



ADVENT

A LIGHT HAS DAWNED



Chilliwack Campus
Agassiz Campus
Promontory Campus
Lake Errock Campus
Harrison Ministry Centre

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ADVENT

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INTRODUCTION

— ADVENT GUIDE —

Gifts are exchanged on Christmas Day. Advent itself is a gift. It is a season of expectancy. A swelling anticipation of the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Behold, I bring you good news of great joy. Luke 2:10

Jesus came to bring us joy. *"I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"* (John 15:11). Advent ushers in our celebration of the incarnation. The coming of Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Messiah (saviour/deliverer) to overcome the two things we can't: sin and death. To deliver us safe and secure to God.

Our hope is that **Advent** will be a sweet season for you and yours. **A season full of celebration of which Jesus – our King who has come – is the pinnacle.**

As December dawns, most families are busy putting Christmas programs and parties on the calendar, making holiday travel plans, and purchasing Christmas gifts. Those are all wonderful things, but if your family is anything like mine, these good things can squeeze out the best thing – nurturing a longing in our hearts and our homes for a fresh sense of wonder that God has come to us in Jesus. If we do not set aside time to focus together on what God's Word tells us about the promise of Christ, on Christmas morning we can find ourselves surrounded by mounds of torn gift wrap, our laps full of presents, but with hearts that are empty and unprepared. – Nancy Guthrie

Let every heart prepare Him room this Advent season.

USING THE ADVENT GUIDE

— HOW TO —

We have created the *Advent Guide* as an easy to use resource to *help you anticipate the coming of Christ this Christmas.*

The guide consists of a **weekly devotional** along with a companion **family devotional**.

At the bottom of the weekly devotional you will find some verses listed as supplemental reading. These additional Scripture passages can be read throughout the week.

The family devotional has been created with young children in mind and includes readings from children's bibles, songs, and discussion questions. Parents, the devotionals *may or may not* be tailored just right for your family so we encourage you to read through it ahead of time and craft questions and activities that will serve your family best.

We hope that between the weekly and family devotional, this will be a trusty companion in helping you make the most of the advent season. ***We supply the guide, you supply an engage heart.***

May we discover a fresh hope, joy, peace, love, and light found of Christ as we spend time in the Word, discussion, and prayer in anticipation of His coming. Jesus has come and will come again. Come, Lord Jesus.

Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS

A vintage-style Christmas card with a dark green background. The word "CHRISTMAS" is written in a large, white, serif font with a gold outline, slanted slightly upwards. Behind the letters is a large, gold sunburst or starburst graphic. The background is a dark green with a fine, repeating pattern of small white and gold floral or geometric motifs.

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

— SPREADING THE LOVE OF JESUS —

The time of year that Canadians are most open to Jesus, the gospel, and the church, is *Christmas*. Here are a number of ideas to inspire you to spread the love of Jesus to those around you this advent season.

Please take up-to-date COVID-19 restrictions into consideration when considering creative ways to bless others this Christmas season.

Adopt a Family

Is there a family that could benefit from a food hamper and turkey dinner this Christmas? Whether on your own, as a family, or a Life Group, this is a practical way to show a family the love of Christ at Christmas.

Advent Candle Lighting

The lighting of advent candles is a wonderful way to gather the family and anticipate the incarnation together each week. We will be incorporating this into our online services this year for you to participate with us. Utilize the sections of this guide (hope, love, joy, peace), followed by a time of prayer – thanking God for sending His Son Jesus – and lighting of the candle.

Backpacks of Hope

Fill a backpack...or two...or four to support children and youth in need in our campus communities. Backpacks are provided through a drive-thru pickup at our Chilliwack Campus on Nov 21st (10am - 2pm) and our Agassiz Campus on Nov 21th (10am - 12pm) and available at our in-person services. Bags to be brought back stocked up with items on the list by Dec 13th. You can also give online towards Backpacks of Hope by selecting that line on the giving page.

Visit Central365.org/BackpacksOfHope for more information.

Bless Essential Workers

Bless grocery store staff, healthcare providers, teachers, and others who have been working so selflessly, in creative way for all of their hard work this past year. For example, make *Thank You* banners and pick up boxes of donuts for your local grocery store employees or hospital staff.

Bless Those Experiencing Hardship this Year

Are there individuals and families that you know who have been hit harder than most during the pandemic? Get creative in finding ways to brighten an especially hard and dark Christmas with the light of Christ. Offer to cover some of the items on their Christmas lists, provide a meal over the holidays, pay a bill, or drop off a card with a message of hope and a generous gift inside.

