



**THE CORNERSTONE
ADVENT 2021**

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WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent is a season of between 22 and 28 days that includes the four Sundays before Christmas. It is a time of watching and waiting. We watch what the Lord is doing in our lives and the world around us, and we wait for the return of Jesus Christ when all that is wrong in the world will be put right.

In 2021, Advent begins on Sunday, November 28 and ends on Friday, December 24.

During Advent, we focus on three attitudes in our hearts through a variety of Advent activities:

- We **lament** the brokenness of our own lives and of the world in general. So, we **pray** for the Gospel to advance into more places and more people, and for Christ to return and make all things new.
- We **hope** for a new day, the breaking of the dawn of righteousness, the fulness of the new creation, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to rule on the earth. So, we **read** Bible passages that describe that day.
- We **rejoice** in the power and promises of God to make things right in the end. So, we use **lights** of various kinds to express our joy in what is doing and will do.

ADVENT ACTIVITIES

Our Advent activities help us to intentionally and attentively focus on Jesus Christ.

Time. During Advent, set aside a daily 10-15 minutes to sit alone or with your family in order to focus on the presence of Jesus now, the wonder of his incarnation in the past, as well as the hope of his return in the (near?) future.

In the guide that follows, you will find daily Bible readings, devotional reflections, prayer prompts, and Advent activities. Make every effort to follow the guide every day. By the end, your mind and heart will be filled with Advent hope and Christ-centered joy.

ADVENT READING, PRAYER, & ACTIVITY GUIDE

Adapted from Various Sources

Introduction

This guide includes a daily Bible reading and activity designed to help you focus on the Names of Jesus. Also, each day has a brief reflection and prayer designed to increase your longing for the return of Christ. You can do part or all of each day's guide.

Set aside a specific time and place every day to work on the guide. If you miss a day, don't give up; simply skip to the current day.

There are two activities included in the guide.

Advent Candles

The first activity is an Advent wreath, or a collection of five candles. Arrange four of the candles in a circle around the wreath and the fifth candle in the middle. Light a candle on each of the Sundays and light the fifth candle on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The candle light reminds us that Jesus, the light of the world, will return in blazing light that drives all the darkness of sin, injustice, and death out of the world forever.

Name Cards

The second activity will help you reflect on the daily Bible readings. Hang string or yarn between two points on a wall in a place you see every day. Each day, write that day's name of Jesus and it's meaning on a 3x5 card and paperclip it to the string. By the end of Advent, you'll have a long line of names to contemplate. This will help you long for Jesus to return soon.

Ready to experience Advent? Let's go!

Day 1. November 28.

Candle #1	This is the first Sunday in Advent. Light the first candle and pray for Jesus to come soon and bring the light of his goodness to the world.
Name	Jesus. This is the anglicized version of the Hebrew name, Yashua or Joshua. It means, the Lord saves. Jesus is the Lord who saves us from our greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil.
Read	Matthew 1:18-25.
Reflect	(Isaiah 9:2a) "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." There are many reasons for walking in darkness - fear, loneliness, oppression, depression, poverty or violence are just a few. God sees those in darkness and, in Christ, offers light to them.
Discuss	Identify some of the people you either know personally or know about who are living in darkness. How did they end up there? What could you do to help them experience light?
Pray	Lord, we remember before you those who are going through times of darkness. We think of them and ask that you bring them light, hope, love and direction. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 2. November 29.

Name	Light of the World. Jesus is the light that brings God's life into the world.
Read	John 8:12-20.
Reflect	(Isaiah 9:2b) "On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned." Many face either the fear of death or the numbing pain of bereavement. In the midst of such a reality of darkness there is the promise of God that the light of life will shine.
Discuss	Draw and color a picture of a lit candle on the name card. Look at the candle throughout the month and remember that, whatever happens, Jesus is your light.
Pray	Lord, have mercy on all those who are living in the place of the shadow of death; those coping with terminal illness or those who have lost loved ones. God, who is light, bring life, strength, hope and comfort today. Amen.

Day 3. November 30.

