

# Advent

Advent is a time of holy expectation. Of preparation for the coming of the Christ child. Of waiting for Christ to come again. In fact, the word *advent* literally means *coming*. And so it is that for four Sundays before Christmas, we prepare our hearts for the season by recounting and remembering both the prophecies that foretold of Christ's coming and the gospel stories of his birth.

Traditionally, each week focuses on one of the different gifts that Jesus' arrival brought us: the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. We encourage you to connect with friends or family once a week for Advent suppers, or participate in these readings in your own homes, where you light the Advent candles, and focus your heart and mind's attention on the things that matter most this season.

As the light from your candles grows brighter each week, may it spark conversations and questions about the hope we have in Christ, the peace he has brought between us and God, the joy he has instilled in our hearts, and the tremendous love he has shown us.

May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with you!

Much of this devotional is based on Advent readings from Muscadine Press. Check them out at [muscadinepress.com](http://muscadinepress.com)!

# Joy

**SAY TOGETHER:** He's coming, He's coming.  
Jesus is coming! Let's make room.

**READ:** Jesus is the Joy of our Salvation. We light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, and joy of salvation he brought to a lost and broken world.

**ASK:** What is joy?

**EXPLAIN:** Joy is an alert awareness to what God is doing. It is the result of knowing God's hope and peace, resulting in an overwhelming gladness bubbling up in your soul, even in difficult circumstances.

**LIGHT** the first and second purple candles, and the pink candle of your wreath.

**READ & DISCUSS:** Isaiah 9:3-4 and Luke 2:8-14

**PRAY:** O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us salvation and restore our joy. We rejoice because he came to live with us and in us and through us. May the good news of great joy of Jesus' coming be ever on our lips. We love you. Amen.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** What brings you joy? What part of the Christmas story makes you most glad? What are some ways that we can bring joy to others this Christmas?

**FOR MORE REFLECTION:** Read the book of Ruth this week. Like Ruth and Naomi, may we be aware of God's providence in our lives, so that our joy may be complete.

# Hope

**SAY TOGETHER:** He's coming, He's coming.  
Jesus is coming! Let's make room.

**READ:** Jesus called himself the Light of the World. We light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope Jesus brought into a world filled with the darkness of sin.

**ASK:** What is hope?

**EXPLAIN:** Hope is looking forward to something wonderful. It's expecting something good to happen. It's light in the darkness.

**LIGHT** the first purple candle of your wreath.

**READ & DISCUSS** Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 1:18-25

**PRAY:** O Lord, our God, thank you for not leaving us in darkness but for sending your light into the world instead. Help us to shine your light in the dark and dreary corners of the world. May your light and love radiate from us and give hope where it seems that all hope is lost. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** What are some things you hope for? What are some ways we can give hope to others? What's so hopeful about Jesus coming into the world?

**FOR FURTHER READING:** Genesis 38:1-26. How does the story of Tamar remind us of the hope we have in Jesus? Praise God that he works to bring hope even in the midst of brokenness, disobedience and deception!

# Love

**SAY TOGETHER:** He's coming, He's coming.  
Jesus is coming! Let's make room.

**READ:** Jesus is the demonstration of God's love. We light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, joy of salvation, and overwhelming love he brought to us.

**ASK:** What is love?

**EXPLAIN:** Love is when you care more about others than yourself. It's sacrifice. The Bible tells us that God is love.

**LIGHT** the purple and pink candles of your wreath.

**READ & DISCUSS:** John 3:16-17 and Romans 5:8

**PRAY:** O Lord, our God, thank you for your unfailing, steadfast love. Thank you for loving us enough to die for us. Help us to love you with our whole hearts. Enable us to love our neighbors with your great love. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you.  
Amen.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** Do you love anyone enough to die for them? What are some ways we can show God's love to one another? To our neighbors? To our friends?

**FOR MORE REFLECTION:** 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25. Where is love in this story? We give thanks that Jesus came to redeem people caught in relationships of unequal power and restore them to the true love and freedom offered by God.

# Peace

**SAY TOGETHER:** He's coming, He's coming.  
Jesus is coming! Let's make room.

**READ:** Jesus is the Prince of Peace. We light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope and promise of peace he brought to a world ravaged by sin.

**ASK:** What is peace?

**EXPLAIN:** Peace is the end of hostility and fighting. It's when all is as it should be. It's harmony. It's rightness and wholeness.

**LIGHT** the first and second purple candles of your wreath.

**READ & DISCUSS** Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-7

**PRAY:** O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to make everything right between us. We're grateful for the peace that comes through knowing Him. Help us to be champions of your peace. May we be peacemakers in a world torn by sin and strife. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** Why is it so hard to "keep the peace?" How does knowing that Jesus came to bring peace between us and God make you feel? What are some ways that we can be peacemakers?

**FOR MORE REFLECTION:** Joshua 2:1-21. How does this story of Rahab remind us of the peace we have in Jesus? Like Rahab, may we choose to walk in the way of God's peace.

# Adore

**SAY TOGETHER:** Jesus has come! God's love is for everyone!

**READ:** Jesus is the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace, the Joy of our Salvation, and the demonstration of God's love. That is why we celebrate his coming at Christmas and offer him our deepest adoration.

**ASK:** What does it mean to adore something?

**EXPLAIN:** To adore is to give honor and worship. It's to love deeply. It's to cherish above all else.

**LIGHT** all five candles of your wreath.

**READ & DISCUSS:** Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 2:1-12

**PRAY:** O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus. He is a gift beyond our wildest imagination. Through him we have light and life, hope and peace, joy and love. We're so grateful, Lord, for your great love. May we carry your hope, peace, joy, and love with us as we work and wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** How can we show Jesus how much we adore Him? What are some ways we can share the "Christmas spirit" all year long?

**FOR MORE REFLECTION:** Luke 1:26-38. Do our souls glorify the Lord and rejoice in God our Savior like Mary did? May we celebrate the miracle of Christmas today and every day!