Carolling

Gather a group of singers together and go sing carols *outside* seniors homes, the hospital, or through your neighbourhood this Christmas season.

Central Christmas Comedy Night

Central Community Church would like to invite you and your families to laugh your way into the Christmas season by joining us online for a "Central Christmas Comedy Special" on Dec 16th @ 7.00pm (online) with special guest: Matt Falk. More information can be found at central365.org.

Christmas Baking

Get out the red and green sprinkles and do some Christmas baking. Deliver them to your neighbours. They'll be glad to have you in the neighbourhood and it will give you opportunity to bless and get to know them more.

Christmas Eve Services

These 45-minute services will be filled with carols, candlelight, a special video featuring our children's ministry, and a brief Christmas message. This year, our Christmas Eve Service will also be offered online. Most people get involved in church because of being invited by a friend. Many people are more open than ever at Christmas. Invite them to register for one of our in-person services with you or send them the link to the online service.

Chilliwack: 3.30pm, 4.45pm & 6.00pm (2.15 if needed)

Promontory*: 3.30pm, 4.45pm (Promontory Only), 6pm (2.15 if needed)

Agassiz: 3.00pm & 6.00pm

Lake Errock: 4.30pm

**Note: Promontory Campus meeting in the Slesse Room (Gym) at the Chilliwack Campus.*

Please note: There will be no In-Person Services on Sat/Sun 26th & 27th. Our Online Service will be available on Sunday, December 27th.

Give Christmas Gifts to Your Service Providers

Bless your mail carrier, sanitation worker, doctor, teacher, etc. with a Christmas gift.

Host a Block Party

Breaking out the fire pit, offering some individually wrapped baked goods, hot beverages, and a few games for the kids is all it takes to gather the neighbourhood to enjoy the season together and build relationship.

Shovel Snow

If it snows over the holidays, skip the gym and shovel your neighbours' driveways and sidewalks.

**Pray, consider, plan, and practice one or multiple things that bless those around you this Christmas. Consider - in light of what Christ has done for you - what you, your family, and your Life Group can do to shine His light upon others.*

HOPE



THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

— HOPE —

²The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
 on them has light shone.
³You have multiplied the nation;
 you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
⁴For the yoke of his burden,
 and the staff for his shoulder,
 the rod of his oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.
⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle
tumult
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace
 there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:2-7

Reflection

Advent begins with the expectant hope of the prophets of old. An eager longing for the One who would break into the darkness with His life-giving light. An anticipation of a King like no other. Whose kingdom is not temporal but eternal. Whose attributes are divine: Wonderful Counsellor (Isa. 28:29); Mighty God (Deut. 10:17); Everlasting Father (Ps. 103:13); Prince of Peace (Eph. 2:14). We begin this season by *slowing down* and *waiting with expectancy* for Jesus, our hope.

As God's people long ago waited for their rescuer to come, we recognize our need of rescue in our lives: from the sin that dwells *within* our own hearts and *without*, in this world that is also in desperate need of redemption.

We await His return so that we can one day walk with God in an eternal garden where we will be unafraid and fully known. We wait.

But because of Jesus we wait with hope!

Response

- What has distracted me from fixing my gaze on Jesus at Christmas time in the past?
- What have I put my hope in other than Jesus?
- The fact that Jesus came to save me should produce a sense of wonder! What would renew that in me?

Candle: Lighting of the Candle of Hope

Also known as the Prophecy Candle, it marks the start of the Advent season—the anticipation of Christmas—and recalls those who first spoke the promise of Christ's coming.

Carol: Song of the Season

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Prayer

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Dear Lord Jesus, Advent has just begun, and I am praying it will be a season marked more by hush than rush. If I'm going to be busy with anything, may it be with quieting my heart, focusing my gaze, and setting my affection on things above—especially *on you*—the Author and Perfecter of my faith; the source and Lord of my salvation; the fountain and fullness of all grace.

Grant me the same intensity and care the prophets invested in searching out the promises of your coming. May old Scriptures come alive in profoundly new ways during this Advent season. Jesus, show me more of yourself throughout the Bible. Humble and gladden my heart with the realization that the prophets were serving me—even me—when they spoke of your coming, your sufferings, and the glories that would follow.

