

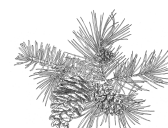


Introduction to Advent

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, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 PETER 1:8-13

The King is coming. Jesus Christ has come and will come again. This is the hope of the Church whom He purchased with His blood. Jesus' coming is the eager expectation and desire of His people. It is our joy because He is our treasure and greatest good. This is the theme of "Advent," formed from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival." It's the traditional celebration of the first advent of Jesus in humility and the anxious awaiting of His second advent in glory. The season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting.



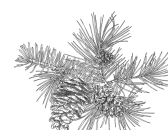


History and Traditions

The Advent season officially begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues until Christmas Eve or Day. There are a variety of ways to celebrate the Advent season, depending on tradition and background. Many people use an Advent calendar, typically made up of 24 “windows” containing Scriptures, stories, poems or gifts, to count down the days until Christmas. As each window is opened and the final day draws closer, expectation increases. This reminds us of the hopeful yet anxious waiting God’s people experienced as they longed for the promised Savior to come.

Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the Light of the World (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9; 8:12). Each week a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The last candle, called the Christ Candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus’ first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the gospel.

Regardless of the tradition, Advent is a significant time in the life of the church. It’s an opportunity for believers to remember God’s promise to send One who would overcome sin and death forever. God promised a Savior, and He kept that promise perfectly.



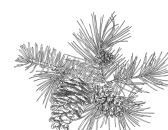


Using the Guide

This guide contains five weeks of material, with both a study to complete on your own as well as a plan to help families talk about the Advent narrative together. The family portions are designed to work for families of all shapes and sizes and do not require extensive preparation. Either portion of the guide can also be used to facilitate discussion with friends, roommates or other communities you are involved in.

The Advent study walks through the narrative of Jesus' birth. It begins in the Garden with God's promise of a Savior and ends with an eager anticipation of Jesus' promised return. In the middle, God shows His unmistakable faithfulness in sending the promised Rescuer. We see His love for the lowly and outcast as He proclaims the news of His Son to the shepherds. We marvel at His heart to see all nations come and worship His Son through the Magi's journey.

Even if you know the Advent narrative well, don't rush past what God has for you in this season. For many, this may be the first time to consider all that God is saying through the birth of His Son. For others, it will be an opportunity to rediscover the way God intimately works in the details of life for His glory and the good of man. For all of us, may this season be one marked by hope, expectation, remembrance and worship. The King has come and is coming! There is much to celebrate.



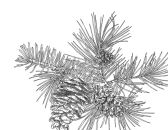


A Note For Families

Advent is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the birth of Jesus. But especially for families, this time of year can be filled to the brim with activities and obligations. Before the calendar begins to overflow, set aside a few minutes to consider what you want this season to be for your family. Then make a plan so that a time intended to remember and celebrate doesn't get swallowed up by lesser things.

To help toward that end, I have provided a family portion each week that will help you create intentional time to talk about Jesus. If you choose to use the Advent wreath as the guide suggests, put it in a special, visible place in the house to serve as a reminder of Jesus' coming. There is also a song each week for your family to sing or listen to together. These songs are available on my Advent playlist posted to Spotify.

I wrote the family portions of the guide with preschool and elementary-aged children in mind. For those in the Youth Group or adults doing it alone, consider working through the "Personal Study" section in place of reading the family commentary, and then come together to talk about what you learned with your family or friends.





Playlists

In both the “Personal Study” and “Family Discipleship Time” sections, you’ll find suggested songs to listen to every week. These songs are available on my Advent playlist posted to Spotify (matt caporale) <https://open.spotify.com/user/mcap2175/playlist/2Nsbzd2ToqMkiTpWgYTMVE>
I hope and pray these songs encourage you and your family throughout the season.

