



A Journey of Promise and Hope

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2025

Christ Church NYC

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Advent: A Journey of Promise and Hope
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**All Bible verses are taken from the
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What is Advent?

"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."

—1 Peter 1:8

"If the Lord Jesus is God, meditation upon Him as such will generate great reverence in our hearts, and cause us to exalt Him far above everything. It will cause us to bow before Him, to worship Him with the angels, to honor Him as the Father, He being one with Him; and we will join all creatures in heaven and upon earth by exclaiming, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'"

—Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)



Advent is about Jesus.

It is about celebrating Him as our King and Rescuer. He is our joy and our hope. He is our treasure, our greatest good. We love Him and long for Him.

The word "advent" is derived from the Latin word "adventus" which means "coming" or "arrival", which is a translation of the Greek word "parousia." Advent therefore is a time to focus our attention on Jesus' coming—looking back and remembering His first coming, as well as looking forward with eager anticipation to His second coming.

The Tradition of Advent

The first clear references to the celebration of Advent come from the latter half of the 6th century, when the season immediately preceding Christmas was set apart to help Christians intentionally reflect on and prepare for Christ's coming in judgment. (This season originally grew out of the 4th and 5th centuries, when Advent was a preparatory season for Christians wanting to be baptized on Epiphany Day, in January.) It was not until the Middle Ages, however, that the season was also explicitly linked to Christ's first coming.

While in some parts of the world — particularly in the Eastern Church — Advent begins in mid-November, the Western Church has traditionally celebrated Advent over the four Sundays immediately preceding Christmas Day, thus beginning the season in late November or early December. This year, it begins on November 30.

One of the most popular Advent traditions is lighting Advent candles. This symbol derives from Scripture, and the emphasis it places on Jesus being the light of the world (Matthew 4:16; John 1:4-9, 8:12). Traditionally, a new candle is lit each week on each of the four Sundays, in anticipation of the fifth lighting on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Advent is a season of hope and promise. It is a season of waiting and expectation. Even as we celebrate and rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible, it is also a season of deep longing and need.

While you consider how you will celebrate Advent, consider these words from the Anglican minister, Justin Holcomb:

"While it is difficult to keep in mind in the midst of holiday celebrations, shopping, lights and decorations, and joyful carols, Advent is intended to be a season of fasting, much like Lent, and there are a variety of ways that this time of mourning works itself out in the season. Reflection on the violence and evil in the world cause us to cry out to God to make things right—to put death's dark shadows to flight. Our exile in the present makes us look forward to our future Exodus. And our own sinfulness and need for grace leads us to pray for the Holy Spirit to renew his work in conforming us into the image of Christ."

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Christ Church NYC's Advent Devotional Guide is ultimately intended to help us treasure Christ more, as we enter into the journey of God's people through the ages—a journey of promise and hope. Beginning with God's promises of salvation in Genesis, waiting and feeling the angst of Israel's hope for a Messiah, to our own longing for God to come and set things right, this guide will take us into that biblical story as we set our hope more firmly on Christ.

This guide consists of five weeks of devotionals. Included in each are Bible passages to be read and carefully considered, questions for personal reflection and response, and additional

writings—one from the Bible and one from a historical reflection on the Bible—that are meant to help us meditate more deeply on Jesus. Finally, each devotional contains group questions and suggestions for use in families and households. It is all too common for the busyness of the season to overwhelm and crowd out any meaningful reflection of the glory, wonder, and significance of what it is we are celebrating. The family devotional is particularly intended to help you carve out time to set your hearts and minds on things eternal. As you think about and plan for the coming weeks, prayerfully consider what you want this season of Advent to be marked by for your family. What do you want your children to value and remember? How will you be intentional in guarding their time, attention and affections so that Jesus is the focus?

We pray this Advent season is for you a meaningful time of personal reflection, hope and longing, and joyful expectation for the coming of Jesus.



Week 1 *The Promise of Redemption*

Week 2 *The Promise of a King to Rule*

Week 3 *The Promise of a Son to Save*

Week 4 *Promises and Hopes Fulfilled: Emmanuel*

Week 5 *The Promise of Jesus' Return*

Appendix *Recommended Activities for Family Devotions*

Week 1:

The Promise of Redemption

Read

1. Genesis 1:1-4, 26-27

2. Genesis 3:1-7, 14-19

3. Genesis 12:1-3a

4. Genesis 22:1-14

Consider

In the beginning . . . the opening chapters of the Bible tell of the good creation of God's world. Everything is right and true and beautiful. Yet we soon learn that men and women are not only the glory but also the shame of God's creation. Instead of trusting God and loving Him with our whole hearts, we have rejected His word and severed our good relationship with Him. The consequences are disastrous—not only is our relationship with God broken, but so too is our relationship with one another and the world around us. We now stand under God's judgment.

