

ad·vent

/'ad·vent/

noun

The arrival of a notable person, thing, or event. The first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays.

synonyms

arrival, appearance, emergence, materialization, occurrence, dawn, birth, rise, development

WHY SHOULD WE CELEBRATE ADVENT?

In a season that is busy with shopping, family, meals, decorating, and traveling, we often forget what all the busyness is about; or at least what it *should* be about. Observing the season of Advent is a way to interrupt the busyness and re-orient our hearts and minds toward the arrival of Jesus. Advent expands the Christmas celebration to include the four weeks prior to it. In doing so, our observance becomes a practice that can help aim our wandering hearts and quiet our busy souls as we reflect on the Christmas story. Advent helps us remember and dwell on what God has done for us in sending Christ. It's also a way for us to link arms with the generations that have gone before us, and experience their same anticipation as they eagerly awaited the coming Messiah who would take away the sin of the world. Lastly, it helps us to long and pray for the return of Jesus and his establishment of the New Heaven and the New Earth. This will be our eternal dwelling place, filled with peace and light beyond imagination.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

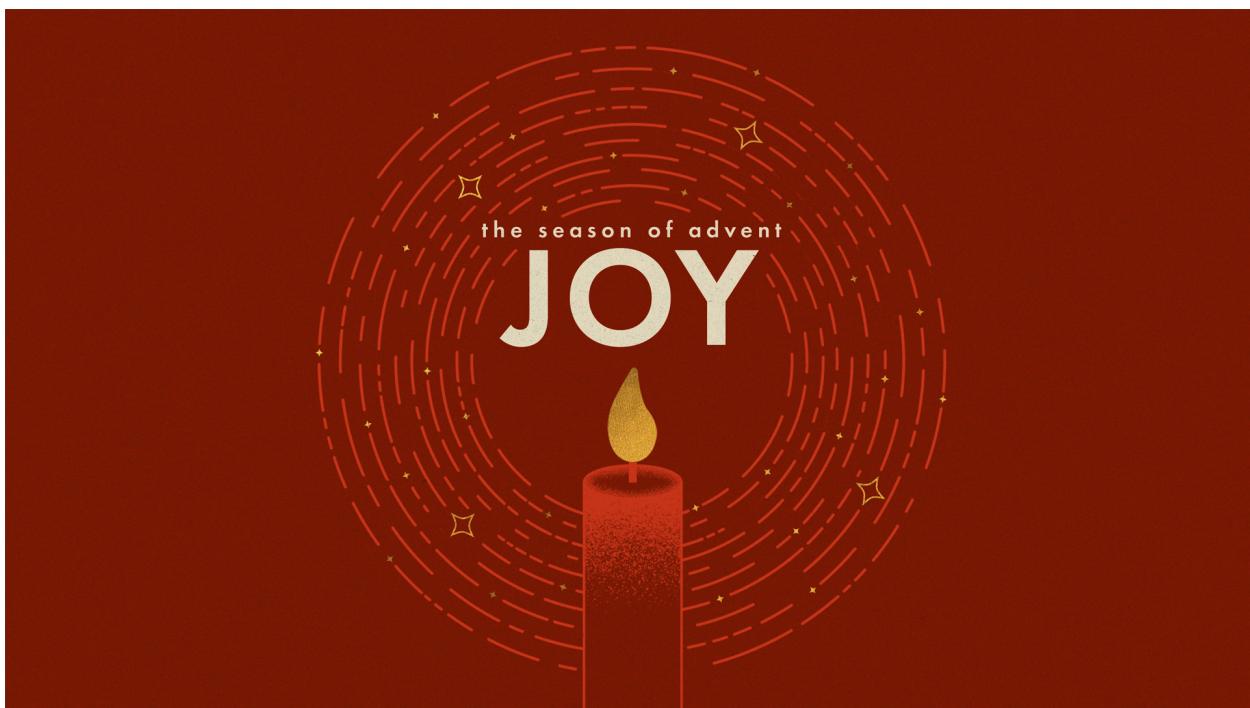
Our hope is that this guide will be a tool that helps you carve out some intentional time with God, friends, and family throughout the Christmas season. Each week includes a passage of scripture, a devotional, reflection questions, a prayer, songs, and activities. Before you get too busy, pick a day, time, and place that you can carve out 30 to 60 minutes to engage with the content each week leading up to Christmas. Invite a friend or neighbor to join you and talk through what you are learning. If you have children, consider making this a special weekly activity to build anticipation toward Christmas.

