The Advent Table

Four weeks of Scripture, conversation, prayer, and hospitality

Advent is a season of waiting for the coming of Jesus. Around an ordinary table, we can remember Israel's longing, receive the gift of Christ's presence, and make room for the people God has placed near us.

A rhythm for the season

Choose one meal each week. Light a candle if you wish. Read the passage aloud, ask the questions, pray together, and choose one small practice before you leave the table. You can do this with children, friends, neighbors, roommates, or on your own.

The four gatherings

Week 1 / HOPE / Isaiah 9:2–7 and Luke 1:26–38

Week 2 / PEACE / Isaiah 11:1–9 and Luke 2:8–20

Week 3 / JOY / Luke 1:39–56 and Luke 2:25–38

Week 4 / LOVE / John 1:1–14 and Luke 2:1–7

A note for households

Keep the readings and questions age-appropriate. A young child may answer with a drawing or a single sentence. People carrying grief, infertility, family conflict, or loneliness may experience Advent differently. Make space for honest answers without requiring everyone to feel festive.

ADVENT / WEEK 01

Hope at the Table

Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 1:26–38

Gather

Set a meal before you. Light a candle if it is safe to do so. Begin with a moment of silence and invite each person to share one word describing their week.

Read

Read Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 1:26–38 aloud from your Bible. If children are present, let them listen for a word or image they want to remember.

Enter the story

Hope is the courage to wait because God has made a promise. Isaiah speaks to people living under darkness and oppression. Centuries later, Mary receives news that God’s promised king is coming through a path she could never have planned.

Notice the text

Isaiah describes light dawning on people who walk in darkness. Gabriel announces a son whose kingdom will have no end. Mary asks a real question and then offers herself to God’s word. Biblical hope makes room for questions as we wait.

Talk together

1. Where do you hear longing in these passages?
2. What stands out about Mary’s question and response?
3. What are you waiting for right now, and what would faithful hope look like there?

Practice this week

Place an empty chair at the table for a moment. Name a person who needs encouragement, then send them a thoughtful invitation or message this week.

Pray

God of promise, meet us in our waiting. When the future feels uncertain, help us trust your faithfulness. Give us courage to make room for your work in ways we did not expect. Amen.

Carry it with you

What are we hoping for this Advent?

_____

Peace at the Table

Isaiah 11:1–9; Luke 2:8–20

Gather

Set a meal before you. Light a candle if it is safe to do so. Begin with a moment of silence and invite each person to share one word describing their week.

Read

Read Isaiah 11:1–9; Luke 2:8–20 aloud from your Bible. If children are present, let them listen for a word or image they want to remember.

Enter the story

The prophets envisioned a world reordered by the reign of God. When Jesus is born, the announcement of peace comes first to shepherds watching their flocks at night. God’s good news reaches people far from centers of power.

Notice the text

Isaiah imagines justice for the vulnerable and a creation no longer ruled by violence. In Luke, angels proclaim peace as the shepherds are invited to see the child. They return to their ordinary work praising God.

Talk together

1. How is the peace of Isaiah 11 bigger than a calm feeling?
2. Why might the shepherds be significant first hearers?
3. Where could you become a peacemaker in a concrete, responsible way?

Practice this week

At one meal this week, put phones away and give each person uninterrupted time to speak. If there is a strained relationship, consider one safe, appropriate step toward repair.

Pray

Prince of Peace, bring your justice and mercy into our lives. Teach us to listen with patience and to seek the good of our neighbors. Let our homes become places where people can breathe and be heard. Amen.

Carry it with you

Where do we need peace?

_____

Joy at the Table

Luke 1:39–56; Luke 2:25–38

Gather

Set a meal before you. Light a candle if it is safe to do so. Begin with a moment of silence and invite each person to share one word describing their week.

Read

Read Luke 1:39–56; Luke 2:25–38 aloud from your Bible. If children are present, let them listen for a word or image they want to remember.

Enter the story

Advent joy often arrives alongside uncertainty. Mary visits Elizabeth, and their shared recognition of God’s work becomes a song. Later, Simeon and Anna recognize the child Jesus after long years of expectation.

Notice the text

Mary’s song celebrates God’s attention to the lowly and his faithfulness to Israel. Simeon blesses God while acknowledging the pain that lies ahead. Their joy is rooted in God’s action, even while the story remains unfinished.

Talk together

1. What does Mary celebrate in her song?
2. What can Simeon and Anna teach us about patient attention?
3. What good gift have you nearly overlooked this season?

