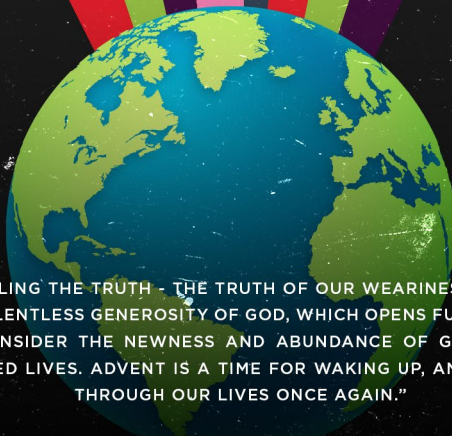


Weary World

REJOICES



"ADVENT IS A TIME FOR TELLING THE TRUTH - THE TRUTH OF OUR WEARIINESS AND OUR ANXIETY, YES, BUT ALSO THE TRUTH OF THE RELENTLESS GENEROSITY OF GOD, WHICH OPENS FUTURES THAT SEEM SHUT DOWN. ADVENT INVITES US TO CONSIDER THE NEWNESS AND ABUNDANCE OF GOD THAT IS ALWAYS ALREADY BREAKING INTO OUR SETTLED LIVES. ADVENT IS A TIME FOR WAKING UP, AND ALLOWING JESUS TO BREAK THROUGH OUR LIVES ONCE AGAIN."

RICHARD FLOYD - CELEBRATING ABUNDANCE



DEAR LOCAL FAMILY,

Christmas is coming. This season brings much anticipation for time with family and friends, time off of school and work, and, of course, gifts! It is also a season that can produce busyness, anxiety, and a spirit of consumerism. Amidst this season of both joy and hurriedness, Advent offers us the invitation to approach the preparation for Christmas in a different way. Advent is a time to wait, be open, and set aside our rhythms of cold indifference, allowing God to break into our lives. Advent is a time when God breaks in on us with new surprises and touches us with a renewing and restoring power!

The theme of our Advent season this year is *Weary World Rejoices*. During Advent, we reflect on the narrative of the people of Israel—the history of the people of God waiting and longing for a Messiah—their weariness as a people and their long journey of hope. Are you weary? Where have you experienced weariness (this year)? 2020 has been a crazy year, full of hurt, pain, and sadness in many ways. Pandemic, anxiety, fear, uncertainty, loss, death, racism, injustice, fighting...the list goes on. And yet this is nothing “new” for humanity. All throughout history—and in the people of God—we have faced hardships and defeat. There have been times of pain and sorrow where it has seemed like there has been NO HOPE at all. The Israelites waited in darkness for a Messiah for over 400 years. No word from the Lord. Silence. Darkness. All seemed lost. And yet, they held onto HOPE. ADVENT is a season of hope and we need it more this year than possibly ever before. Where does hope come into your weariness? Will you let it linger there?

This booklet is an invitation for you to engage with Jesus through His Word, speaking and listening to Him in prayer, and with intentional experiences during the weeks of Advent. We hope that interacting with these intentional rhythms will help create space for you and/or your family to embrace hope, peace, joy, and love during this weary year of 2020.

Are you a parent? You have the greatest influence on the faith formation of your children. It is our prayer that these invitations to engage with these various rhythms would help your family slow down, reflect and connect with Jesus, as well as each other, this Advent season.

As individuals and in Local Groups, you'll find encouraging and unique ways to pray, engage, and reflect together—both individually and collectively—on what it means to anticipate Christ breaking into our world at His birth and upon His return.

May you, your family, and your Local Group all find rest and renewal as we anticipate God's hope, peace, joy, and love this Advent season.

Grace + Peace
The Local Church Staff

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Prayer + Reflection

Provided are morning and evening prayers that you can say and learn individually, together as a family, or with your Local Group each week of Advent.

Scripture Readings

Daily readings are provided for personal and family devotions.

Our Advent Series Theme is "Weary World Rejoices".

There will be sections that focus on the theme of the Sunday Sermon Series titled "Weary World Rejoices".

The season of Advent encourages us to slow down, anticipate, and prepare ourselves for the arrival of Jesus. God has come near and is coming near again. Advent reminds us no matter how long we have waited or how weary we may feel, Jesus can break into our lives and we can rejoice!

Individual Prayer + Family Prayer + Local Group Prayer

Below is a prayer you can read, memorize and pray individually, as a family, or in your Local Group.