And yet . . . !

And yet, even as Genesis 3 speaks of God's judgment, there is mercy. A child will be born of the woman. And this child will bring an end to the evil and chaos. Genesis 12 then points us forward to God mercifully calling one man, and through him mercifully promising to bring blessing and redemption to the world.

How will God accomplish this? Just as Genesis 3 hints that it will be through the offspring of the woman, so too Genesis 22—in the context of a son to be sacrificed—hints that redemption will come through an unexpected substitute sacrifice.

The promise is made. Redemption will come. God's people must now wait.



Questions for Reflection

Think of a time you felt completely hopeless. What led you to feel that way?

How was your hope restored?

In what ways do you see God's mercy and the promise of redemption in Genesis?

What does God's providing the lamb in place of Isaac show us about His nature and character? How is it a picture of Jesus?

After you read Genesis 22, look up Romans 8:32. What do you learn?

How does Romans 8:32 help you to trust that God will fulfill all of His promises?

Response

What is one hope you have for yourself, your family or your community as you begin the Advent season? How will you make that a reality?

Pray for yourself and those around you, asking God to open your eyes and heart to what He has for you this Advent season.

Meditate on Christ

"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him."

—2 Corinthians 1:20

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . 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 1:1-5; 14

Suggested Family Devotions

- **Sunday:** Light the Hope/Prophecy Candle (see Appendix for details.)
- **Monday:** Prayer Time: Focus on Hope - praise God for the hope of Christmas & ask that your hopes for this season align with the reason we celebrate - Jesus. Read Passage 1.
- **Tuesday:** Read Passage 2. Discuss what it teaches us about Jesus.
- **Wednesday:** Discuss what everyone may already know about Abraham and God's promises to him. Read Passage 3.
- **Thursday:** Read Passage 4. (Consider reading all of Genesis 22.) Discuss questions people have about it, or things that they do not understand.
- **Friday:** Family Fun Activity (See Appendix for ideas)
- **Saturday:** Reflection Questions & Song.

For Further Reflection "Christ the True and Better"

BY MATT BOSWELL, MATT PAPA AND KEITH GETTY

Christ the true and better Adam, Son of
God and Son of Man,
Who, when tempted in the garden, never
yielded, never sinned.
He who makes the many righteous brings
us back to life again.
Dying, he reversed the curse, then rising,
crushed the serpent's head.

Christ the true and better Isaac, humble
son of sacrifice,
Who would climb the fearful mountain,
there to offer up his life.
Laid with faith upon the altar, Father's joy
and only son,
There salvation was provided, oh what full
and boundless love.

Christ the true and better Moses, called to
lead a people home;
Standing bold to earthly powers, God's
great glory to be known.
With his arms stretched wide to heaven,
see the waters part in two.
See the veil is torn forever, cleansed with
blood we pass now through. (*Chorus*)

Christ the true and better David, lowly
shepherd, mighty King.
He, the champion in the battle - where, O
death, is now thy sting?
In our place He bled and conquered,
crown him Lord of majesty.
His shall be the throne forever, we shall
e'er His people be. (*Chorus*)

Chorus:

Amen, amen, from beginning to end,
Christ the story, His the glory, Alleluia,
amen.

Week 2:

The Promise of A King to Rule



Read

1. 2 Samuel 7

2. Psalm 2

Consider

During the reign of King David (c.10th century B.C.), we find that important elements of God's promise to Abraham were fulfilled: God's blessing and deliverance came to the Jewish people in Egypt, a nation had been established between the Nile and the Euphrates. At this time David then spoke with Nathan the prophet about building a "house" (temple) for God. Nathan responded by informing David that God did not dwell in buildings; furthermore, using the word "house" with a double meaning, he told David that God would establish his "house" (kingdom) forever.

One of the central promises throughout the Old Testament is that God's kingdom would come—a promise that became particularly desirable after the nation of Israel was conquered and God's people exiled.