Name	Immanuel. This means that Jesus is "God with us." He is God in flesh; truly God, truly man.
Read	Matthew 1:22-23; Philippians 2:5-11.
Reflect	(Isaiah 9:6b) "... Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." For all who are making difficult decisions and are not sure what direction to take, ask the Wonderful Counsellor for light and direction.
Discuss	Watch the "For Unto Us" section of Handel's Messiah on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TN5BaOGTmGs . How does the music highlight Christ?
Pray	Lord Jesus, we wait for you to be revealed at your Return. Our world desperately needs to know you as you truly are. Come quickly and unveil your glory. Amen.

Day 4. December 1.

Name	Christ. Christ is the English form of the Greek word that translates the Hebrew word, Messiah. Messiah means anointed One. Jesus is the promised prophet, priest, and king who is anointed (filled) by the Holy Spirit for his saving life and ministry.
Read	Matthew 16:13-18.
Reflect	(Isaiah 9:7) "Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end." Around the world, many people live under oppression and fear. When Jesus returns, he will bring lasting peace on earth.
Discuss	Pour a little oil into a bowl. Dip a finger in the oil and smear it on today's name card as a reminder that Jesus is Christ, the anointed of God.
Pray	Lord, have mercy, bring order out of chaos, protect the vulnerable, strengthen the weak, and give voice to the voiceless. Come quickly, Lord Jesus and bring peace. Amen.

Day 5. December 2.

Name	I Am. In Exodus 3, God revealed himself to Moses and told him his Name: I Am. By taking this name, Jesus indicated that he is the uncreated, self-sustaining God.
Read	John 8:48-59.
Reflect	Reflect: (1 John 1:5b) "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all." God is untouched by sin; He is pure light. He shines his perfections into the darkest places.
Discuss	In the evening, turn off all the lights in your room. Take a moment to absorb what the absence of light is like. Then, turn on a flashlight to light up one spot. That's the world as we know it. Jesus shines in the midst of darkness.
Pray	Prayer: Lord God, show me the areas of darkness in me. Where I have become hardened to the plight of others or where I have lost the will to do good, Lord, forgive and renew me. Amen.

Day 6. December 3.

Name	Today's Name: Lamb of God. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world by carrying them to the cross. His blood (death) frees us from sin, death, and the devil.
Read	John 1:29-34.
Reflect	(John 8:12a) "Jesus said ... 'I am the light of the world.'" Jesus is the life of God shining into the world. Jesus calls us to explore his perfect character so as to know what that light/life is for us.
Discuss	Make a list of ways to grow your knowledge of Jesus. Pick one and find a time/place to do it.
Pray	Lord, forgive me for the times when I wander away from you. Jesus, I am joined to you by faith. Help me to grow deeper into all you have given me in union with you. Amen.

Day 7. December 4.

Name	Son of David. God promised that the Savior of the world would come from ancient King David's family tree. Almost 1,000 years later, Jesus was born.
Read	Luke 3:23-38. Luke 1:67-69.
Reflect	(John 8:12b) "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus is the only source of God's life in us. He lives in us to bring the light of truth, goodness, love, grace, forgiveness, hope, joy, strength, right living, and so much more.
Discuss	Draw the family tree of Jesus from Luke 3:23-38. Start at the end of that passage and work back up. Talk about the tree. What does it say about God's faithfulness?
Pray	Lord, you are faithful forever. You keep all your promises. Help me to follow you and to grow deeper into all you are and have for me. Amen.

Day 8. December 5.

Candle #2	This is the second Sunday in Advent, so light the second candle and pray for Jesus to return to rule on the earth really soon.
Name	Judge. Jesus did not come the first time to judge the world. However, at his second coming, Jesus will be the judge who has the final word on everyone's eternal destiny.
Read	John 12:47. Acts 10:39-43.
Reflect	(Ephesians 2:8) By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" Have you received this grace by faith?
Discuss	Talk about what you will rely on Judgment Day. The Bible tells us that salvation from judgment and condemnation is by the love, mercy, and grace of God alone.
Pray	Lord, I thank you that your saving love, mercy, and grace have been revealed in Jesus Christ. Help me to stand firm by faith until the final judgment. Amen.

Day 9. December 6.

Name	King of the Jews. Jesus is the promised, eternal, king in King David's dynasty. His rule is forever over not just Israel but the whole world.
Read	Matthew 2:1-12.
Reflect	(Revelation 11:15b) "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Jesus reigns over the world. This allows us to conquer our doubts and fears as we live as his faithful followers.
Discuss	Google an image of Jesus on a throne. Either print the image or draw it and put it on today's name card. Use it to help you remember who is in charge of the world and your life.
Pray	Lord God, I bow down to you my King. Please give me confidence in you as the ruler of all things so that I live as your faithful follower. Amen.

