

ADVENT SEASON: A Helpful Guide

"FOR YONDER BREAKS A NEW AND GLORIOUS MORN."

— O HOLY NIGHT



ADVENT GUIDE

A Note as You Begin

To our friends in Christ,
Advent does not hurry upon us. It comes quietly, like the stars appearing
throughout the night.
It sits with us.
It waits with us.
It speaks softly of God drawing near to us.
This guide is a small offering—something to receive; not a task to accomplish
or a product to consume.
Take it slowly.
Use what helps.
Let the season meet you where you are, as you are.

Merry Christmas,
The Spiritual Formation Society of the Ozarks

How to Use this Guide

This is no correct way. There is no incorrect way.

Sit for a moment of quiet, light a candle, or read slowly. Pencil in hand to
write, jot, or draw what comes up in you.

Let one word or one sentence stay with you. If days slip past, there is no failure
here.

God is already here.

Prayer for Advent

Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our
preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"
Amen.
- Henri Nouwen



ADVENT GUIDE

The Roots of Advent

The word "Advent" has its roots in the Latin word "adventus," which means "coming" or "arrival." In the Christian tradition, Advent refers to the season of spiritual preparation and anticipation that leads up to the celebration of Christmas, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. It typically begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and lasts for four weeks, culminating on Christmas Eve.

Advent is a time of reflection, repentance, and expectation, as Christians look back on the historical event of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and look forward to his promised return. The season is marked by various traditions, including the lighting of Advent candles on a wreath, Scripture readings, prayers, and a focus on specific themes such as hope, love, joy, and peace. Overall, Advent is a period of spiritual preparation, encouraging believers to deepen their relationship with God and to reflect on the profound meaning of the Incarnation.

Practicing Advent

- Prepare
 - Readiness and preparedness for the coming of the birth of Christ is one of the fruits of Advent. May we deeply understand what we are needing birthed, illuminated, and filled with hope this season. May we arrive on Christmas Day with a deep sense of readiness for His arrival.
- Scripture Reflection
 - Here is a brief list of selected Scriptures that could add deeper meaning into your Advent observance. Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:8-14; Luke 2:19; Mark 1:1-8.
- Cultivate Silence and Stillness
 - Say "no" more often than "yes" in this season. Amidst the busyness of the holiday season, intentionally create moments of silence and stillness. This quiet time can be a powerful space for reflection, prayer, and a deeper connection to what your soul is longing for this season.
- Acts of Kindness & Mindful Gift-Giving
 - Make Advent a season of giving and kindness. Small acts of generosity, whether through charity or simple gestures toward others, can help you embody the spirit of love and goodwill associated with Christmas. If gift-giving is part of your holiday tradition, consider gifts that align with the themes of Advent – offering hope, promoting peace, , sparking joy, or spreading love. Thoughtful, intentional gifts can carry deeper meaning to those we love.



ADVENT GUIDE

The Four Advent Themes

The four weeks of Advent are traditionally represented by candles lit on an Advent wreath. Each candle carries a theme, and they are often lit successively on each Sunday leading up to Christmas.

You are invited to prayerfully consider each week's theme. Throughout the season, there may be only one or two words that meet you most deeply in your life with God. Let those words slow you down. Listen gently. Return to them as needed.

The four traditional themes are:

- **Hope** (Week 1): The first week of Advent focuses on the theme of hope. It symbolizes the anticipation of the Messiah's coming, echoing the hope that sustained the people of Israel as they awaited the birth of the Savior.
 - What are the hopes and expectations that you carry within you during this Advent season?
 - Where in your life are you longing for hope this season?
- **Peace** (Week 2): The second week centers on peace. The lighting of the second candle represents the peace that Christ brings to the hearts of those who welcome Him. It serves as a reminder of the tranquility found in the presence of the Prince of Peace.
 - What aspects of your life needs the calming presence of God's peace as you wait?
 - When peace arrives in your soul, what does it typically look like to you?
- **Joy** (Week 3): The third week emphasizes joy. As the anticipation heightens, the lighting of the third candle symbolizes the joy that comes with the nearness of Christmas. It calls believers to rejoice in the coming of the Savior and the hope He brings.
 - What are you delighting in this Advent season?
 - Where do you sense Jesus' delight in you?
- **Love** (Week 4): The final week centers around the theme of love. As the final candle is lit, it represents the boundless love of God embodied in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. It encourages believers to reflect on and share this profound love with others.
 - Where are you noticing God's love (great or small) just for you lately?
 - What has he invited you into recently that feels loving?



ADVENT GUIDE

Reflections for Advent

Waiting in Advent is not passive. It is a quiet, purposeful openness to what God is forming in us.

- Where in your life are you waiting for Christ to arrive?

Look back over your year since last Christmas.

- Where have you noticed hope, peace, joy, or love?
- In what ways has Jesus been present or illuminating?

Advent often draws our deep longings to the surface.

- What desire is rising in you this season?
- What do you quietly long for with God this season?

It is easy to become absorbed by the noise and busyness of Christmas.