And if angels were on tiptoes with joy as they pondered your coming, so renew my awe and joy as well. I will never cease giving you thanks for those you sent into my life to preach the gospel to me by the power of the Holy Spirit. I will ever praise and worship you, Lord Jesus, for granting me the knowledge of my need and a love for yourself. Apart from the new birth, I would forever be a prisoner to my old life. O come, O come, Immanuel, and bring even greater freedom to my heart and glory to yourself. I pray, in the wonders of your love and the trustworthiness of your name. Amen.

CHRIST THE WORD

My Father,

In a world of created changeable things,
Christ and his Word alone remain unshaken.

O to forsake all creatures,
to rest as a stone on him the foundation
to abide in him, be borne up by him!

For all my mercies come through Christ,
who has designed, purchased, promised,
effected them.

How sweet it is to be near him, the Lamb,
filled with the holy affections!

When I sin against thee I cross thy will, love, life,
and have no comforter, no creature, to go to.

My sin is not so much this or that particular evil,
but my continual separation, disunion,
distance from thee,
and having a loose spirit towards thee.

But thou hast given me a present, Jesus thy Son,
as Mediator between thyself and my soul,
as middle-man who in a pit
holds both him below and him above,
for only he can span the chasm breached by sin,
and satisfy divine justice.

May I always lay hold upon this Mediator,
as a realized object of faith,
and alone worthy by his love to bridge the gulf.

Let me know that he is dear to me by his Word;

I am one with him by the Word on his part,
and by faith on mine;

If I oppose the Word I oppose my Lord
when he is most near;

If I receive the Word I receive my Lord
wherein he is nigh;

O thou who hast the hearts of all men
in thine hand,
form my heart according to the Word,
according to the image of thy Son,

So shall Christ the Word, and his Word,
be my strength and comfort

The Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers and Devotions

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

— WEEK ONE —

Getting Started

Set a time this week for a special family gathering to celebrate the first week of Advent.

[You will need: 5 candles, lighter, Bible, music player. Find the song “O Come O Come Emmanuel” by Rain for Roots on Apple Music or Spotify]

Lighting the Advent Candle

Select one child from your family to light the first candle marking the first week of Advent.

Song and Praise

Sing, listen or read, “**O Come O Come Emmanuel**”. You can either sing together using instruments or play the song from a music player.

*O Come, O come, Emmanuel
O Come, O come, Emmanuel
O Come, O come, Emmanuel
O Come, O come, Emmanuel*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

*O come, Thou Dayspring, 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, O Israel*

Devotional Readings

Select one person to read the following passages aloud.

Long before Jesus was born, some of God's prophets told people that Jesus would come. Isaiah the prophet lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born on earth. Isaiah's message was about who Jesus' mother would be and who Jesus would be. Isaiah said, *"The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel"*. The name Immanuel means *"God with us"*. Some time later, Isaiah talked about Jesus again. He said, *"A child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders . He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6). All of these names tell us who Jesus is and the great things He would do. Jesus was coming to earth to help people and protect people. Jesus would be a king who cares about His people, and He would bring peace to the whole world.

"It's All About Jesus Storybook Bible"

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

Reflection

- What do all of the prophecies in the Old Testament show about God?
- Do they help you trust him more?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for planning long, long ago to send your Son to save us from sin. You even planned what little town he would be born in. Thank you that you have good plans for each of your children. In Jesus name, Amen.

PEACE

THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

— PEACE —

¹*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

²*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.*

³*A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for
our God.*

Isaiah 40:1-3

Reflection

Whether it's putting up decorations, attending Christmas parties, buying and wrapping presents, shopping for, cooking, and serving Christmas dinner, or any of the other thousand to-do's at Christmas time, the season requires a lot of preparation.

As *Joy To The World* reminds us, "let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing," the most significant preparation of all at Christmas is that of preparing our hearts for our coming King. Jesus broke into human history to rescue fallen humanity. And we prepare to celebrate that astounding fact this Christmas.

Response

- What is the most stressful part of the Christmas season?
- What is one of your favourite parts about the Christmas season?
- What would it look like for you to prepare room in your heart for Jesus this Christmas?

Candle: Lighting of the Candle of Preparation

Also known as the Bethlehem Candle, it signifies preparing for the arrival of Jesus.

Carol: Song of the Season

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Prayer

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:7)

Dear Lord Jesus, your righteousness is our surety and your sovereignty is our sanity. Hallelujah, many times over! How could we have possibly imagined that your humble Advent entrance through a stable would lead to the stabilization of the universe and that your cradle would eventually rock our placeless world?