Thus, in Acts 1:6, after Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples great hope was that now God's kingdom would finally and permanently be established, as they asked Jesus: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Indeed, Jesus taught His disciples and us to pray just that way: *Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. Why? Because this is what the human heart longs for. "The kingdom of God" is language which describes the loving, righteous, intimate rule of God over our lives and this world. It describes our relationship with Him renewed and restored. It describes the realities we all long for—a place where peace, justice, truth, goodness, and beauty reign.

No more heartache. No more abuse. No more death. No more crying. No more pain. Rather, life with God as His people, in His place, under His rule—forever.

And so God's people waited.

Questions for Reflection

Why is it hard to be patient when waiting on God's promises? How can we fight impatience?

Why do you think God's people in the Old Testament so longed for His kingdom to come?

How does the promise of God's kingdom fill you with hope?

The Christian author Graeme Goldsworthy has famously defined the kingdom of God as "God's people in God's place under God's rule". As you think through the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, can you think of ways you see God fulfilling this promise?

To live under God's kingly rule means to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him in His presence. Because God is holy and perfect, that is only possible if we submit to His loving rule and do not sin . . . what does that mean for your life today?

Response

Consider how you can work to pursue the realities of God's kingdom where you are during this Advent season. To what situations might you be able to bring peace, justice, truth, beauty, goodness?

Pray for God's kingdom to come.

Meditate on Christ

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 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 made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

—Philippians 2:4-11

Suggested Family Devotions

- **Sunday:** Light the Faith/Bethlehem Candle (see Appendix for details.)
- **Monday:** Prayer Time: Focus on faith - ask for its increase and growth during this Advent season.
- **Tuesday:** Discuss what people think of when they think of kings and kingdoms. Read Passage 1.
- **Wednesday:** Read Passage 2. What kind of King is God's Anointed?
- **Thursday:** Reflection Questions. What are some ways we can show love to Jesus our king?
- **Friday:** Family Fun Activity (See Appendix for ideas)
- **Saturday:** Song Reflection.

For Further Reflection "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"

BY CHARLES WESLEY

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.



Week 3:

The Promise of A Son to Save



Read

1. Isaiah 9:2-7

2. Isaiah 11:1-9

3. Isaiah 53:1-12

4. Galatians 4:4-6

Consider

In the 8th century B.C. the powerful Assyrian army threatened the nation of Israel. Into these dark days Isaiah the prophet spoke of God's coming intervention as a light that would shine in the north. The sign of God's victory would begin with something very weak, something very insignificant—the birth of a baby boy—but this baby boy, of the house of David, would be born to be God's special ruler: the one who would serve and save God's people.

As Isaiah's prophecy continued to unfold, the means through which this baby boy would one day save God's people became clear. Isaiah spoke of a servant to come—a servant who would identify with Israel, but who would also be separate from Israel, and thus would be able to save Israel, and indeed save all who would put their trust in Him. The climax of Isaiah's prophecy about a

baby boy-servant to save comes in chapter 53, where we learn that He would save by dying like a slaughtered lamb. The means of His salvation would be His perfect life and His substitutionary death . . . *the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

With this promise in mind, the New Testament opens with a genealogy connecting Jesus to all the promises that came before—He is the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1), and the son of Adam, the son of God (Luke 3:38). Therefore Mark opens His record of Jesus' life by proclaiming, *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

God's plan was unfolding, at the perfect time and in the perfect way. The waiting was coming to an end.

On the right day, in the right place, at the right time, Jesus was born.

Questions for Reflection

Can you think of a time when you felt like God had forgotten or abandoned you?

Can you think of a time when God's timing surprised you?

While God rarely comes at our appointed time, He always comes at the right time. If you have trouble believing that, consider why?

How does the birth of Christ encourage you to wait on God and His timing?

Consider the reading from Galatians 4. How does being able to call God "Father" encourage you to wait on Him?

Response

As you make your list of people to buy gifts for, include someone who would never expect to receive a gift from you. Think of the delight you would feel in blessing them and consider the love in God's heart as He sent His Son to die for sinners.

In prayer, thank God for His goodness in sending a Savior. Confess places where your confidence in His faithfulness is weak and ask Him for increased trust, belief, and hope.