Practice this week

Invite everyone at the table to name one specific reason for gratitude. Write the responses down and keep them where you can see them through Christmas.

Pray

God of joy, open our eyes to your gifts amid unfinished stories. Help us rejoice with others, remember those who are hurting, and receive today with gratitude. Amen.

Carry it with you

What are we thankful for today?

_____

Love at the Table

John 1:1–14; Luke 2:1–7

Gather

Set a meal before you. Light a candle if it is safe to do so. Begin with a moment of silence and invite each person to share one word describing their week.

Read

Read John 1:1–14; Luke 2:1–7 aloud from your Bible. If children are present, let them listen for a word or image they want to remember.

Enter the story

The mystery of Christmas is that the eternal Word took on flesh and lived among us. Luke places the birth of Jesus amid travel, imperial power, and crowded circumstances. God’s love enters the material world and comes close to ordinary people.

Notice the text

John says the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Luke tells of Mary giving birth and laying Jesus in a manger. These passages invite us to consider how God’s love becomes visible in actual places and bodies.

Talk together

1. What surprises you about the way God comes near?
2. How does the incarnation shape the way we treat people?
3. Who could experience Christ’s love through a place at your table?

Practice this week

Set an extra place at a meal or deliver food to someone who may be isolated. Choose a person and a concrete action rather than leaving the invitation abstract.

Pray

Jesus, Word made flesh, thank you for coming near. Teach us to receive your love and to embody it in the places we live. Make our tables places of welcome and our lives a witness to your presence. Amen.

Carry it with you

How will we make room for love?

_____

A Simple Advent Table Liturgy

Use this before a meal throughout the season.

Gather

Leader: The light shines in the darkness. All: And the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5, reference)

Remember

Light a candle and pause. Each person may name something they are waiting for, someone they miss, or a reason they are thankful. Passing is always welcome.

Pray before eating

God who came to dwell among us, thank you for this food and for the people gathered here. Be near to those who are hungry, grieving, or alone tonight. Teach us to share what we have and to welcome others as we have been welcomed in Christ. Amen.

At the end of the meal

Leader: Christ has come, and Christ will come again. All: May we live in hope and love until that day.

For a household with children

Ask one question: “Where did you notice love today?” Children can answer with a story, a word, or a picture.

Making Room at Christmas

Practical ways to extend the table

An invitation that feels possible

“We’re sharing a simple meal on [day] at [time]. We’d love to have you join us. There’s no need to bring anything.”

When a full meal is too much

Offer soup, dessert, coffee, or a walk. Hospitality can fit the time, energy, and resources you actually have.

When someone is grieving

Ask whether they would like to talk about the person they miss. Avoid making them perform cheerfulness. Acknowledge that a holiday table can carry both gratitude and sorrow.

When a relationship is strained

Keep expectations realistic. A holiday meal does not need to resolve longstanding conflict. Respect boundaries and avoid pressuring anyone into contact that feels unsafe.

When you are eating alone

Read one Advent passage, give thanks for your food, and consider reaching out to someone else who may appreciate connection. Solitude can be a meaningful place to pray without pretending loneliness is easy.

A simple hosting checklist

☐ Choose a date and an easy menu.

☐ Invite someone personally.

☐ Ask about food allergies and accessibility needs.

☐ Set aside the phone during the meal.

☐ Prepare one question, then let the conversation unfold.

☐ Follow up afterward with gratitude.

Our Advent Table Plan

A page to print and complete together

Our weekly meal day and time

_____

_____

People we hope to invite

_____

_____

A simple meal we can share

_____

_____

A neighbor or household we want to care for

_____

_____

One screen-free rhythm we will practice

_____

_____

Someone we want to remember in prayer

_____

_____

Our four weekly practices

Hope: _____

Peace: _____

Joy: _____

Love: _____

Christmas Table Blessing

A closing prayer for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

Read Luke 2:1–20 or John 1:1–14 before the meal. Give each person an opportunity to name one gift of the season. Then pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, you entered our world and shared our human life. Thank you for coming close to us in love. As we gather at this table, help us remember those who cannot be here and those who have no table to join. Give us grateful hearts for the food before us and generous hands for the people around us. May the welcome we offer point toward the welcome we have received from you. Amen.

After Advent

Choose one practice to carry into the new year. You might share a weekly screen-free meal, invite someone new once a month, or begin a simple tradition of prayer before dinner.

A final question

Who might find a place at your table in the coming year?

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