Day 10. December 7.

Name	Sacrifice. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice offered for sin and to restore us to God. When he returns, he will bring about a spotless new creation.
Read	1 John 2:1-2; 4:7-12. Romans 3:25a.
Reflect	(Revelation 21:23) "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the lamb is its lamp." In the new creation, the darkness of sin, injustice, and evil will have no place. All will be spotless light.
Discuss	Wash some dirty dishes and pots and discuss how it makes you feel that Jesus died to wash us clean from sin and will return to bring a spotless new creation.
Pray	Lord Jesus, help me to live every day and in every circumstances in confident hope that you have cleansed me from sin and restored me to God. Help me to spread the faith, joy, and comfort that flow from knowing this.

Day 11. December 8.

Name	Son of God. On the surface, this is a title for kings in ancient Israel. When applied to Jesus, however, it means much more: Jesus is God, the eternal, uncreated, Son.
Read	Mark 1:1-8.
Reflect	(Matthew 5:14) "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden." We represent the light of Jesus by telling the good news that he is the eternal Son of God who will soon return for us.
Discuss	Identify some people in your circle who need to hear that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Pray for open doors to share.
Pray	Lord, open doors for Christians everywhere to share the light of your good news love to people who live in darkness. Amen.

Day 12. December 9.

Name	Last Adam. The first Adam dragged the whole world into sin and death. Jesus, the last Adam, raises us to new life in his eternal kingdom.
Read	1 Corinthians 15:20-28.
Reflect	(Matthew 5:16) "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Jesus makes it possible for us to reject the influence of the first Adam and to live under the influence of the second Adam with such love and goodness that people give praise to God.
Discuss	Draw and color a big red love-heart on today's name card as a reminder to live a life of love every day.
Pray	Lord, do not let Christians around the world hide their light. Help us to love others and do good to them so that they give you praise. Amen.

Day 13. December 10.

Name	Rabbi. Rabbi is the Hebrew word for teacher. Jesus taught the Bible to his followers, but he did more than that, he was a prophet who spoke for God. We should follow his teachings.
Read	John 12:47-49. Acts 3:22-23.
Reflect	(Ephesians 5:8) "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light." We live as children of light as we follow and lovingly obey the teachings of Jesus.
Discuss	What is one of Jesus' teachings you could work on following today? What are some ways you can follow it? What are some obstacles to obeying it. What difference would following this teaching make in your life or the life of someone else?
Pray	Thank you God for rescuing us out of darkness and bringing us into your light. Help Christians around the world to live in ways that bring your light into the darkness. Amen.

Day 14. December 11.

Name	Alpha and Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This name means that Jesus is God (see 1:8) and is in charge of the past, present, and future. In the context of the book of Revelation, it means that Jesus is ruling over everything that happens.
Read	Revelation 1:8. Revelation 22:12-13.
Reflect	(Ephesians 5:9) "For the fruit of light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." Jesus rules the world with the light of goodness, righteousness, and truth in contrast to the darkness created by sin and Satan. The followers of Jesus should shine light, not darkness, by how they live like Jesus - a life of love for all.
Discuss	How does knowing that Jesus rules over everything that happens help you live a life of love for all? Can you think of a time you brought light into a dark situation.
Pray	Lord, I trust that you are ruling over everything. Please renew my heart so that it loves to do good. Holy Spirit, give me the will and the way to help the people around me. Amen.

Day 15. December 12.

Candle #3	This is the third Sunday in Advent. Light the third candle and ask Jesus to quickly return and make this world the home of righteousness.
Name	High Priest. Israel's high priest represented the people to God by offering prayers and sacrifices. Jesus represented us as he offered himself as a sacrifice that removes sin.
Read	Hebrews 2:14-18; 3:1; 4:14-16.
Reflect	(Ephesians 5:9) "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." Jesus is the great light by virtue of being the High Priest who shows us the way back to God.
Discuss	Google the lyrics for "In Christ Alone." Read them aloud and give praise to our High Priest.
Pray	Prayer: Lord, help me to always count on Jesus, the High Priest, to make a way for me to return to you. Let my faith in Jesus help people see his great light and believe. Amen.