Truly, there's only one government and one peace sufficient to meet the needs of our sinful hearts and broken world. You are already installed as "the ruler of kings on earth" (Rev. 1:5) and of everything else. King David's throne has become a throne of grace, from which you are actively ruling the world with your truth and grace. Joy to the world, indeed!

Truly, you are zealously working all things together after the counsel of your will. You—the Lamb of God, the Lord of Lords, and the Lamp of the New Jerusalem—are working in all things, for your glory and for our good. No one and nothing can derail, deter, or distract you from bringing to completion your good work of redemption and restoration.

You don't promise to do all things easy, but you are always doing all things well. Forgive me when I get impatient with your timing, don't enjoy all your providences, and second-guess your involvement. I've lived long enough to know you do some of your "best work" when I am actually feeling the absence of your presence.

As the gospel of your kingdom continues its transforming work in my life, may it advance through my life. Give me more joy than I've ever had before in loving and serving people. Intensify my hope in the day you will return and finish making all things new. I pray in your mighty and merciful name. Amen.

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

— WEEK TWO —

Getting Started

Set a time this week for a special family gathering to celebrate the second week of Advent.

[You will need: 5 candles, lighter, Bible, music player. Find the song “*Unto Us A Child Is Born*” by Randall Goodgame Presents: *Sing the Bible Family Christmas* on Apple Music or Spotify]

Lighting the Advent Candle

Select one child from your family to light the first and second candle marking the second week of Advent.

Song and Praise

Sing, listen or read to the, “**Unto Us A Child Is Born**” by Randal Goodgame. You can either sing together using instruments or play the song from a music player.

*Unto us a child is born, Unto us a son is given;
And the Government shall rest upon his shoulders,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.*

Devotional Readings

Select a family member or two to read the following:

When someone important is being introduced, the announcer usually says, "Mr. So-And-So-Founder of this Extra-Important Company!" or "Miss Something Else, Nobel-Prize-Winning Inventor of this Brilliant Thing!". Do you know how God likes to be introduced? "His name is the Lord...Father to the fatherless, defender of widows." (Psalm 68:4-5) Our Almighty God who sifted stars through his fingers, stands not with kings and princes, but with the weak, the powerless, the poor. Because the people no one else thinks are important have a special place in God's heart. He hears their cries He fights for them and defends them. And one night long ago, in Bethlehem, he stepped out of heaven and became one of them."

"Thoughts to Make your Heart Sing" by Sally Lloyd Jones

Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:20-21

Reflection

- What makes Jesus birth so special?
- How did Jesus birth bring peace on earth?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for using your Mighty power to become human. Thank you for all the great things that you stepped out of heaven to become one of us and to save and defend us. In Jesus name, Amen!

JOY

THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

— JOY —

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with
whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2:8-20

Reflection

Shepherds were nobodies. But to God they were somebodies. When Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world was born, angels were sent to notify shepherds tending sheep in the fields so that they could be a part of the celebration.

They did what any person who truly encounters Jesus would do: they spend time with Jesus, then they go make Him known, and glorify and praise God for all that He has done for them.

We are invited to respond precisely the same way this Advent season. Jesus has come and is coming again. This is incredible news! News to make known to others. God-glorifying news.

Response

- What are the things that bring joy to your life?
- What's something that you could do to bring joy to someone else?
- *Emmanuel* is a name for Jesus that means, God with us.
- How does that beautiful name and simple truth produce joy in us rather than fear?

Candle: Lighting of the Candle of Joy

Also known as the Shepherd's Candle, it signifies a shift from a season of repentance towards a time of celebration. It recalls those who joyfully shared the good news of the birth of Christ with others.

Carol: Song of the Season

Joy To The World

Prayer

Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. (Isaiah 65:17-19)

Dear heavenly Father, I love meditating through the servant songs of Isaiah during Advent, because they remind me that the birth of Jesus wasn't a "merry little" event. Christmas represents the fulfillment of promises of immeasurable, irrepressible, indescribable proportions and delight. I praise you that every Christmas is colossal—irrespective of the economy or our discretionary spending.

With the first coming of Jesus, you inaugurated your plan to create a new heaven and new earth from the stuff of this very broken world—a new creation world in which you will find great delight. Though it will take the second Advent of Jesus, your kingdom has come, and it will come in fullness. I praise you for your generosity, tenacity, and felicity in doing all that you do, mighty and merciful Father.

