

Christmas Advent

Devotional



Advent



The Advent season means “Arrival” and it has been a practice of many Christians throughout the centuries to take time leading up to Christmas reflecting upon the meaning and significance of Christmas. This weekly practice can really help you enrich your experience of Christmas and better understand the reason and significance of the birth of Jesus.

John 1:14 says, “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The birth of Jesus is not just the birth of any child, but the mysterious truth that God became a man. Why? Because He loves us and wanted a relationship with you.

Over the next three weeks take about 15 minutes to read and reflect on the passage with the questions as a guide. There are some simple prayers that are suggested in response to what you read and can be prayed from the heart throughout your day.

Take note after the holidays if you noticed a change this year in your experience of the need for a savior to be born.



Part 1

OUR NEED FOR A SAVIOR

DAY **01** *“I have always loved you,” says the Lord. But you reply, “Really? How have you loved us?”* (Malachi 1:2 NLT)

Why is it easy to forget God’s love for us? In what ways has God shown his love for you throughout your life? How about in the past week?

Prayer: “God, help me remember how you have loved me. Would you open my heart to believe and receive the love you have given to me through Jesus.”



DAY **02** *You dishonor My name with your actions. By bringing contemptible food, you are saying it’s all right to defile the Lord’s table. You say, “It’s too hard to serve the Lord,” and you turn up your noses at My commands,” Says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “Think of it! Animals that are stolen and crippled and sick are being presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?” Asks the Lord.* (Malachi 1:12,13 NLT)

When you think about your time, money, and talents do you give the best of these to God, or the rest of these to God? Why do you think we settle for giving God our left overs?

What would it look like to begin to give God your best? What would need to change about your heart and your attitude towards Him?

Prayer: “God empower me to give the BEST I have to you. Show me what that looks like today and increase my faith that I might give it.”

D A Y
03

Judah has cheated on God—a sickening violation of trust in Israel and Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the holiness of God by falling in love and running off with foreign women, women who worship alien gods. God's curse on those who do this! Drive them out of house and home! They're no longer fit to be part of the community no matter how many offerings they bring to God-of-the-Angel-Armies.¹³⁻¹⁵ And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from God. (Malachi 2:11-13, The Message)

Why is it easy to forget God's love for us? In what ways has God shown his love for you throughout your life? How about in the past week?

Prayer: “God, help me remember how you have loved me. Would you open my heart to believe and receive the love you have given to me through Jesus.”



D A Y
04

You make God tired with all your talk. “How do we tire him out?” you ask. By saying, “God loves sinners and sin alike. God loves all.” And also by saying, “Judgment? God’s too nice to judge.” (Malachi 2:17, The Message)

Do you believe that God hates sin? Why is it hard for us to realize that God can both love us (like in Malachi 1:2) and hate our sin?

Do you hate your sin? In what ways do you love sin more than God?

Prayer: “God empower me to give the BEST I have to you. Show me what that looks like today and increase my faith that I might give it.”

D A Y 05 *You say, “What’s the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying His commands or by trying to show the Lord of Heaven’s Armies that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them suffer no harm.”* (Malachi 3:14,15 NLT)

How can you struggle to see serving God as useless? How much of your effort, heart, sweat, time, thought, muscle do you give to serving God?

What can you choose this week/next semester to begin to weekly serve God?

Prayer: “God, help me believe that living for you is the BEST life possible.”



D A Y 06 *Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In His presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared Him and always thought about the honor of His name. “They will be my people,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “On that day when I act in judgement, they will be My own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child.”* (Malachi 3:16,17 NLT)

To “fear” means to honor and put oneself underneath. Do you fear God? Would you choose to put your name down as one who fears Him above anyone else?

What would it mean for you to know that you are counted as one of His special treasure?

Prayer: “God would I live the life that honors you first.”

D A Y *Count on it: The day is coming, raging like a forest fire. All the arrogant people who do evil things will be burned up like stove wood, burned to a crisp, nothing left but scorched earth and ash— a black day. But for you, sunrise! The sun of righteousness will dawn on those who honor my name, healing radiating from its wings. You will be bursting with energy, like colts frisky and frolicking. And you'll tromp on the wicked. They'll be nothing but ashes under your feet on that Day.” God-of-the-Angel-Armies says so.* (Malachi 4:1-3)

What kind of power does God have against evil?

For those who fear God what is promised? What kind of hope does this give you knowing that there is healing and joy and victory for those who put their trust in God?

Prayer: “God open my eyes to see You for who You really are! Give me a taste of the joy that is in you when I trust in You.”



Part 2

THE GIFT OF JESUS

D A Y **08** *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall no hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*
(John 6:35 ESV)

What does food empower us to do for our day?

What is Jesus saying he does for our spiritual lives (that is both physical, emotional and spiritual)?