Day 16. December 13.

- Name Savior. Salvation means rescue. When Jesus returns, we will experience the full dimensions of his rescue from sin, the devil, death, and all harm. He rescues us to bring us to God.
- Read Hebrews 2:14-18; 3:1; 4:14-16.
- Reflect (Matthew 1:19) "Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly." Joseph and Mary exemplify the struggle to live by faith while we wait for salvation to be fully revealed. When Jesus returns, it will all be worthwhile.
- Discuss What are some the struggles you have while waiting for salvation to be fully revealed? What helps you to stay in faith?
- Pray Prayer: Lord God, we pray for all those who feel alone or isolated or in despair as they wait for salvation to be fully revealed. Help them to stay in faith while they wait. Amen.

Day 17. December 14.

- Name Bread of Life. We're born with spiritual hunger that only Jesus himself can satisfy. We "eat" of him by faith, nourishing ourselves on his love, grace, care, forgiveness, life, and so on.
- Read John 6:25-35.
- Reflect (John 6:27) "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you." So many seek spiritual satisfaction apart from Jesus. The results are emptiness, addiction, hopelessness, anxiety, and despair.
- Discuss Bake something and eat it as a reminder that Jesus is the Bread of Life.
- Pray Lord Jesus, you fill up our longing hearts with the spiritual food that brings us life. As we wait for your return, help us to feast on all you are and have done for us. Amen.

Day 18. December 15.

- Name Wonderful Counselor. Jesus is the wisdom by which we are able to make good decisions. His person, his teachings, and his example all guide us in how to live.
- Read John 6:25-35.
- Reflect (John 6:27) "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you." So many seek spiritual satisfaction apart from Jesus. The results are emptiness, addiction, hopelessness, anxiety, and despair.
- Discuss Talk about a decision you need to make. How does knowing Jesus is Wonderful Counselor help in the decision-making process?
- Pray Wonderful Counsellor, we ask for your guidance at this time. Help us to take the right paths and the correct decisions. Lord be our guide. And even when we take a wrong turn, help us to trust that you are with us, healing, restoring and forgiving. Amen.

Day 19. December 16.

Name	King of Kings. Jesus will return to exercise absolute dominion over the new creation. Jesus is good, righteous, and loving, so we can look forward to his return with happy anticipation.
Read	Revelation 19:11-16.
Reflect	(Luke 2:7) "She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room for them." The King of kings humbled himself and became poor and helpless in order to be our Savior.
Discuss	Have a conversation about the contrast between the way Jesus rules and the way other powerful people exercise their power.
Pray	Lord, by your humility you manifest your power to save us. Come soon and establish your good kingdom on earth for all to see. Until then, protect your people from those who use their power to hurt, abuse, and manipulate. Amen.

Day 20. December 17.

Name	Redeemer. In the past, God redeemed Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Later, Jesus Christ redeemed us from slavery to sin and Satan by his blood shed on the cross.
Read	Ephesians 1:3-10 - see verse 7; Colossians 1:13.
Reflect	Jesus redeems us because we cannot redeem ourselves. While do all we can to make this a better world, we do so knowing that ultimately we need Jesus to return to make all things right.
Discuss	What is one thing you know you can make right? What is one thing that cannot be made right until Jesus returns?
Pray	Come, Lord Jesus and make all things right in the world. Amen.

Day 21. December 18.

Name	Son of Man. This was Jesus' favorite name for himself. It is a way of telling us that, yes Jesus is truly human, but he is also so much more.
Read	Daniel 7:9-14.
Reflect	When Jesus returns, he will be fully manifest as God - hence the reference to riding on the clouds. He will rule over the earth forever. His dominion will be total; all peoples will submit to his rule and all will be as it should be.
Discuss	Sing or say, "I surrender all, I surrender all. All to him my blessed Savior, I surrender all."
Pray	Lord Jesus Christ: King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be. Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow, Lead me to Calvary. Amen.

Day 22. December 19.

