

Advent

2021



For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

LUKE 2.11



The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word for “coming.” It’s a season where we prepare for the arrival of Jesus. We invite you and those in your home to engage in this ancient practice of preparing our hearts to both celebrate our Lord’s first coming and to grow in hope in his coming again. With all the noise and clutter this time of year, we want to take one evening a week to quiet our hearts, light candles, sing, and pray.

If you have little kids, we’ve created special, more interactive devotionals to help you participate as a whole family in the Christmas story.

Our prayer as we observe Advent is that Jesus will rise above the busyness of Christmastime as we proclaim to one another, “Good news of great joy for all people!”

You are loved and

Merry Christmas!

Read the Introduction on page three.

Light the first candle.

READER #1 (Adult): Do you know what one of the best and most wonderful things about our God is? It's that he wants to be with us! There are a lot of people in the world who think that God doesn't want to be around us. They think God is kind of a grumpy old man who lives up in the sky and who is always angry with his kids (that's you and me). But that's not who God is at all! The Bible tells us that God wanted to be with you and me so much that he made it possible. He came to earth to live with us and look like us and be like us.

READER #2 (Child): God had lived forever and ever, and he didn't have a body or fingers or hair. But then, one night, a miracle happened. A little baby boy was born with baby skin and soft baby hair, and tiny baby fingers and toes. And that little guy was God.

READER #3 (Adult): Don't worry if you have a hard time understanding how it's possible. Even grown-ups can't totally understand it. But it's true! God came to live with us. He didn't come in a rocket ship. He didn't appear in a bolt of lightning or shoot out of a volcano and land on earth. He came into the world the same way you did—through his mommy.

We're going to read part of a story this week where a young girl hears the news about this baby coming. To her, it seems impossible—like making a tower out of water. But God told her that he was going to make it possible.

READ: Jesus Calling Bible Storybook, The New Testament Intro and "Mary Meets An Angel" pp. 139-141



OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Give your kids a cup of water and ask them to build a tower out of only the water in the cup. It's impossible! Then, pull out a tray of ice cubes and ask them to build a tower out of the ice cubes. God can do even more impossible things than that!

READER #4 (Adult): What is something in your life right now that feels impossible? Do you think it would be impossible for God? How could he help you with it?

SING TOGETHER: “Away in a Manger” and/or “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

Special note for Kids’ Devotional Songs: You might find it easier, depending on the age of your kids, to sing the same song each week, such as “Away in a Manger.” Young children often don’t know many Christmas songs because the words can be difficult. Each week, the devotional recommends one or two songs to sing as a family. These are just recommendations. Feel free to sing whatever songs your kids know or just focus on singing one song throughout the season.

Away In A Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

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 appears
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

PRAYER: Thank you, God, that you are not a grumpy old man who stays away. Thank you that you are so full of love for us, and you wanted to be with us so much that you made it possible. There are still a lot of things in life that feel impossible, though. We can’t wait for the day when Jesus comes again as a King. Help our hearts to trust you as we wait for that day. We love you, God. Thank you for loving us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Begin by reading the Introduction on page three.

Light the first candle.

READER #1: Christmas is a celebration of light. It's a story about a world that sat in total darkness, until one day, a single light entered it. This light was God in the form of a baby. What good does one light do in a whole world of darkness? This candle we just lit couldn't possibly fill our home with light. How unimpressive a single flame is surrounded by consuming darkness. And yet, this single point of Light that God sent, this small and unimpressive baby born to peasants, would grow until all the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. In Advent, we remember both this moment when light entered our world, and we look forward to the future when at last the Shadow will pass away entirely, and the glory of God's presence will be our light forever. One of the reasons we light candles each week is that it reminds us of what this season is all about; a people sitting in the dark, waiting for the dawn. Christmas is that first sunrise (Luke 1.78), and it is meant to stir in us a deep longing for the final dawn.

READER #2: Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You 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.

⁴ For 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.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For 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.

⁷ 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.

SING TOGETHER: “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 Day-spring, 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

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

READER #3: By the time Gabriel visited Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of God's Son, very few people were waiting. Only a remnant of waiting people remained. These were the people that God chose to impart himself to. In our world, waiting is avoided at all costs. That's because waiting feels passive. But the waiting we see in Luke 1 and 2 isn't passive waiting. It's active.



Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it. A waiting person is someone who is present to the moment, who believes that *this* moment is *the* moment.

HENRI NOUWEN

QUESTIONS:

In what ways are you presently waiting?

How have you given up waiting or resigned hope?

What would it look like to begin to actively wait once more?

What would you have to believe about your Father and about yourself for that to happen?

READER #4: In Psalm 27, we read:

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!
Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

As you read these verses again, what do you feel and long for?

SING TOGETHER: “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”

Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee
Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation, joy of ev’ry longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring
By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone
By Thine all sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne

PRAY: *[Read this prayer slowly]*

Father, of all the seasons that seem hard to slow down and wait in, this season may be the most challenging. And so we come to you, Lord, and ask you to help us learn to be patient and wait for you to manifest yourself in specific moments. Give us hearts that wait on your faithfulness. Forgive us for always rushing to the next thing, rarely slowing down, and always worrying if we’re doing enough. Let us lean into the goodness of your heart towards us and the kindness of your plans for us. Thank you for coming to us. Thank you for the promise that you’re coming again for us. Make us ready through Jesus Christ to receive your kingdom. Amen.