Meditate on Christ

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

—Hebrews 1:1–4

Suggested Family Devotions

- **Sunday:** Light the Joy/Shepherd Candle (see Appendix for details.)
- **Monday:** Prayer Time: Focus on joy & gratitude - try not to ask for anything! Read Passage 1. Work through all the names this baby boy will be given.
- **Tuesday:** Read Passage 2 (verses 1-6). If doing the Jesse Tree (see Appendix), discuss the importance of tracing Jesus' family.
- **Wednesday:** Read Passage 3. Discuss questions people have about it or things they don't understand.
- **Thursday:** Read Passage 4. What are the benefits of being in God's family?
- **Friday:** Family Fun Activity (See Appendix for ideas)
- **Saturday:** Reflection Questions & Song.

Sing and Reflect: "*Fullness of Grace*"

BY KEITH AND KRISTYN GETTY AND STUART TOWNEND

Fullness of grace in man's human frailty,
 This is the wonder of Jesus.
 Laying aside His power and glory,
 Humbly He entered our world.
 Chose the path of meanest worth:
 Scandal of a virgin birth.
 Born in a stable, cold and rejected:
 Here lies the hope of the world.
 Fullness of grace, the love of the Father
 Shown in the face of Jesus.
 Stooping to bear the weight of humanity,
 Walking the Calvary road.
 Christ the holy Innocent
 Took our sin and punishment.
 Fullness of God, despised and rejected:
 Crushed for the sins of the world.
 Fullness of hope in Christ we had longed for,
 Promise of God in Jesus.
 Through His obedience we are forgiven,
 Opening the floodgates of heaven.
 All our hopes and dreams we bring
 Gladly as an offering.
 Fullness of life and joy unspeakable:
 God's gift in love to the world.

Week 4:

Promises and

Hopes Fulfilled:

Emmanuel



Read

1. Isaiah 7:10-17

2. Matthew 1:18-25

3. Luke 1:67-79

Consider

As the Old Testament progresses and gives glimpses of how God will redeem and rescue His people, we begin to see the surprising and wonderful truth that the King coming to rule, and the Son coming to save, will not be any ordinary baby boy, but will in fact be God Himself.

Matthew, the Gospel writer and a former tax collector, records how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's ancient promises—the baby to be born was to be called "Emmanuel" (God is with us) and "Jesus" (God rescues).

This of course is the stunning truth of the Incarnation: The eternal God, full of infinite power and being, took on the finitude and frailty of human flesh. Reflect again on John 1: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made*

that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... 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."

The eternal Word "became" a man named Jesus. He who eternally existed as God became human for humanity's redemption. He did not cease to be God. He came as fully God and fully man—on a mission of grace and truth, reflecting the glory He shared with the Father to the blind and broken world.

God's people had waited. God was faithful. He kept His promises. And He did so in the most extraordinary and abundant way possible. As Zechariah sings in Luke 1, God Himself has visited and redeemed his people.

God Himself has come. He is our hope and salvation. He does not just provide for us. He provides Himself for us.

Questions for Reflection

Describe a time when you looked forward to an event for a long time. What emotions did you feel as you waited? How did you feel when the wait was finally over?

Can you think of a time when God abundantly answered your prayers, giving you far more than you ever thought you could have hoped for or imagined?

How would you explain the phrase, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us?"

What does the birth of Jesus show us about the nature and character of God?

Do you worship Jesus as God?

Response

The Incarnation means that God has come to us—to where we are. Who is someone you know who is hurting and in need? Who is some one who needs to know the gospel? Think of a way you can go and meet them where they are.

In prayer, praise God for loving the weak, despised and lowly and showing them His glory.

Meditate on Christ

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."

—Colossians 1:15-22

Suggested Family Devotions

- **Sunday:** Light the Peace/Angel's Candle in the morning (See Appendix for Details.)
- **Monday:** Prayer Time: Focus on the peace of Christ - ask for peace on earth and praise God not only for the peace he gives our hearts but also the peace we have with God through the reconciling work of Jesus. Review the last few weeks of Bible readings.
- **Tuesday:** Read Passage 1. What is it like to wait to open a gift? How do you feel when you can finally open it? How is Jesus our greatest gift?
- **Wednesday:** Read Passage 2. What does this name of Jesus teach us about him and about his mission?
- **Thursday:** Read Passage 3. Discuss questions people have about it or things they don't understand.
- **Friday:** Family Fun Activity (See Appendix for ideas)
- **Saturday:** Reflection Questions & Song.

