



ADVENT READING GUIDE

[Reading Guide for Advent 2015]

ADVENT 2015: "Let Every Heart Prepare"

Advent means coming or arrival; especially the coming of that which is eagerly awaited. For the Christian church, the Advent (which is the four weeks leading up to Christmas) is a season of worshipful expectation and anticipation. Traditionally, Advent is divided up into four reflections (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love) which culminate into the Christ reflection on Christmas Eve. (As a church, we celebrate and observe these reflections through the **Advent Wreath** each year.) We invite you to use this reading plan to prepare your heart and seek the Messiah in the Scriptures this Advent season.

PREPARE:

Advent marks the beginning of the Christian calendar. And while much of the way our culture participates in the holiday season encourages us to "go" at a hurried pace, Advent is a time to "stop" and re-orient ourselves around what we desire to be true and important. This year during Advent, we invite you to consider how you might "prepare" yourself and your household for the coming of Jesus. The Bible is filled with stories of God's people "preparing" for the arrival of God's presence and action. As we look towards Christmas, may we look beyond the joy of sharing gifts, enjoying food, and celebrating with friends and family. May we also look towards and prepare for the arrival of Jesus in our lives and our world.

HOW TO USE THIS READING PLAN:

This plan provides you with 4 daily practices to help you prepare for the coming of Jesus. Each week, the daily practices will remain the same but the specific invitations related to each practice will change. During a season that may seem busy, chaotic, and disruptive, a little repetition can help ground our souls.

Use this reading plan in whatever way is most natural for you and your household. Pick and choose the practices you find helpful, and feel free to engage in the practices alone or with others, early in the morning or late at night, in the car, or while sharing a meal, adapting them as necessary. The reading plan is composed in such a way that you can participate in all 4 daily practices at one time, or you can spread them out throughout the day.

Here's an overview of each practice:

[Read]

Each day you'll be invited to read 1 chapter from Luke's Gospel. By immersing yourself in Luke's version of the "Good News" you'll be reminded of what you're preparing for.

[Confess]

Each day of the week, you're invited to pray the same prayer of confession on behalf of a different subject. The prayer of confession will then rotate each week, giving you the opportunity to pray 4 prayers in 7 different ways throughout Advent.

[Stop]

Each day you'll be invited to participate in a practice that's meant to disrupt your daily experience of "time" and remind you of God's presence and provision in your life. We have to be willing to "stop", if we desire to "begin" experiencing time and God's presence in new ways.

[Yearn]

Each day you're invited to light the corresponding Advent candle for the week and repeat a given phrase that expresses our shared longing for the coming of Jesus. Let your candle burn each day as a symbol of all that is awaiting fulfillment in your life and in our world.



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Week 1 – Hope

[Read]

Nov 29 – [Isaiah 40:1-5](#)

Nov 30 – [Psalm 42](#)

Dec 1 – [Romans 8:18-27](#)

Dec 2 – [Isaiah 11:1-10](#)

Dec 2 – [Hebrews 6:13-20](#)

Dec 4 – [Psalm 33](#)

Dec 5 – [Isaiah 35](#)

[Confess]

Most merciful God, we confess that we, as a [World, Nation, City, etc.] have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen. (~ from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer)

Sunday: World

Monday: Nation

Tuesday: City

Wednesday: Church

Thursday: Grace Church

Friday: Family

Saturday: Self

[Stop]

Begin your day with 5 minutes of prayer and reflection, specifically visualizing the expected events and interactions of your upcoming day and asking the Holy Spirit to be present with you.

[Yearn]

At one point in time during the week, light the 1st Advent candle and read and/or recite together:

"My soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning." ~ Psalm 130:6

Reflect on the specific ways you and/or your household are waiting for God's intervention in your lives.



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Week 2 – Peace

[Read]

Dec 6 – [Isaiah 40:9-11](#)

Dec 7 – [Philippians 4:4-7](#)

Dec 8 – [Jeremiah 33:7-16](#)

Dec 9 – [Isaiah 42:1-9](#)

Dec 10 – [Zechariah 9:9-17](#)

Dec 11 – [2 Corinthians 1:2-5](#)

Dec 12 – [Isaiah 52:7-10](#)

[Confess]

Have mercy on [our World, Nation, etc.], O God,

According to your unfailing love;

According to your great compassion

Blot out our transgressions.

