



a
christmas

ADVENTure

★ 2017 ★



FELLOWSHIP MISSIONARY CHURCH

Let the ADVENTure begin!

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means arrival or coming. For hundreds of years the Hebrews looked forward to the coming of the promised Savior or Messiah. Christmas celebrates the First Advent of Jesus. Now, we look forward with great expectation to the time Jesus will return to take His Bride home – the Second Advent. Even as we remember Jesus' arrival in Bethlehem, we eagerly await the day He will come again in glory.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN ADVENT?

Traditionally, Advent counts down the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas. Practically, Advent reminds us to look forward to His return every day. This season is about resetting Christ at the center of our lives. After all, when Jesus comes to take us home to live with Him forever, we want to be ready! As you participate in this ADVENTure, look to be challenged, inspired, motivated, convicted, encouraged, refocused, and most of all...expectant.

HOW DO I USE THIS ADVENT GUIDE?

"A Christmas ADVENTure" is a 25-day plan meant to be started on December 1 and take you through Christmas Day. Each day will have a passage of scripture to read, a few questions to consider, and often a suggested activity to help you center your day upon Jesus. You can go in order or you can skip around, picking a topic you feel would be most beneficial for where you are. You can go through the guide individually or you can do it as a family or with a group.

Some of the activities are things you do already during this season, but will suggest a Christ-centered way of going about it. Other activities may be things you've never done. Be open-minded and try something new. After all, this is an ADVENTure!

Each day will include opportunities to **EXAMINE, EXPLORE, EXPRESS** and **EXPERIENCE**. You may find it helpful to read this section before the scripture so you know what to look for.

DAY 1

LUKE 2:21-40

anticipation

EXAMINE: Read the story of two people who waited in the Temple every day for the arrival of Jesus.

EXPLORE: Discuss or journal about these two people who were blessed to see Jesus, the Messiah, with their own eyes. Think about how you anticipate Christmas. What would it look like for you to live with such anticipation for the return of Christ?

EXPRESS: At the beginning of this 25-day ADVENTure, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes so your vision of Jesus becomes clearer than it has ever been. Ask God to make you more aware of what it means to live your life with the expectation of the Advent of Jesus.

EXPERIENCE: Look up information about Advent wreaths and set up something in your home to use during this time. It could be as simple as four candles arranged in a circle.

DAY 2

Matthew 1

Announcement

EXAMINE: Read the opening chapter of the New Testament and the account of Joseph, the earthly father God chose for His Son.

EXPLORE: Consider the weight of the expectations of all those generations and how that might have affected Joseph's decision to step into this role. What do you think was going through Joseph's mind when the angel showed up and made that announcement?

EXPRESS: Discuss or journal about how you might have felt or what you might have done if you were Joseph. What did this announcement mean for Joseph and for all of us?

EXPERIENCE: God asked Joseph to do something that seemed ridiculous. Have you ever had an experience where God asked you to do something that seemed ridiculous. Make a plan to do something ridiculous you know God is asking you to do.

DAY 3

Isaiah 9:1-3

Matthew 4:12-17

Matthew 5:14-16

Lights

EXAMINE: Read these passages about Jesus being the Light.

EXPLORE: How is Jesus the light of the world? What do you know about the qualities of light that make it such a perfect illustration of who Jesus is?

EXPRESS: Why do you think Jesus refers to His followers as the light of the world? What would it mean for you to be a light in your relationships and life circumstances?

EXPERIENCE: Make a plan to be a light to someone today.

DAY 4

Mark 9:33-37

Servant of all

EXAMINE: Read Jesus' remarks to His disciples about being a servant.

EXPLORE: Why do you think Jesus took a child into His arms when He made these remarks? What does it say about Jesus that a little child was nearby?

EXPRESS: Take an inventory of how you spend most of your days. Is your life characterized more by being served or serving? Is it any different during Christmas time? Who do you think is more blessed when you serve – you or the one you serve?

EXPERIENCE: In the next 24 hours, live this out by serving someone. Especially think of a way you can welcome a little child in Jesus' name.