You've promised to redeem a people from every race, tribe, tongue, and people group to populate that eternal world of peace and joy—a people in whom you find great delight and over whom you will rejoice forever. The gospel really is that big and that good. You've used stars, sand, and dust to describe the mathematics of your mercy. Free me from my unbelief, grace-full and loving Father.

Because you have sent Jesus to us and for us, we live with the blessed assurance that all of our sins have been wiped away and the glorious hope that all of our tears, likewise, will one day be wiped away. Until that day, free us to engage in your commitment to make all things new, wherever you have placed us and wherever you might send us. I pray with great joy and freshly fuelled hope, in Jesus' exalted name. Amen.

Supplemental Reading

- Nehemiah 8:9-12
- Isaiah 9:3-6
- Isaiah 12:1-6
- Luke 1:46-80
- Romans 15:8-13
- James 1:2-4

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

— WEEK THREE —

Getting Started

Set a time this week for a special family gathering to celebrate the third week of Advent.

[You will need: 5 candles, lighter, Bible, and a music player.

Find the song “Every Bell On Earth Will Ring” by The Oh Hellos on Apple Music or Spotify.]

Lighting the Advent Candle

Select one child from your family to light the candles 1,2 and 3 marking the third week of Advent.

Song and Praise

Sing, listen or read to the, “**Every Bell On Earth Will Ring**”. You can either sing together using instruments or play the song from a music player.

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing!*

*He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
and wonders of His love!*

*Every bell on earth shall ring, on Christmas Day in the morning!
Every soul on earth will sing, on Christmas Day in the morning!*

*Joy to the world! the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ!
While fields and floods
and hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy!*

*O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him! Christ the Lord!*

Devotional Readings

Select a different person to read each passage below

One day, God sent an angel named Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. The angel went to visit a young virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendent of King David. The angel said to Mary, "Rejoice! You have found favour with God. He is with you." Mary was very afraid and puzzled. Why would God find favour with her? She had done nothing special. The angel told Mary not to be afraid. He told Mary that she was going to have a very special and unique baby, and they would call the baby Jesus, which means "the Lord saves". The angel explained that the baby would be great - He would be God's Son... Mary replied, "I belong to God. May everything happen just as you said."... Mary was so happy, she praised God with a song about how Great God is."

"It's All About Jesus Storybook Bible"

In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!"

Luke 1:39-45

Reflection

- How did Mary respond to what God had said?
- What great things has God done for you?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for using your Mighty power to become human. Thank you for all the great things that Jesus has done for us! Please forgive our sins and fill us with your spirit. In Jesus name, Amen!

LOVE

THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

— LOVE —

For God So Loved the World

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

John 3:16-20

Reflection

God loved the world so much, in it's state of brokenness and depravity, in it's idolatry and rebellion, that He sent His Son Jesus to live the life we couldn't, die the death we deserve, so that we could have abundant and eternal life. There is no greater love on the planet than this. And Christmas marks the time when Jesus broke into the mess, when eternal, holy God stooped to save.

Response

- What are some of the most loving things someone has done for you?
- What comes to mind when you consider the love of Christ?
- How is the love of Christ being exhibited to others through your life?

Candle: Lighting of the Candle of Love

Also known as the Angels' Candle, it reminds us of the love fulfilled in Christ's first coming and our hope-filled anticipation of His second coming.

Carol: Song of the Season

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Prayer

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, so the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:34-38)

Dear heavenly Father, the one thing I share in common with Mary is incredulity over the mind-boggling, heart-encouraging promises you have made in connection with the birth of Jesus. I too say, "How will this be?" And I hear you answer back, from the Scriptures and the history of redemption, "Nothing is impossible with God."

Everything you've promised, with regard to Jesus, will come to pass, including the redeeming of Jesus' bride from every nation, tribe, people, and language and the renewal of this broken world into the new heaven and new earth. But, hallelujah, it also includes your plans for each of your children. Just as surely as you placed the life of Jesus in Mary, you have done the same for us. Though in an entirely different way than Mary, we too are "pregnant with glory" (See Rom. 8:18-27).

One day I will love perfectly, with the kindness and compassion of Jesus. I will only think and see with the wisdom and eyes of heaven. I will fully embrace your will as my favourite bread and utter delight.

