

Journey to Bethlehem

*An Advent and Christmas
Devotional Booklet*



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Welcome on this “Journey to Bethlehem”

The word “advent” goes all the way back to the people who spoke Latin in ancient Rome. Back then the word was ‘advenire’, and simply meant to come toward. Over time the word has become ‘advent’ and means that ‘something’ is coming.

In the church when we use the word ‘Advent’, with a capital “A”, it doesn’t mean just anything is coming; it means that something really important is coming - **Christ is coming!** And when Christ is coming we need to get ready! In the Church four special weeks are set aside to get ready. These weeks are called ‘Advent’ and during Advent we prepare for Jesus’ coming both as a baby in Bethlehem and also as our Savior who will come again and usher in the kingdom of God.

There are many ways to prepare for Jesus’ coming into our lives. One important way is to set aside time to be quiet, offer prayers, hear the stories of God’s plan for Jesus’ birth, and think about what it all means for us and the church. This booklet, along with your advent wreath help to build a ritual that includes everyone in the family getting ready for Christ to come among us. Find a quiet time; early in the morning, during the evening meal, or before bed to gather together and follow the worship liturgies found in this booklet. We hope that they will be for you a time of joy as you prepare for Christ to come into your home this season.

Advent One: Hope

Light the First Advent Candle The Candle of Hope

Advent Prayer

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest.
Fill our hearts, our home, our lives;
With your love as you come
To us this Christmas

Read today's scripture and/or Bible story from
The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

- Nov. 30 Isa. 6:1-8, or *365 Stories* #188
- Dec. 1 Isa. 2: 2-4
- Dec. 2 Isa. 64:1-3
- Dec. 3 Mal. 3:1, or *365 Stories* #237
- Dec. 4 Ps. 23, 121, or 46, or *365 Stories* #231
- Dec. 5 Lk. 1:5-7, or *365 Stories* #238
- Dec. 6 Lk. 1:8-25, or *365 Stories* #239

Questions for reflection

- What does hope look like in today's reading?
- What message could the prophet be asked to bring?
- How will things change if this hope is fulfilled?
- What do people fear when things change?
- What do you hope for your family, your church, your world?
- What does God hope for you, your family, your church, your world?

Care of your Advent Wreath

Your Advent wreath should last throughout the whole of the season of Advent if it is kept watered consistently.

Place your wreath on a large plate when you get it home to prevent any water damage to your table. Keep the greens well-watered by topping up the water in the outer ring where the oasis is at least two times per week. If the wreath feels light, then the oasis is drying out and needs some more water.

At the end of the Christmas season throw the greens into the garden waste pile and throw the oasis out. Pack away the plastic tray for next year's Advent wreath.

The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

This devotional booklet recommends using the *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories* in place of, or in addition to the scripture readings if you have younger children in your home. It is published by Lion Children's Books and is available for purchase from Augsburg Fortress. On some days there is no corresponding storybook story and on these days the bible reading is shorter and less complex for children to read aloud or hear read.

Christmas

Light the Four Advent Candles and the Center Christ Candle

Christmas Prayer

Dear Lord, Long ago you promised to send us Emmanuel. We thank you for your promises and your gift to us this Christmas in sending us your Son, our Saviour. Amen

Read today's scripture and/or Bible story from
The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

Dec. 24 Lk. 2:1-7, or 365 Stories #243

Dec. 25 Lk. 2:8-20, or 365 Stories #244

Questions for reflection

How does Jesus bring hope? peace? joy? love?

Who do you need to tell this story to?

How will you tell it?

How will you celebrate today? all year?

Advent Two: Peace

Light the First and Second Advent Candles The Candle of Hope and the Candle of Peace

Advent Prayer

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest.
Fill our hearts, our home, our lives;
With your love as you come
To us this Christmas

Read today's scripture and/or Bible story from
The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

Dec. 7 Is. 40:1-5

Dec. 8 Mk 1:1-8, or *365 Stories* #249

Dec. 9 Isa. 40:9-11

Dec. 10 Isa. 11:1-5

Dec. 11 Isa. 11:6-9

Dec. 12 Ps. 85:1,2, 8-13

Dec. 13 2 Pet. 3:1, 2, 13, 14, or *365 Stories* #364

Questions for reflection

What does peace look like in today's reading?

How can peace be more than the absence of war?

What do you think righteousness means?

How does God want us to be keepers and helpers of peace?

How were you/will you be a promoter of peace today?

Advent Three: Joy

Light the First, Second and Third Advent Candles

The Candle of Hope, the Candle of Peace
and the Candle of Joy

Advent Prayer

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest.
Fill our hearts, our home, our lives;
With your love as you come
To us this Christmas

Read today's scripture and/or Bible story from
The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

- Dec. 14 1 Thess. 5:16-19
- Dec. 15 Lk. 15:8-10, or *365 Stories* #287
- Dec. 16 Mt. 5:13-16, or *365 Stories* #281
- Dec. 17 Is. 61:1,2
- Dec. 18 Jn. 1:6-8
- Dec. 19 Lk. 1:26-38, or *365 Stories* #240 (1st half)
- Dec. 20 Lk. 1:38-45 or *365 Stories* #240 (2nd half)

Questions for reflection

What does joy look like in today's reading?
How do you show your joy?
Why is darkness and light an important theme in advent readings?
Make a list of all the names for Jesus you learn this week.
Make a symbol for joy out of playdough, pipe cleaners or paper and tell someone else about your symbol.

Advent Four: Love

Light Each of the Four Advent Candles

The Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Advent Prayer

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest.
Fill our hearts, our home, our lives;
With your love as you come
To us this Christmas

Read today's scripture and/or Bible story from
The Children's Bible in 365 Stories

- Dec. 21 Lk. 1:46-55
- Dec. 22 Lk 1:56-66, or *365 Stories* #241
- Dec. 23 Mt. 1:18-25 and Is. 9:6, 7c, or *365 Stories* #242

Questions for reflection

With each reading: What does love look like in today's reading?
Dec. 21: How does Mary show her love for God?
Dec. 22: How do Zechariah & Elizabeth show their love for their new baby? for God?
Dec 23: How does Joseph show his love for God? Mary? the baby Mary is carrying?
How does God show love for Mary? Elizabeth? Zechariah? Joseph? the world?
How can we say thank you for such love?