DAY 5

Genesis 1

Isaiah 1:18

Psalms 51:1-10

Snow

EXAMINE: Read the account of creation and these passages about snow.

EXPLORE: These passages associate Jesus' forgiveness with snow. Discuss or journal your thoughts about being made white as snow.

EXPRESS: Shaping a snowman is much like what God does with us. Describe a time in your life when you knew for sure that God was shaping you to become like Jesus. Tell God how thankful you are that He continually shapes us to look more and more like Jesus.

EXPERIENCE: Create a snowman. If you can't use real snow, find a creative way to make a snowman. You can use cotton balls, wadded up paper, or just draw one.

DAY 6

Luke 11:1-13

pray

EXAMINE: Read of when Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

EXPLORE: What does Jesus' teaching following the Lord's prayer teach you about God? How does your view of God affect the way you pray? Which parts of Jesus' prayer pattern do you often leave out when you pray?

EXPRESS: Discuss with family or friends or journal about a time in your life where God answered an important prayer.

EXPERIENCE: Use the Lord's Prayer as a pattern to write out your own prayer. How was writing down your prayer different from just saying it? Ask someone you trust to pray it along with you.

DAY 7

Isaiah 9:6-7

Revelation 19:1-16

1 Timothy 6:11-16

his names

EXAMINE: Read these prophecies about Jesus' first coming and second coming. Notice how prominent the names of Jesus are in these verses.

EXPLORE: How have you experienced Jesus as a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace? How is He a King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

EXPRESS: Discuss with friends or family or journal about how Jesus expresses Himself as these various names in your life. Then read out loud the charge to Timothy about how to live ready to meet our King.

EXPERIENCE: Listen to the "Hallelujah Chorus" or "For Unto Us a Child Is Born" from Handel's "Messiah"—both are easy to find online.

DAY 8

Micah 5:2, 4

Luke 2:1-20

City of David

EXAMINE: Read about Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth.

EXPLORE: What do you think is the significance of Jesus being born in the hometown of David, the Shepherd King? How have you experienced Jesus as your Shepherd?

EXPRESS: Bethlehem was a small, seemingly insignificant town. Have you ever felt insignificant? Discuss or journal about what God might be saying to you from Micah's prophecy?

EXPERIENCE: Look for someone that might easily be overlooked in the bustle of the season and make an effort to look them in the eye, call them by name, speak to them warmly and treat them with the significance God sees in them.

DAY 9

Exodus 25

Decorations

EXAMINE: Read God's detailed instructions for the decoration of the Tabernacle.

EXPLORE: Why do you think God was so specific about how to decorate the Tabernacle? What significance or symbolism do you think these decorations must have had?

EXPRESS: Go through your home and examine the Christmas decorations you have. Discuss with friends or family or journal about the meaning and significance of your existing decorations.

EXPERIENCE: Create a new ornament or decoration that can represent how you feel about your relationship with Jesus this year. If you haven't decorated for Christmas yet, take this time to decorate your home to celebrate this important season.

DAY 10

Luke 1

Jeremiah 32:17

The impossible

EXAMINE: Read the story of an improbable baby and an impossible baby. God is setting the stage for the arrival of His Son Jesus, who would be known for doing the impossible.

EXPLORE: Why do you think God delights in doing the impossible?

EXPRESS: Is God asking you to believe for something that seems impossible? Write down something you want to ask Him for this Christmas that seems impossible.

EXPERIENCE: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time in your life when you had to depend on Jesus to do the impossible. Read the verse about our God of the impossible out loud wherever you are.

DAY 11

Matthew 1:22-23

Isaiah 7:10-15

John 1:14

immanuel

EXAMINE: Read the passages about Immanuel.

EXPLORE: Immanuel means “God with us.” How is Jesus still “God with us” even now that He’s not walking on the earth? What are some ways you sense God with you?

EXPRESS: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time in your life when you felt the closest to Jesus. Make plans to do something today to get closer to God. How important is it to seek to experience that closeness all the time?