For Further Reflection *"Of the Father's Love Begotten"*

BY AURELIUS PRUDENTIUS CLEMENS

Of the Father's love begotten
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the Source, the Ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see
Evermore and evermore.

Oh, that birth forever blessed
When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bare the Savior of our race,
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face
Evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heaven, adore Him;
Angel hosts, His praises sing;
Powers, dominions, bow before Him
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert ring
Evermore and evermore.

This is He whom Heaven-taught singers
Sang of old with one accord;
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word.
Now He shines, the Long-expected;
Let creation praise its Lord
Evermore and evermore.

Christmas Eve

Have one person light the candles from the first four weeks, remembering together what you have learned about God's faithfulness during Advent. After reading Luke 2:1-20, have another person light the fifth candle—the Christ candle.



Have one person pray, thanking God for His incredible faithfulness in sending Jesus to save His people.

Sing and Reflect: "O Holy Night"

BY PLACIDE CAPPEAU

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 appear'd 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, 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! O, praise His name forever!
His power and glory ever more proclaim!
His power and glory ever more proclaim!

Week 5:

The Promise of Jesus' Return

Read

1. 1 Peter 1:8-13

3. Revelation 22:1-21

2. 1 John 3:2-3

Consider

Once more we wait.

As we have seen throughout this journey of promise and hope, the Old Testament looked forward to the day when God would rescue His people, and bring peace, justice, and joy. That day has come! And yet there is still more to be fulfilled.

Theologians speak of this as the already, but not yet, reality in which we live. God's kingdom has already been inaugurated—Jesus has defeated death, He has poured out His Holy Spirit, and He has begun to gather His people and build His church all over the world. And yet His kingdom has not been fully consummated.



There yet awaits a future Day of Judgment and Righteousness when Jesus will come again in all of His beautiful glory.

Revelation 22 provides us with a picture of what that final day will look like. It is a picture that should remind us of Genesis 1, for in it we read of what Jesus called "the new world,"—literally, "the new genesis." Thus, as the first chapter of the Bible informs us that God made the world, this last chapter of the Bible informs us that He will remake it. Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, there will no longer be any darkness or death, for the presence of sin will be finally and fully eradicated. As a result, God's people will live in the light and joy of His presence forever.

And so now, once more, we wait.

Questions for Reflection

Think about the different ways in which you prepare for things in your life—whether it's making dinner, getting ready for work, or having a guest over. How much time and intentionality do you invest and why? What motivates you toward careful preparation? What adjustments do you make to your schedule, plans, budget, etc.?

How does your life reflect your belief in the promised return of Jesus? Is it something you think about and long for? If not, why do you think that is?

How would looking expectantly to the coming of Jesus affect the way you see your present circumstances?

As you consider how you should wait in this already, but not yet point in history, 1 Peter 1:8-13 is instructive for us (also consider 2 Peter 3:8-14). Noting what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13, what would it look like for you to set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Why do you think Peter emphasizes the coming of grace?

Response

One way God's children prepare for Jesus' return is by caring for the poor, vulnerable and outcast (Matt. 25:31-46). As you look ahead to the New Year, think of practical ways you and your family or community can care for the weak in your area.

In prayer, thank God for the reality that Jesus will return and make all things new. Confess any areas of your life—finances, time, relationships, stewardship of your body—where you haven't been diligent in pursuing holiness. Ask the Lord to show you specific ways you can actively await His promised return in the coming year.

Meditate on Christ

"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain . . . And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll, and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.' Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!' And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

—Revelation 5:6, 8-14

Suggested Family Devotions

- **Sunday:** Prayer time: Focus on the second advent of Christ - pray expectantly - with hope, faith, joy and peace.
- **Monday:** Light all of the Advent Candles to symbolize how we keep "our lamps burning" as we wait for Christ's return. (Luke 12:35-36). Consider lighting them everyday until January 1 or for the 12 days of Christmas leading to Epiphany on January 6.
- **Tuesday:** Read Passage 1. How is it fulfilled in Jesus's birth? How will it be fulfilled in his second coming?
- **Wednesday:** Read Passage 2. Ask your children what they are most looking forward to about the coming of Jesus.
- **Thursday:** Read Passage 3 (Consider reading all of Revelation 21-22). Discuss the picture of heaven from this passage. What will it be like? Ask your children if there is anything that scares or frightens them.
- **Friday:** Family Fun Activity (See Appendix for ideas)
- **Saturday:** Reflection Questions & Song (Consider signing all the songs).