Lord Jesus, in this Advent season we wait eagerly for your arrival. Come fill our home with your hope, peace, love, and joy. The world isn't like you wanted it to be. Come, help us change. We need you, Jesus. Break into our hearts and world. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Around the Table

Dinnertime is formational for us as individuals, as families, and in our Local Groups. Invite a friend or family member to join you for dinner and share this devotional with him/her as you journey through Advent together. With your family, choose at least one night during the week to cook together, eat dinner as a family, and read the Scriptures and questions provided. Find time throughout the Advent season to share a meal with your Local Group and use the booklet to guide your conversation.

Experiences

Set aside special times for yourself, your family, or in your Local Group to experience and reflect on the season of Advent through unique activities. Take time to spread the hope, joy, love, and peace of Christ in your family, neighborhood, community, and world.



WEEK ONE HOPE

□ Daily Readings

Monday

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19,
Mark 1:1-8

Tuesday

Isaiah 64:1-9, 1
Corinthians 1:3-9

Wednesday

Psalms 85, Mark 1:9-11

Thursday

Isaiah 6:8-13, Mark 1:14-15

Friday

Psalms 119:25-48, Mark
13:24-37

Saturday

Take some time this weekend to reflect and celebrate God breaking into you and your family's life this Advent season.

Use the scriptures provided for daily reflection individually and as a family.

Advent is about considering the ways God is breaking into our lives. Use this ancient prayer at the end of each day to practice this.

☞ PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Take a few minutes to close your eyes and breathe. Slow down and become aware of God's presence (pause).

Ask God for Light - God has been with you, in every detail, since the beginning. As you prepare to look back on your day, ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light that will clear your vision.

Give Thanks - Allow gratitude to draw you into the fullness and joy of life. Every moment is a gift from God, even the smallest things. What are you grateful for today?

Review the Day - However ordinary, think back over your day. Recall the sights, smells, conversations, thoughts, feelings you experienced. What made you feel alive? What made you feel weary?

Face Your Shortcomings - As you consider your day, reflect on the moments you felt out of tune with God. Do you need forgiveness? To make things right with someone? Look at your shortcomings, and allow God to heal them.

Look Towards the Day to Come - As you near the end of your day, look to tomorrow. What are you looking forward to, and what concerns you? Ask for God's help in the future.

Want to be led in this prayer?

Check out this 10 minute video!



Prayer + Blessing

[Morning, Bedtime, or Both]

✧ Morning ✧

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. - Romans 15:13

✧ Evening ✧

Merciful God, You neither slumber nor sleep. In Your grace, sustain us through the darkness of this evening until the morning light. In the same way, Almighty God, give us grace to toss away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light until the light of the world, Jesus Christ, returns in majesty. Amen. - *Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer*

📖 Weary World Rejoices 📖

God whose giving knows no end, make us glad recipients of your generosity. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to remember your abundance, that we might share with the world. Amen.

🕊 Individual Prayer + Family Prayer + Local Group Prayer 🕊

Lord Jesus, in this Advent season we wait eagerly for your arrival. Come fill our home with your hope, peace, love, and joy. The world isn't like you wanted it to be. Come, help us change. Bring us hope. We need you, Jesus. Break into our hearts and world. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.



Around the Table

|

Psalm 85

Mark 1:14-15

|

- Practice gratitude, what is one thing you are grateful for?
- In Jesus we find the hope of the world and the future hope of Jesus restoring all of creation to its original purpose. How can you cling to this hope this Advent season?
- Share one way that you have found hope in Jesus this past year.
- Assign each person in your family to write an encouraging note about someone else. Put the letter in an envelope and place it under your Christmas tree. On Christmas morning, have people read their letter out aloud.

EXPERIENCES

HOPE

- ÷ Purchase or make an Advent wreath. Light the candles each week to remind you and your family the meaning of Advent.
- ÷ Set up a nativity scene and talk about the characters in the story of Jesus' arrival.
- ÷ Practice waiting. Sit in silence for five minutes, and think about the ways God needs to break into your life. Write these things down, and pray as a family for Christ to break through into your lives and family.
- ÷ Purchase a daily Advent calendar.
- ÷ Take a drive and look at Christmas lights. Talk about Jesus being the light of the world and arriving on earth to bring new life and renewal.



WEEK TWO PEACE

□ Daily Readings

Monday

Psalms 37:1-11, Luke 1:1-25

Tuesday

Isaiah 33:17-20, Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday

Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 1:39-56

Thursday

Psalms 63, Luke 1:57-66

Friday

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11,
Zephaniah 3:14-20, Luke 1: 67-80

Saturday

Take some time this weekend to reflect and celebrate God breaking into you and your family's life this Advent season.