EXPERIENCE: Make a sign that reminds you that God is with you and hang it up somewhere that you see often.

DAY 12

Acts 15:22-31

Christmas cards

EXAMINE: Most of the New Testament is made up of letters. Read this passage about an encouraging letter.

EXPLORE: Think of how meaningful letters like this must have been in the first century. Why do you think there is so much power in expressing love to someone in writing?

EXPRESS: The Bible is like a really long letter God wrote to us to express His love for us. What has been the most meaningful part of His letter to you?

EXPERIENCE: Buy or make a Christmas card for someone who has really been a blessing to you this year. Spend some additional time expressing to them what they mean to you. If a card won't hold all you need to say, write out a whole letter like the early church did.

DAY 13

Isaiah 58

Matthew 6:16-18

fast

EXAMINE: Read these passages about fasting.

EXPLORE: Why do you think Jesus asked us to fast? What kind of fasting does Isaiah say the Lord requires?

EXPRESS: Why do you think it is so difficult for people to make this a habit? How can you incorporate fasting into your regular habits of worship?

EXPERIENCE: Christmas is generally a time of feasting. Take at least a day to fast from something. Journal about your experiences with fasting. What did you learn? How did it change you?

DAY 14

Matthew 25:31-46

*The Least
of These*

EXAMINE: Read Jesus' teachings about the final judgment.

EXPLORE: How would you treat people differently if you really saw Jesus in their face? What are some changes you could make in your lifestyle that would fall into the sheep category?

EXPRESS: Discuss or journal about the difference between serving others like Jesus and "charity." If you were the one who was sick, or in jail, or naked, how would you want to be treated?

EXPERIENCE: Think of someone you know of that probably falls into the category of "the least of these." You may have to think outside your normal circles. Invite them to a meal with you. Learn their story. Pray for them.

DAY 15

Acts 20:35

1 John 4:10

The gift

EXAMINE: Read these verses about giving.

EXPLORE: What is the real point of giving a gift? How is Jesus the best gift you have ever received? How generous are you with your time, treasures, and talents? Do you live as if it truly is more blessed to give than receive?

EXPRESS: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time when you blessed someone with extreme generosity or a time where you were blessed by someone else's extreme generosity. Spend time praying, asking God to help you become more generous by better comprehending the gift of love He has given us.

Experience: Go Christmas shopping for someone that is not a part of your immediate family, like a patient in a nursing home or hospital, your mail carrier, your garbage collector, or a foster child.

DAY 16

1 John 3:1-3

Revelation 2:1-5

True Love

EXAMINE: Read the warning about turning from your first love.

EXPLORE: Who is your first love? Think back to how your feelings of love change over time. In what ways can you relate to the Ephesian church?

EXPRESS: The Christmas song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” is all about the amazingly generous gifts given by one’s True Love. Read once again the passage from 1 John about God’s great love for us. What gifts has our True Love already given to you?

EXPERIENCE: Look up the lyrics of “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” then write lyrics to your own version of the song as an expression of what you would like to give to Jesus—your true first love. Include in your song the pieces of your life that He wants, the changes He wants you to make, and the things He wants you to take action on.

DAY 17

Matthew 2:1-12

Nativity

EXAMINE: Read the story about the kings who came to worship Jesus. Look at the pieces of a nativity set and consider the features the artist used to show that the scene is centered on Christ.

EXPLORE: What do you think it would have been like to be right in the middle of that? What stance or position would you take in that scene?

EXPRESS: The wise men worshiped Jesus by kneeling. Get on your knees and express to Him right now how much you love Him. How does just being in that posture change the position of your heart?

EXPERIENCE: The wise men also worshiped by offering their best gifts. Think of a creative way to offer worship today that has nothing to do with singing.

DAY 18

John 1

The Word

EXAMINE: Read the first chapter of the Apostle John's account of Jesus' life.

EXPLORE: What is significant about understanding that Jesus is The Word and that He has been God since the beginning? How did Jesus' life display grace and truth?