For Further Reflection *"Savior of the Nations, Come"*

BY ST. AMBROSE

Savior of the nations, come,
virgin's Son, make here thy home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,
that the Lord chose such a birth.

Not of flesh and blood the Son,
offspring of the Holy One;
born of Mary ever blest,
God in flesh is manifest.

Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
of the Virgin undefiled!
Though by all the world disowned,
still to be in heav'n enthroned.

From the Father forth he came
and returneth to the same,
captive leading death and hell,
high the song of triumph swell!

Thou, the Father's only Son,
hast o'er sin the vict'ry won.
Boundless shall thy kingdom be;
when shall we its glories see?

Praise to God the Father sing.
Praise to God the Son, our King.
Praise to God the Spirit be
ever and eternally.

Appendix

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS



THE JESSE TREE

The Jesse Tree, which is introduced on the First Sunday of Advent, is an artistic depiction of the genealogical tree of Jesus. It is an extended genealogy that tells the entire biblical story of redemption. The symbol of the tree comes from Isaiah 11:1: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."

Each week until Christmas, new figures are added as the story of the Old Testament progressively unfolds leading up to the birth of Jesus. In the first week, ornaments representing God's work (Gen 1:1-2:3), Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4), Noah (Gen 6:11, Gen 7:17, Gen 8:20), Abraham (Gen 12:1, Gen 15:1), Isaac (Gen 22:1), and Jacob (Gen 27:41) are put on the tree, starting from the bottom and progressively moving upwards.

You can find free printable Jesse tree ornaments online. Some come in color and others let your children color in the pictures.



THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath is an ordinary wreath with special candles. Often, three purple candles and one pink candle stand around a central white candle. Each Sunday during Advent, one candle is lit, and as the candle burns throughout the week, we remember the passage of time and the nearer we are to the birth of Christ. Like the Jesse Tree progressively being filled in, the Advent wreath gets brighter and brighter as Christmas approaches.

The first purple candle, lit on the first Sunday of Advent, is called the hope or prophecy candle. It represents the expectation for the coming Messiah. The second Sunday lights the second purple candle, representing faith, called the Bethlehem Candle after Mary and Joseph's journey. The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday as a symbol of joy, often referred to as the Shepherd's Candle. On the fourth Sunday, we light the last purple candle, symbolizing peace. It's sometimes called the Angel's Candle after the message of the angels. The white candle in the center is for Christmas Eve or Day as it's the Christ Candle, symbolizing his birth.



THE EMPTY SEAT

Throughout the season of Advent, set an extra place at the table or add an extra chair to where you pray as a sign of looking forward to Jesus' return. This will help you and your family remember that what we are ultimately waiting for at this stage of redemptive history is Jesus' second coming.



THE DRAMA

Set up a nativity scene together and/or reenact the nativity story with your family.



THE COUNTDOWN

Make an Advent paper chain or Advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas. If you make a paper chain, write different prompts on each ring for your children to complete each day, including an act of kindness, a prayer, or a song.



WANDERING WISE MEN

To bring fun and laughter to your Advent season, consider playing "Wandering Wise Men." Similar to "Elf on a Shelf," hide plastic Wise Men throughout your house. If you or someone is your family finds one, they have to re-hide it. On Christmas Day, bring out all the Wise Men and add them to your nativity scene. Though a bit silly, it will be a good reminder for your children of the true story of Christmas as the Wise Men went in search of the True King.



NAMES OF JESUS ORNAMENTS

Find printable ornaments online of the names of Jesus and have a craft night. Color the ornaments and hang them on your tree to remember all different aspects of Jesus' character.



PERFORM AN ACT OF KINDNESS

Whether it's baking Christmas cookies and delivering them to a neighbor, inviting friends to Lessons & Carols, or encouraging your children to do one of their sibling's chores, spend time serving others as a sign of gratitude for all Jesus has done.



MAKE CHRISTMAS CARDS

Create your own Christmas cards using any craft materials and write encouraging, hope-filled messages. Deliver them to neighbors or take them to a local senior center.



READ A CHRISTMAS STORY BOOK

Find unique Christmas story books or find printable stories online and tell the Christmas story from a new and fun angle, whether from the perspective of a young sheep in the field or a camel carrying a wise man.



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