One day I will never be selfish, petty, or defensive again. I will never get my feelings hurt, insist on being right, or demand more. I will think of others more highly and more often than myself. I won't keep a record of anybody's wrongs and will only and forever be an encourager. I will be free, so very free and whole.

To all of these promises, I find myself saying, "How will this be, since I'm still so very much not like Jesus?" And you answer back so grace-fully, "Things impossible with man are possible with God." To which I say and pray, "May it be as you have promised in the gospel, holy and faithful Father. I am yours and your servant." I pray in Jesus' exalted name. Amen.

Supplemental Reading

- Luke 2:1-21
- John 15:1-17
- Romans 5:6-11
- Romans 8:18-25
- Romans 8:26-39
- Galatians 2:15-21

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

— WEEK FOUR —

Getting Started

Set a time this week for a special family gathering to celebrate week four of Advent.

[You will need: 5 candles, lighter, Bible, and a music player. Find the song “*Away In A Manger*” by *Sufjan Stevens* on Apple Music or Spotify.]

Lighting the Advent Candle

Select one child from your family to light the candles 1, 2, 3 and 4 marking the fourth week of Advent.

Song and Praise

Sing or Listen to “**Away In A Manger**”. You can either sing together using instruments or play the song from a music player.

Devotional Readings

Nine Months after the angel's visit to Mary, the Son of God was born in a humble stable in Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem. All of heaven held its breath, waiting as an angel announced Christ's birth to shepherds guarding their sheep that special night. After the announcement, the angels exploded in a chorus of joy that rang out over glory-lit hillside near Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth.” The shepherds were dumbfounded. One minute they were sleepily watching their sheep, and the next they were watching a concert from heaven! What could this all mean? They could barely take in the news that the promised saviour had been born, but they had to go see for themselves. So, leaving their sheep, they hurried to the manger where their newborn Savior lay.

“The Ology: Ancient Truths Ever New”

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!

Luke 2:8-14

Reflection

- If you could give Jesus a gift, what would it be?
- How can you show love to your family this Christmas?
- What about love for the poor?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your love on Christmas. We love you so much and worship you because you are worthy. In Jesus name, amen!

The word "LIGHT" is rendered in a bold, white, serif font with a slight 3D effect. It is centered on a dark, textured background. Behind the letters, there is a stylized sun with a dark circular center and numerous thin, white rays radiating outwards, creating a bright, glowing effect.

LIGHT

CHRISTMAS EVE

— THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD —

The Word Became Flesh

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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. ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 1:1-18

Reflection

The prologue of John's Gospel is like the opening movement of a grand symphony. It is meant to grab our attention and draw us into the story—the story of all stories. The apostle sets the stage for the presentation of the gospel by highlighting the main plotline and central themes of the entire Bible—creation (vv. 1-4), the fall (v. 5), and redemption (vv. 9-13), all of which point to the person and culminating work of Jesus (vv. 23, 29).

Who is Jesus? This is John's main question and the quest of discovery that he bids us enter. John's Gospel helps us understand how to look for Jesus in Moses, the Prophets, and all the Scriptures. He wants us to see how Jesus is the "Yes!" and "Amen!" to every promise God has made (2 Cor. 1:20) throughout the history of redemption.

ESV GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION BIBLE

Response

- In what ways is Jesus the light of humanity and our light?
- How has Jesus brought light into your life (vv. 4, 9)?
- What must you do to receive the salvation of Jesus (v.12)?
- God sent His Son Jesus as light into darkness, the pinnacle of His redemptive story, to extend grace upon grace, by making Himself known through His Son. How will you respond to such loving mercy this Christmas?

Candle: Lighting of the Christ Candle

This candle represents our adoration and praise to God for sending His Son Jesus into the world, *light of the world* and *joy to the world*.

Carol: Song of the Season

O Holy Night

Prayer

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:1-7)

Dear Lord Jesus, whether or not you entered our world anywhere close to our December 25 is irrelevant. That you were born—that you actually came from eternity into time and space, not as a metaphor or myth, fable or tale, but as our Saviour—that's what matters.

We sing to you on this day with all the humility and felicity we can muster, "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." We praise, bless, and adore you.

Luke took great care to detail the history of your birth, but it's the quietness of your birth that is noteworthy. Any other king would've come with great fanfare and a royal entourage. But you came into our world in utter stillness and profound weakness. "No room in the inn" wasn't an insult to you; it was your choice, your plan, the way of the gospel.