Wash away all of our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin.

For we know our transgression,

And our sin is always before us. Against you, you only, have we sinned And done what is evil in your sight;

So you are right in your verdict

And justified when you judge.

Create in us a pure heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within us. ~ Psalm 51:1-4,10

Sunday: World

Monday: Nation

Tuesday: City

Wednesday: Church

Thursday: Grace Church

Friday: Family

Saturday: Self

[Stop]

Pause for 30 seconds before each meal, reflecting on God's generosity in your life.

[Yearn]

At on point in time during the week, light the 1st Advent and 2nd candle and read and/or recite together:

"How long Lord? Will you forget us forever?" [Psalm 13:1a]

Reflect on the ways you and/or your household at times feel "forgotten" by God. Is this normal? Is this healthy? Can you think of people in the Bible who have felt forgotten? Discuss.



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Week 3 – Joy

[Read]

Dec 13 – [Habakkuk 3](#)
Dec 14 – [John 16:5-28](#)
Dec 15 – [Isaiah 55:9-13](#)
Dec 16 – [Psalm 66](#)
Dec 17 – [1 Peter 1:3-9](#)
Dec 18 – [Psalm 96](#)
Dec 19 – [Isaiah 12](#)

[Confess]

Forgiving God, look not upon our [World's, Nation's, City's, etc.] sins but upon our desire to serve you and one another. Dispel our darkness, and help us to embrace our failings in loving union with your goodness. Heal us this day, and may we be a source of strength and courage for others. (~ People's Companion to the Breviary)

Sunday: World

Monday: Nation

Tuesday: City

Wednesday: Church

Thursday: Grace Church

Friday: Family

Saturday: Self

[Stop]

Pay attention to every time your schedule or expectations feel interrupted by unexpected people or events. Respond to both the positive and negative emotions you may feel by saying, "Thank you" to God.

[Yearn]

At one point in time during the week, light the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Advent candles and read/recite together: "On Earth as it is in Heaven." [Matthew 6:10b]

Reflect on the ways you and/or your household desire God's Kingdom to be present in specific areas of your lives and in our world.



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Week 4 – Love

[Read]

Dec 20 – [Zephaniah 3:14-20](#)

Dec 21 – [Psalm 89:1-4](#)

Dec 22 – [Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

Dec 23 – [Isaiah 9:6-7](#)

Dec 24 – [John 3:16](#); [Revelation 21:1-5](#)

[Confess]

Almighty God, merciful Father, and my good Lord, have mercy on our [World, Nation, City, etc.], we are sinners.

Grant us forgiveness of our sins.

Make us guard against and overcome

all snares, temptations, and harmful pleasures.

May we shun utterly in word and in deed,

whatever you forbid, and do and keep whatever you command. Let us believe and hope, love and live, according to your purpose and your will. (~ St. Anselm, 1033-1109)

Sunday: World

Monday: Nation

Tuesday: City

Wednesday: Church + Grace Church

Thursday: Family + Self

[Stop]

End your day with 5 minutes of prayer and reflection, specifically visualizing the events and interactions of the previous day and thanking God for His grace and presence in your life.

[Yearn]

At on point in time during the week, light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Advent candles and read/recite together: "Come Lord Jesus come." [Revelation 22:20b]

Reflect on the ways and situations you and/or your household need Jesus to arrive in your hearts and lives.



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CHRISTMAS DAY

[Read]

Today, find some time to read [Isaiah 9:1-7](#) and [Hebrews 1:1-3](#); let's celebrate Jesus' birth!

[Confess]

"Jesus son of David, have mercy on me a sinner!" [Luke 18:38]

[Stop]

Before you participate in meals, gifts, or gatherings, (or at one point in time) spend 3 minutes in silence with those you're celebrating with. Reflect on the words: "Be still, and know that I am God." [Psalm 46:10a]

[Yearn]

As a household, light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Advent candles and recite together:

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." [Psalm 107:1]

Reflect on the ways you and/or your household are grateful for God's enduring love in your lives.