- What might you gently step away from this year?
- What might you lean into with God more intentionally?

One of Advent's movements is from darkness to light (*Isaiah 9:2*).

- Where are you waiting to see God's light this season?
- What part of your life feels hidden, unresolved, or "not yet" — and where do you sense God meeting you there?



ADVENT GUIDE

Words for the Advent Season

- “In Advent we prepare for the coming of all love—that love which will redeem all the brokenness, wrongness, and hardnesses of heart that have afflicted us.” - Madeleine L’Engle
- “Above all, we seek to stay awake and become aware.” - Trevor Hudson
- “As I read (the story of Christ’s birth), I was struck by how earthy the stories are; in other words, how utterly human. Even in this day and age of ‘real’ and ‘authentic,’ I fear we keep these stories in the realm of card stock and porcelain figures. If these stories did not happen to flesh and blood and bone and sinew, then we of all people are to be most pitied.” - John Blase
- “The arrival (of Christmas) doesn’t happen until the end of Advent. Christmas is the morning of the arrival. Advent is the time of waiting for that arrival—perhaps patiently, or perhaps not so.” - Matthew Dickerson
- “We know that Christ has come, and yet the season of Advent calls us out of our time-bound moment to remember...we don’t merely retell the story of the gospel; we enter it.” - Trish Harrison Warren
- “Incarnation is the process of becoming seen.” - Scott Erickson
- “The counsel to slow down and wait, places us in a perfect position to listen to God and sets us up for the next movement in our journey of ‘preparing Him room’ in our hearts.” - Ted Wueste

Receiving Childlikeness

Reflection:

- As you see the lights and signs of Christmas, what catches the eye of the younger parts of you?
- What stirs or awakens within you in this season?
- If that younger part of you could speak, what would it say?
- What words of comfort or reassurance does it need to hear

I find myself thankful
that the child within doesn’t perish
from the weight of a weary world,
but rather finds deep slumber,
blanketed in grace.

The soft lights of Christmas
often begin to flicker a stirring—
a reawakening, for a season,
or just a moment

— Justin Phillips



ADVENT GUIDE

A Gentle Pause

Below is a simple word search. Move slowly through it, noticing each word as it appears. You might pause for a moment with any word that seems to speak to you. Words can be found horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and in reverse.

A	A	N	N	U	N	C	I	A	T	I	O	N	J	M	A	N	G	E	R
N	A	T	I	V	I	T	Y	P	P	S	F	E	O	R	Y	N	U	A	N
S	O	V	N	E	Y	J	E	Q	K	W	A	I	T	L	F	D	G	L	K
C	G	W	U	L	O	G	H	L	C	V	U	Z	Y	S	W	N	K	E	V
S	T	A	I	S	A	W	R	A	D	V	E	N	T	B	X	N	M	K	L
E	A	S	E	F	K	C	H	Q	Z	U	M	L	K	D	F	O	S	W	M
V	C	P	O	D	A	W	F	L	X	O	M	M	I	M	C	I	N	D	E
T	H	L	F	G	D	S	D	I	Q	Z	A	K	L	L	P	T	Z	W	S
E	H	J	D	P	H	Z	A	G	P	C	N	M	Z	O	T	A	K	Z	S
G	L	S	T	A	R	Y	W	H	F	P	U	M	T	V	A	N	Y	Q	I
L	B	K	S	J	E	O	Y	T	W	X	E	V	T	E	J	R	J	P	A
K	F	E	D	A	F	B	M	Q	J	G	L	R	N	D	D	A	L	Z	H
J	F	Q	T	B	A	W	Z	I	L	O	Q	S	P	X	U	C	C	W	V
M	A	Y	P	H	N	Q	X	Y	S	T	Y	H	U	L	X	N	O	N	W
A	K	S	V	N	L	Y	C	G	W	E	P	E	A	C	E	I	Q	B	N
R	M	H	Z	M	W	E	J	H	N	J	Y	P	Y	H	A	P	U	Z	D
Y	U	E	J	G	B	F	H	S	E	D	Z	H	K	Q	H	N	V	H	S
C	A	E	T	U	C	G	K	E	Q	L	T	E	W	P	X	Z	D	G	B
A	S	P	G	O	Z	H	L	A	M	A	O	R	S	Z	M	M	R	L	Q
H	O	P	E	P	B	A	S	P	K	F	L	D	P	K	G	R	A	C	E

WORD LIST

ADVENT
HOPE
PEACE
JOY
LOVE
WAIT
LIGHT
INCARNATION
EMMANUEL
MESSIAH
MARY
JOSEPH
BETHLEHEM
ANGEL
STAR
MANGER
SHEPHERD
GRACE
SHEEP
CANDLE
PROMISE
ANNUNCIATION
NATIVITY



ADVENT GUIDE

A Closing Blessing

May hope rise quietly.
May peace settle deeply.
May joy surprise you.
May love hold you
in the place where you most need to be held.

Go gently into the season,
and may Christ be near.



Spiritual Formation Society of the Ozarks