ and is presently ushering in his Kingdom for the renewal of all things.

This Christmastide, may we become more aware of such a profound gospel!

CHRISTMASTIDE READINGS

CHRISTMAS DAY	
Theme	The light shines in the darkness! Christ has come!
Scripture	John 1
Prayer focus	To receive the gospel afresh and to be a light and witness of the gospel in your everyday, ordinary life.
DECEMBER 26 | Feast of St. Stephen, the Martyr	
Theme	The life of Stephen, the first Deacon to serve the poor and first martyr of the Church.
Scripture	Acts 6-7
Prayer focus	Courage to share the gospel and serve the poor, even when it costs something.
DECEMBER 27 | Feast of St. John, the Evangelist	
Theme	Endurance, suffering, and hope as an example by the Apostle John, the beloved disciple.
Scripture	Revelation 1:9-18
Prayer focus	Courage to share the good news and keep faith alive in trial.
DECEMBER 28 | Feast of Holy Innocents	
Theme	Commemorating the innocent children Herod killed trying to find the Christ-child. Jesus's kingdom threatens earthly power.
Scripture	Matthew 2:13-18
Prayer focus	Protection for the vulnerable children in our world.

Continued on next page >

DECEMBER 29 | The Church Cannot be Silenced	
Theme	Peter, James, and other Apostles are arrested for sharing the gospel. Hardship for the gospel is considered a joy!
Scripture	Acts 4:18-20
Prayer focus	Boldness and joy in obeying God's leading and calling. Prayer for the Church around the world facing hardship.
DECEMBER 30 | The Faithful Remembered by God	
Theme	The great cloud of witnesses who set the example of faith for us today.
Scripture	Hebrews 11
Prayer focus	Adopting a radical posture of faith that has been handed down to us, trusting God's plan even when we don't fully understand it.
DECEMBER 31 | Jesus Saves to the Uttermost	
Theme	The name of Jesus is worth everything. The early martyrs died confessing this name as Lord of all.
Scripture	Acts 4:12-14
Prayer focus	Allegiance to Christ alone. There is no other name by which you can be saved.
JANUARY 1 | Feast of The Holy Name	
Theme	The circumcision and naming of Jesus Christ.
Scripture	Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:15-40
Prayer focus	Celebrating the fulfillment of the coming of Christ, who has come to save alongside obedience to God in the ordinary things.

JANUARY 2 | Obedience and Trust from the Beginning	
Theme	Jesus trusted his parents and Heavenly Father in the everyday, ordinary things. Our obedience in the ordinary leads to radical faith in the big things.
Scripture	Luke 2:41-52
Prayer focus	Faithfulness in the everyday experiences; asking for the Lord to teach you through the ordinary thing in front of you.
JANUARY 3 | The Gospel for All Nations	
Theme	Christ is not for one people or party only. The Church looks outward and prays for our nation and the world, especially those persecuted.
Scripture	Revelation 7:9-14
Prayer focus	For those in your neighborhood, our city, and around the world who have yet to hear the Gospel or trust in Christ.
JANUARY 4 | Take Up Your Cross	
Theme	To follow Jesus this year means to deny yourself and live for him. This includes daily self-sacrifice and trust in the one who is good.
Scripture	Matthew 16:24-26
Prayer focus	Even when comforts are highlighted and challenged, the willingness and courage to follow Christ in self-denial.
JANUARY 5 | The Light Promised and Revealed	
Theme	We wait in hope as Christ's light is not yet fully here, but will not be overcome.
Scripture	Isaiah 60:1-3
Prayer focus	The light of Jesus is revealed to the world! So may the light of Jesus shine within me.

Appendix

BIBLE PROJECT | ADVENT WORD STUDY SERIES

To get a better understanding for each of our Advent themes and words, our friends at Bible Project put together a Bible word study series that covers each word used for Advent. Using the camera on your phone, scan the QR code to access each video, or enter the url in your web browser.



HOPE
bibleproject.com/explore/video/yakhal-hope



PEACE
bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace

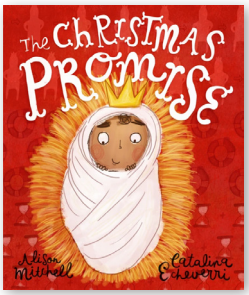


JOY
bibleproject.com/explore/video/chara-joy

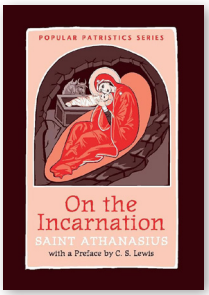


LOVE
bibleproject.com/explore/video/agape-love

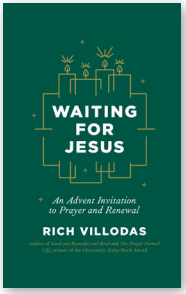
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR INDIVIUALS AND FAMILIES



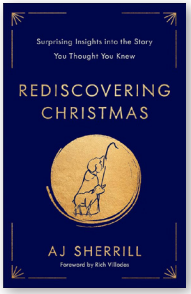
The Christmas Promise Storybook, by Catalina Echeverri (ages 3-7)



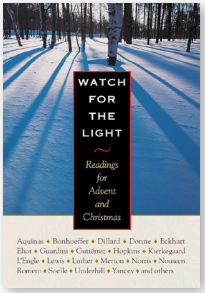
On the Incarnation, by Saint Athanasius (Popular Patristics Series)



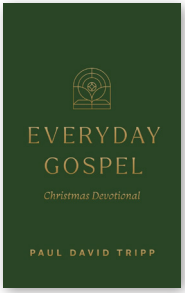
Waiting for Jesus: An Advent Invitation to Prayer and Renewal, by Rich Villodas



Rediscovering Christmas, by A.J. Sherrill



Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas, by Various Authors



Everyday Gospel: Christmas Devotional, by Paul David Tripp

River West Church

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