Use the scriptures provided for daily reflection individually and as a family.

Advent is about considering the ways God is breaking into our lives. Use this ancient prayer at the end of each day to practice this.

☞ PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Take a few minutes to close your eyes and breathe. Slow down and become aware of God's presence (pause).

Ask God for Light - God has been with you, in every detail, since the beginning. As you prepare to look back on your day, ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light that will clear your vision.

Give Thanks - Allow gratitude to draw you into the fullness and joy of life. Every moment is a gift from God, even the smallest things. What are you grateful for today?

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Look Towards the Day to Come - As you near the end of your day, look to tomorrow. What are you looking forward to, and what concerns you? Ask for God's help in the future.

Want to be led in this prayer?
Check out this 10 minute video!



Prayer + Blessing

[Morning, Bedtime, or Both]

✧ Morning ✧

Come, let us bless the newborn king. Come, let us bless the wonderful counselor. Come, let us bless the mighty God. Come, let us bless the everlasting Father. Come, let us bless the prince of peace. Come, let us bless the one who sits on David's throne. The one who was, is, and is to come. Emmanuel! God with us!

✧ Evening ✧

Prince of Peace, You were born into Your world as the stillness and peace of the night. May Your peace be born into our hearts in the stillness of this evening, that we may find peace and rest in turning to You and Your everlasting love.

📖 Weary World Rejoices 📖

*Let nothing disturb you, nothing affright you;
All things are passing, God never changes.
Patience attains - all that it strives for;
Who possesses God finds nothing lacking;
God Alone Suffices, Amen.
—Prayer from Teresa of Avila*

🕊 Individual Prayer + Family Prayer + Local Group Prayer 🕊

Lord Jesus, in this Advent season we wait eagerly for your arrival. Come fill our home with your hope, peace, love, and joy. The world isn't like you wanted it to be. Come, help us change. Bring us peace. We need you, Jesus. Break into our hearts and world. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.



Around the Table

|
Psalm 37:1-11

Luke 1:26-38
|

- Practice gratitude, what is one thing you are grateful for?
- What word or phrase or idea stood out to you from this passage?
- Take some time to share an area in your life you feel you need the peace of Christ right now.
- Make a plan to bring peace to someone you know. How can your family bless and encourage someone you know?

EXPERIENCES

PEACE

- ÷ Pick a night of the week and have a family game night. Try slowing down and being present by putting all phones and devices away. After playing the game read through the Christmas narrative as a family. [Matthew 1-2 or Luke 1-2]
- ÷ Camp out in sleeping bags by the Christmas tree and read the Christmas narrative. [Luke 1-2]
- ÷ Paint a picture of what peace will look like on Earth when Jesus arrives again. What will Jesus make right that is broken today?
- ÷ Using old magazines create a peace collage.
- ÷ Take a walk in nature. Praise God for His creation.



WEEK THREE JOY

☐ Daily Readings

Monday

Isaiah 11:1-11, 1 John 1:1-4

Tuesday

Psalms 126, 1 John 2:1-6

Wednesday

Psalms 49, 2 Peter 1:16-21

Thursday

Amos 9:11-15, John 1:1-18

Friday

Isaiah 40:1-5, John 1:19-34

Saturday

Take some time this weekend to reflect and celebrate God breaking into you and your family's life this Advent season.

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☐ PRAYER OF EXAMEN

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Ask God for Light - God has been with you, in every detail, since the beginning. As you prepare to look back on your day, ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light that will clear your vision.

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Want to be led in this prayer?

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Prayer + Blessing

[Morning, Bedtime, or Both]

✧ Morning ✧

Bless the Lord, my soul! Bless the Lord, all of creation! Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the seas resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Bless the Lord! -Adapted from Psalm 96:11-12

✧ Evening ✧

Come, Lord Jesus, that we and all of Your creation may sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come." Come, Lord Jesus, in Your power to save the world. Come, Lord Jesus, in Your mercy to forgive the world. Come, Lord Jesus, in Your grace to heal the world. Come in us! Come, Emmanuel!

📖 Weary World Rejoices 📖

Grant us, reconciling God, the imagination with which to see the world coming into being through the wonder of Jesus of Nazareth. May we embrace it and dwell there in obedience, in discipline, and in JOY, to begin again. Amen.