Candle #4	This is the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Light the fourth candle and ask Jesus to quickly return and make this world the home of righteousness.
Name	Mediator. By his incarnation, Jesus became the eternal God-Man so that he can stand in the gap between God and humanity and bring them together, forever.
Read	1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 2:14-18.
Reflect	Jesus represents God to us. He also represents us to God. Think of this: God became one of us in Christ, so that he would be able to die for us.
Discuss	Write down every word you can think of to describe God's decision to become one of us.
Pray	Great God, you are indescribable, surprising, amazing, loving, gracious, humble, unbelievable, and good. There aren't enough words to describe the God who became one of us so that he could die for us. I'm in awe of you. Amen.

Day 23. December 20.

Name	Nazarene. Jesus was raised in Nazareth. He grew up in a small town/village right alongside the people and families there. The point is that he lived with us as one of us.
Read	Philippians 2:5-8. 2 Corinthians 8:9.
Reflect	Imagine living next to a billionaire and not knowing it because they lived a "normal" life in order to work as a nurse at the local hospital. Jesus humbled himself and lived next door to us in order to represent us to his Father. BUT ... when he comes again, it will be in full, glorious, splendor. There will be nothing normal or ordinary then.
Discuss	Visit www.nazarethvillage.com and explore the videos/photos of the reconstruction of the Jesus' home town. Search Google images for more photos.
Pray	Lord Jesus, never let me forget that you are God who chose to become one of us. Give me grace to live humbly for the sake of others. Come soon and show us your glory on earth.

Day 24. December 21.

Name	Good Shepherd. The Bible pictures God's people as sheep and God as our Shepherd.
Read	Psalms 23:1; John 10:11-18.
Reflect	We can take great comfort in knowing that Jesus is our Shepherd. The metaphor illustrates his great commitment to us, even to the point of laying down his life for us.
Discuss	Reflect on Jesus as your Shepherd. Imagine the lowest point in your life. Now picture Jesus with you in that moment, as a Shepherd, caring for you, protecting you, going with you.
Pray	Lord Jesus, during this season, we wait for you to return. However, even as we wait, we know that you are with us all the way. You are the Good Shepherd who cares for his people. Thank you. Amen.

Day 25. December 22.

Name	The Bridegroom. Jesus has engaged himself to us as his bride. He will soon come for us for our wedding day so that we will be with him forever.
Read	Revelation 19:6-9.
Reflect	The church is the bride of Christ. In some cultures, husbands must pay a bride price to the bride's parents. In a similar way, Jesus paid our bride price with his own life (Ephesians 5:25-27) to make us holy and blameless. When he returns, the "wedding" will happen.
Discuss	Look at photos of brides. Talk about the way they prepare themselves for their husbands - dress, hair, etc. Discuss how we make ourselves ready for Jesus.
Pray	Lord Jesus, we long for our wedding day. You will be dressed in glorious splendor and you will take your Bride to be with you forever. Help us to make ourselves ready for you by staying faithful and by living loving lives that are full of good deeds.

Day 26. December 23.

Name	The Cornerstone. In ancient buildings, the cornerstone was the foundation stone that was set in place first, and in relation to which all the other foundation stones are laid, and on which the building is built.
Read	Ephesians 2:19-21.
Reflect	When we align our lives with Jesus, we build on a firm foundation and we become part of his church, the temple of the Holy Spirit. When he returns, those who have aligned with him will not be put to shame (1 Peter 2:6); that is, our faith now will be proved right then .
Discuss	Play a game of Jenga and remember that Jesus is the only firm foundation for life, now and into eternity.
Pray	Lord Jesus, life is difficult and full of challenges. If we didn't have you as our firm cornerstone, we would be overwhelmed. Come quickly and bring the new creation in which our faith in you will be proved right. Amen.

Day 27. December 24.

Name	The Resurrection and the Life. Joined to Jesus, we will be raised to live with God forever.
Read	John 17:23-27; Revelation 1:12-18.
Reflect	Physical death is not ultimate death. Jesus has promised to raise his followers to life with God. We know he is able because he already defeated death. We look forward to his return because we long for resurrection bodies and our inheritance in his eternal Kingdom.
Discuss	Read this online article about the biggest number: www.nonfictionminute.org/the-nonfiction-minute/whats-the-biggest-number . Discuss how long eternity with God will be.
Pray	Almighty God, you made eternity and infinity. Thank you for sending your Son into the world in Jesus to be the Resurrection and the Life. Fill our hearts and minds with a longing for eternal life with you so that we live now with true love and faithfulness to you. Send your Son soon. Amen.