ADVENT WREATH HOW-TO GUIDE:

- 1) Gather four candles of your choice (any kind will do).
- 2) Place them in a line or circle on a surface that won't be damaged by wax.
- 3) Optional: Spruce it up with some holly, ribbon, or winter greenery. Light a candle each week during your time of reflection. Each week is meant to build toward the next, until all four candles are lit during your Advent reflection time.

Parents, kids love lighting the candles! Help them understand anticipation, excitement, joy, and longing as they light each candle.

Week 2



Light the First, Second, & Third Candle
Read the Devotional
Reflect

"For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Everlasting Father..."

Isaiah 9:6

What makes someone a good father? If you made a list of good qualities in a dad, it would probably include things like: he's involved and interested in his kids' lives, he's kind, compassionate, and forgiving towards his kids, he's a protector, and he teaches his kids how to live well in the world. Kids who grow up with this kind of father oftentimes experience a childhood full of peace and joy.

As the prophecy about the coming Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 continues to unfold, it introduces quite a paradox – "a *child* is born...and his name shall be called *Everlasting Father*." By definition, a baby is neither everlasting nor a father; a baby needs a father to care for them. They certainly can't be a father to others. And yet that's the promise of Isaiah 9:6 – the baby boy who will be born in Bethlehem will also be an Everlasting Father who will care for God's people.

And remember the qualities of a good father we listed? Jesus embodies those qualities and he does so perfectly. Jesus protects us, he provides for us, he's involved in our lives, he's kind, compassionate, and forgiving, and he teaches us how to flourish in the world (2 Cor 4:8-9; Phil 4:19; John 14:16; Eph 4:32b; Matt 7:24-29).

Jesus is not an abrasive and harsh father who provides structure and rules, but no grace. And Jesus is not an absent father who fails to love and lead his children. Jesus is good and perfect. And as those who are a part of Jesus' family, we have peace and joy available to us even as adults, with all the pain and suffering that comes from growing up (Phil 4:4-7).

But not only is Jesus like a good father right now in this moment, he's also an *everlasting* father. Verse 7 from Isaiah 9 says this about him:

*Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end - Isaiah 9:7*

Our experience of Jesus being like a father, unlike with any earthly father, goes on forever. The peace and joy that's available to us as children of God in Jesus doesn't end because we never leave home and Jesus never leaves us. In fact, our experience of Jesus as our father and the peace and joy that follows will only increase.

Isaiah 9:7 isn't describing our present situation. Jesus' rule and the peace that it brings is not obvious or widespread in our world. Isaiah 9:7 is describing the eternal, everlasting reality for God's people. Jesus' government and peace will, one day when he returns, be total and it will be unending. Jesus, as our *Father*, cares for us now in this

broken world, but Jesus as our *Everlasting Father*, will also deliver us from all brokenness and into perfect joy.

C.S. Lewis wrote that "joy is the serious business of heaven." What he meant was that in our earthly lives activities like working, eating, cleaning, and parenting are our serious business, and oftentimes they don't bring us much joy; however, in eternity with God, joy will become our serious business. We will likely still work and eat, but whether we're working, eating, reading, hiking, singing, or dancing, we'll do so with total and complete joy.

God created us to live with him in his creation and to do so in perfect joy, but we messed it up. Sin brought brokenness and brokenness robs us of joy. But God sent Jesus at the first Christmas to restore our joy. Joy is available to us now because Jesus is a perfect father who cares for us in this broken world. And perfect joy awaits us when our *Everlasting Father* returns to make all things new.

REFLECTIONS

What qualities do you think are most important in a good father? How does Jesus embody those qualities?

How can our future hope of total joy in eternity with God give you more joy in your life now? What specific circumstances does this future hope help you navigate right now?

PRAYER

Everlasting Father, we thank you for protecting us, providing for us, forgiving us, and teaching us how to live in the world. We confess that we often reject your care for us and try to do things on our own. Help us live as your children. Lead us towards peace and joy in our

lives here and now and encourage us with our future hope of perfect peace and total joy in your presence forever.

HYMNS & SONGS

Joy to the World

Angels We Have Heard on High

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

Search for [redemptionchurch](#)

Songs of Advent

ACTIVITY

Set aside some time to sing Christmas carols with family and/or friends! This can be as simple as putting on a Christmas record or pulling up a Spotify playlist, or you can attend a caroling event like Line the Street (details below).

Line the Street Carol Sing

Downtown Edmond

Friday, December 16th, 6-7 pm

MAY YOU BE FILLED WITH JOY IN CHRIST

This guide was written and distributed by Redemption Church of Oklahoma City.

All scripture is quoted from the ESV Bible.

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