Prayer: “Jesus, teach me to come to you when I am hungry and thirsty in my soul that I might be satisfied by you.”



D A Y **09** *Jesus again said to them, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12 ESV)

Where is there darkness, confusion, complexity for you in life and relationships and your future? What worries do you have?

What is Jesus promising to do for you?

Are you willing to follow Him and trust Him to lead you through these places in your life?

Prayer: “Jesus, you say you are the light of the world, would you speak to me today and begin to show me how to follow you?”

D A Y **10** “*I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture... I came that they might have life and have it abundantly*” (John 10:9,10 ESV)

When you pursue life and adventure and happiness do you go through Jesus?

What promises does Jesus make here? Do you believe He can do these things?

If you say “Yes” look at your life, do you enter it through Him?

Prayer: “Jesus, there are lots of tempting places to find life. Would these places begin to lose their taste for me, and would the way of life through You open up.”



D A Y **11** “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.*” (John 10:11-14 ESV)

Do you know Jesus? Does He know you? Do you know His voice?

What does Jesus do for His sheep? If someone took a bullet for you, what would you owe them? What do you owe Jesus?

Prayer: “God empower me to give the BEST I have to you. Show me what that looks like today and increase my faith that I might give it.”

DAY ***Before Abraham was, I am.*** (John 8:58 ESV)

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Simply put. Jesus says that He has always existed. He was never started, He was there when the world was created and was the one who actually created it.

Do you understand why this is significant? Who is Jesus claiming to be? To look more into is look up Colossians 1:15-23

Prayer: “God, help me remember how you have loved me. Would you open my heart to believe and receive the love you have given to me through Jesus.”



DAY ***Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believe in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believe in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*** (John 11:24-25)

Jesus says, while we will physically die, we will spiritually live with Him forever.

What do you think happens when you die? Where do you go?

Have you put your trust in Him that you might have life today and for eternity?

Prayer: “Jesus, I put my faith in YOU that you are the only one who can give eternal life.”

D A Y **14** “*I am the true vine, and my Father the vinedresser...I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*” (John 15: 1,5 ESV)

What kind of life does Jesus promise if we are connected to Him? What does it mean to bear fruit? What kind of life would that potentially look like?

Why does a branch need to be connected to the vine to bear fruit? Who then is Jesus to us, why do we need Him?

Prayer: “As I follow you, Jesus, would you give me fruit in my life.”



D A Y **15** *Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7*

Isaiah was written about 700 years before the birth of Jesus. This passage is about who God was going to send to establish His Kingdom.

There were five awesome titles Jesus was given (Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace). Look up these verses to see confirmation of these titles:

Wonderful- Luke 11:14

Counselor- John 7:46

Mighty God- John 10:30

Everlasting Father- John 1:3, Hebrews 11:3

Prince of Peace- Colossians 1:20

How do these verses make Isaiah 9:6-7 fuller for you?

In what ways do you long to experience and see Jesus in these ways? What does this passage say about the type of Kingdom Jesus will rule over? What will the world look like when Jesus finally brings the fullness of His Kingdom?

D A Y ***Reading Luke 1:46-56***

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Mary was about 16 when she found out she was to give birth to Jesus! I guess people matured faster in the ancient world. Look at Mary's prayer what do you notice about her attitude towards God?

Do you think this shows weakness to strength to surrender to God's will?

What is the view that this 16 year old has of the God she follows? Do you see Him in a similar way?



D A Y ***Reading Matthew 1:19-25***

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What would it have been like to be Joseph, a young man getting ready to marry his future bride? In what way did God meet Joseph to help answer those questions?

Note vs. 22-23, Matthew quotes Isaiah again. What is significant about this prophesy? How has God chosen to come to us? Why is it significant that Jesus would come be with you? How does might/ does this change your daily life?

DAY ***Reading Luke 2:1-20***

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To whom did Jesus' birth announcement come to? What does this tell us about God's invitation to humanity that He came to shepherds first? In what manner were the shepherds visited (note. Vs. 13)?

What message does the Angel bring? Who is Jesus?

God came to us so that we might have forgiveness of sin, peace with Him, and eternal life. Have you made this decision to receive God's gift (John 5:24)? If so, in what ways have you experienced this gift so far? In what ways have you needed to be reminded of this gift this Christmas season?



DAY ***Reading Matthew 2:1-12***

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Upon the news that Jesus is born what is the difference in response from Herod and the Wise Men (Note Herod was King at that time, so news of a child that would become King was very threatening to his authority)? In what ways do you struggle to give the thrown of your life over to Jesus?

Why do you think the Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus? Christmas is about God's gift by sending Jesus to us, so Christmas is also a time for us to give God the gift of our lives. As you look to your 2017 how do you want to give Jesus more of your life? What gift could you give Him that would be honoring to him as King?