For you didn't consider your equality with God something to be protected or hoarded. Rather, you made yourself "nothing," becoming one of us—tabernacling among us as God in the flesh, the Servant of the Lord. And with measureless humility and joy, you died in our place upon the cross.

"Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see! Hail, the incarnate deity! Pleased, as man, with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel!" "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Hallelujah, so many times over!

The Gift of Gifts

*O Source of all good,
What shall I render to thee for the gift of gifts, thine own dear
Son, begotten, not created, my Redeemer, proxy, surety,
substitute, his self-emptying incomprehensible, his infinity of love
beyond the heart's grasp.
Herein is wonder of wonders:
he came below to raise me above,
was born like me that I might become like him.*

*Herein is love;
when I cannot rise to him he draws near on wings of grace,
to raise me to himself.
Herein is power;
when Deity and humanity were infinitely apart
he united them in indissoluble unity,
the uncreated and the created.*

*Herein is wisdom;
when I was undone, with no will to return to him,
and no intellect to devise recovery,
he came, God-incarnate, to save me to the uttermost,
as man to die my death,
to shed satisfying blood on my behalf,
to work out a perfect righteousness for me.*

*O God, take me in spirit to the watchful shepherds,
and enlarge my mind;
let me hear good tidings of great joy,
and hearing, believing, rejoice, praise, adore
my conscience bathed in an ocean of repose,
my eyes uplifted to a reconciled Father;
place me with ox, ass, camel, goat,
to look with them upon my Redeemer's face,
and in him account myself delivered from sin;
let me with Simeon clasp the new-born child to my heart,
embrace him with undying faith,
exulting that he is mine and I am his.
In him thou hast given me so much that heaven can give no
more.*

The Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers and Devotions

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

— CHRISTMAS EVE —

Getting Started

Set a time this week for a special family gathering to celebrate the final day of Advent.

[You will need: 5 candles, lighter, Bible, and a music player.

Find the song “*Silent Night*” by Randall Goodgame Presents: *Sing The Bible Family Christmas* or “*Silent Night, Holy Night*” by *The Oh Hellos* on Apple Music or Spotify.]

Lighting the Advent Candle

Select one child from your family to light all the candles.

Song and Praise

Sing or Listen to “**O Come all ye Faithful**”. You can either sing together using instruments or play the song from a music player.

Scripture Reading

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born. “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

***And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah:
Because out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”***

Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.

After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was –the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12 (NIRV)

Reflection

- What things do we do at Christmas time to celebrate and and have joy at Christ's birth?

List different Christmas traditions and discuss what they mean.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the greatest joy we can ever know. Help our hearts to rejoice in you, just as the angels in heaven do. Thank you for the awesome greatness of Christmas! In Jesus name, Amen.



The *gospel* is incredible news. It is the reality that Jesus came to bring you *hope, peace, joy, and love* that ultimately satisfies.

Turn to *Jesus*
– the light of the world –
this *Christmas!*

NOTES

— REFERENCES —

Family Devotional

It's All Bout Jesus Storybook Bible

Sally Lloyd Jones, "Thoughts To Make Your Heart Sing"

The Ology: Ancient Truths Ever New

Introduction Quote

Nancy Guthrie, "Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room: Daily Family Devotional for Advent"

Prayers

Scotty Smith, "Every Season Prayers: Gospel-Centered Prayers for the Whole of Life"

Poems

The Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers and Devotions



This resource was created by and for
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You are permitted to use and share this Study Guide,
as long as you do not change or add to it
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MISSION:

WE EXIST TO BE AUTHENTIC FOLLOWERS OF **JESUS** WHO LEAD OTHERS TO **FOLLOW HIM**.

VISION:

WE AIM TO SEE THE ENTIRE EASTERN FRASER VALLEY **TRANSFORMED** BY THE **GOSPEL** FOR THE **GLORY OF GOD** AND GOOD OF **ALL PEOPLE**.

VALUES:

CENTRED ON THE **GOSPEL**.
ROOTED IN THE **BIBLE**.
GATHERED IN **COMMUNITY**.
EMPOWERED BY THE **SPIRIT**.
EQUIPPED FOR **MINISTRY**.
SENT ON **MISSION**.



We have created the Advent Guide as an easy to use resource to help you anticipate the coming of Christ this Christmas. The guide consists of **a weekly devotional** with a companion **family devotional**.

Jesus has come and will come again.

Merry Christmas!