EXPRESS: Those who believe and receive Jesus become the children of God. Discuss or journal what it means to you to be a child of God.

EXPERIENCE: Jesus' invitation to His early followers was simple: "Come and see." Who could you invite come with you to church or to Christmas Eve services this year?

DAY 19

Luke 2:1-20

Terrified

EXAMINE: Read the account of the shepherds who became witnesses to Jesus' arrival.

EXPLORE: The shepherd's encounter must have been wonderful and terrifying at the same time! What do you think was going through the shepherd's minds when the angels appeared?

EXPRESS: How would you have felt if you were given this news? Discuss with a friend or journal about your reflections of this miraculous scene.

EXPERIENCE: Have you had an experience where God interrupted your life with an important message? How was that a combination of terrifying and wonderful? Take time to pray—not to say anything to God, just to listen.

DAY 20

Luke 17:11-19

Colossians 3:15-17

gratitude

EXAMINE: Read these passages about giving thanks.

EXPLORE: Why do you think Paul puts so much emphasis on gratitude in the life of the Christian? Does your heart tend to move more quickly to complaint or to thanks? Why?

EXPRESS: Imagine you are that leper who fell at Jesus' feet. What would you say to Him? Make a list of the things you are thankful for this holiday season.

EXPERIENCE: Take a few minutes to write a note of thanks to someone who has blessed you.

DAY 21

Psalm 100

joy

EXAMINE: Read the passage from Psalms.

EXPLORE: The Psalm says we should come before the Lord with joyful songs. How does singing help you worship? Why do you think it is such an effective form of worship?

EXPRESS: What is your favorite Christmas carol? Why? In your own handwriting, write out the lyrics to your favorite Christmas carol. Ask God to use this season to help you experience the joy and peace the song communicates in a new way this year.

EXPERIENCE: Get a group together and go Christmas caroling. If you don't know all the words, print out copies of the lyrics before you go out.

DAY 22

John 21:25

The greatest
Story ever
Told

EXAMINE: Christmas is getting closer! It will be easy to lose focus on Jesus as the season gets busier. Read the last verse of the Gospel of John.

EXPLORE: What is your favorite part about Jesus' life?

EXPRESS: How has your story become a part of the greatest story? Journal about the role you have played in God's big story.

EXPERIENCE: Gather some friends or family and watch the 1965 movie classic "The Greatest Story Ever Told." It's available on DVD or online. How did the movie help your understanding of Jesus' life? How did watching that with others open up opportunities for good discussion?

DAY 23

Matthew 25

Coming again!

EXAMINE: Read some parables Jesus told about when He would return.

EXPLORE: What do you think is the main point of the chapter? You've done a lot to get ready for Christmas. What can you do to be ready for the Second Advent?

EXPRESS: Discuss with friends and family or journal about what you want to do to be ready for Jesus' return.

EXPERIENCE: How would your life be different today if you believed Jesus was returning at midnight? If something springs to mind that you would do differently, go do it now.

DAY 24

John 3:16

So Loved

EXAMINE: Christmas Eve is the last day of Advent. One verse sums it up the best. Read John 3:16.

EXPLORE: Max Lucado describes John 3:16 as “a twenty-six word parade of hope...If you know nothing of the Bible, start here. If you know everything about the Bible, return here. We all need the reminder.” Say this verse aloud. Memorize it if you haven’t already. Do you feel God’s love today?

EXPRESS: What has been your greatest moment of being a Jesus follower? What has been your hardest moment as a Jesus follower?

EXPERIENCE: Attend a Christmas Eve worship service with friends and family.

DAY 25

Luke 1:26-56

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 2:1-40

Matthew 2:1-12

Christmas Day

Christmas has arrived! Celebrate the advent of our Savior Jesus Christ. Reflect on your experiences from this ADVENTure and rejoice in the hope of our coming King.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

“A Christmas ADVENTure” was adapted from the YouVersion Advent plan “Rediscovering the Christmas Season” by Life.Church.



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