👐 Individual Prayer + Family Prayer + Local Group Prayer 👐

Lord Jesus, in this Advent season we wait eagerly for your arrival. Come fill our home with your hope, peace, love, and joy. The world isn't like you wanted it to be. Come, help us change. Bring us joy. We need you, Jesus. Break into our hearts and world. Come, Lord Jesus. Come.



Around the Table

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Psalm 126

1 John 1:1-4

|

- Practice gratitude, what is one thing you are grateful for?
- We anticipate and rejoice that Jesus will return and make all things new. Describe what kind of joy we will have in that moment.
- What has brought you joy in this past week?
- As a family (or local group), write a letter to Jesus thanking Him for the joy He has brought to your family.

EXPERIENCES

JOY

- ÷ Bake Christmas cookies and take them to a neighbor or family who you know could use encouragement.
- ÷ Together, create a welcome sign for Jesus. Celebrate His arrival in your life and family. Hang the sign in your home as a reminder to slow down and long for Christ before leaving each day.
- ÷ Visit a farm or living nativity and talk about how Jesus our King was born in a stable. Why is that surprising?
- ÷ Decorate a mini Christmas tree and deliver it to an elderly friend in a care facility.
- ÷ Throw a birthday party for Jesus complete with cake and ice cream.



WEEK FOUR LOVE

📖 Daily Readings

Monday

Psalms 148:8, Matthew
22:36-40

Tuesday

Isaiah 42:16 ; Romans 8:28-
39, Luke 15:1-31

Wednesday

Isaiah 41:10-14; 1 Peter 4:8,
Matthew 24:1-14

Thursday

Isaiah 28:14-22, Matthew
23:37-39, Revelation 21:1-5

Friday (Christmas)

Isaiah 9:1-7, Matthew
1:18-2:23

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📖 PRAYER OF EXAMEN

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Want to be led in this prayer?

Check out this 10 minute video!



Prayer + Blessing

[Morning, Bedtime, or Both]

✧ Morning ✧

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel! Shine Your light and love into our world once more that we may recognize You and love You this day.

✧ Evening ✧

God of life and light, make Your presence shine upon us! Give us grace to listen to Your prophets that we may turn from the darkness of our sin and love the beautiful light of Your presence.

📖 **Weary World Rejoices** 📖

Coming God, make us ready with overflowing love! May we be on the way to you even as you are on the way to us. May we be glad and grateful as we wait. Amen.

🙏 **Individual Prayer + Family Prayer + Local Group Prayer** 🙏

Lord Jesus, in this Advent season we wait eagerly for your arrival. Come fill our home with your hope, peace, love, and joy. The world isn't like you wanted it to be. Come, help us change. Bring us love. We need you, Jesus. Break into our hearts and world. Come, Lord Jesus. Come



Around the Table

|

Isaiah 9:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

John 3:16-17

|

- How have you experienced the love of God during this year?
- How does God's love need to break into our world?
- Have each family member find three personal items that they can donate to a charity for Christmas.

EXPERIENCES

LOVE

- ÷ Write a letter to God letting Him know how much you love Him. Thank God for sending Jesus to be with us.
- ÷ Light candles or build a fire and worship with Christmas songs. Listen and reflect upon hearing and singing the lyrics. Find an artist or band your or your kids enjoy and listen to these songs.
 - Joy to the World
 - O Come Let Us Adore Him
 - O Holy Night
 - Silent Night
- ÷ Make a paper chain of love, writing a note to a family member on a strip of paper, connecting them all into one long continuous chain.
- ÷ Order and send a dessert to a fire station, hospital, police station, or other public service station and thank them for how they serve, protect, and rescue. Send a note talking about how Jesus breaks into our world to rescue all of creation.





CHRISTMAS DAY

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth,
and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

Luke 2:7

Jesus, the Bread of Life, was born in Bethlehem (Hebrew: "House of Bread")
in a *manger* (Feeding Trough), to feed and nourish the world.

Read: Matthew 1:18-2:23

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Christ is born!

*Praises to our Creator God, who
became flesh for us most fully
in Jesus, Incarnate Word
To become one of us, human,
yet divine*

Christ is Born!

*My Heart sings that the time of
waiting is over.
The light has overcome the
darkness as the true gift from God
has arrived*

Christ is born!

*Praises to our Creator God, who is
as close as the love that binds us,
one to another,
Filling us with awe and wonder at
such miracles*

Christ is born!

*Help us to live the joy of Jesus'
birth this and every day,
knowing that the Spirit of Christ
dwells in us guiding us to be his
witnesses in all that we say and do
throughout the year.*

CHRIST IS BORN!

[illegible]



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