



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,

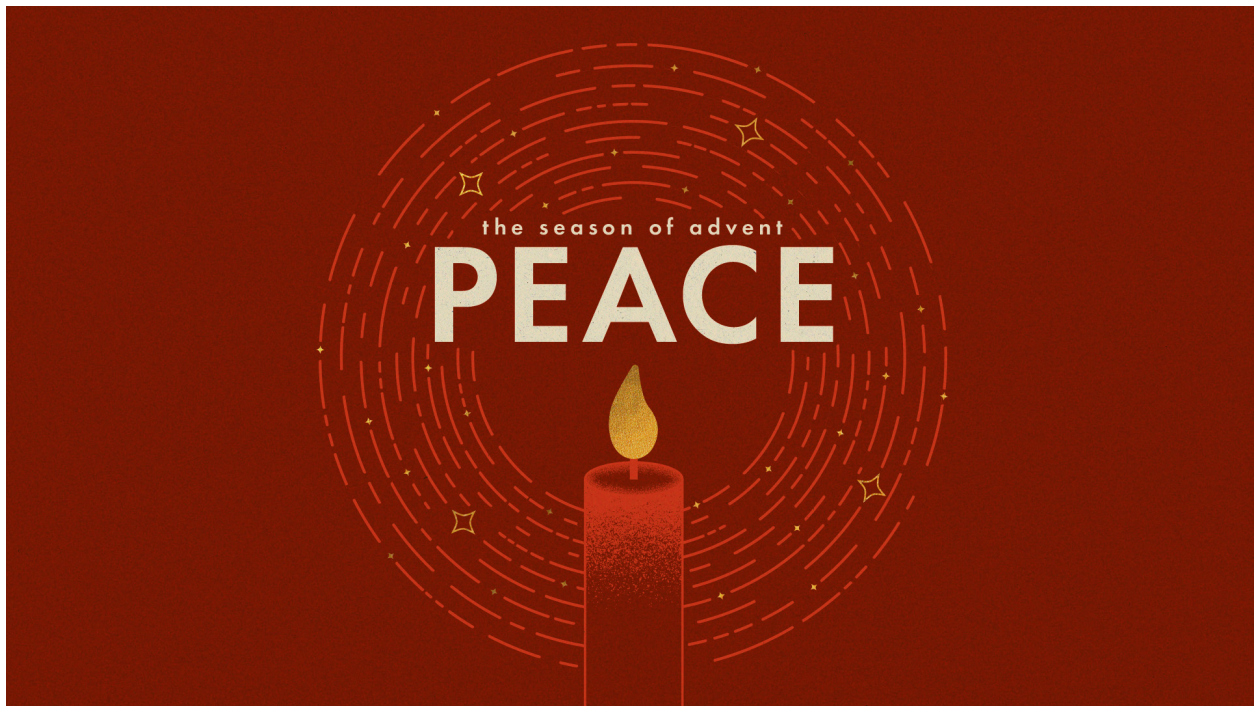
and place that you can carve out 30 to 60 minutes to engage with the content each week leading up to Christmas. Invite a friend or neighbor to join you and talk through what you are learning. If you have children, consider making this a special weekly activity to build anticipation toward Christmas.

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.

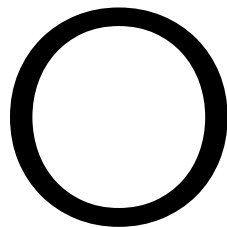


Week 4

Light the All Four Candles
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
Prince of Peace...”

Isaiah 9:6

ur world is anything but peaceful. Whether you're scrolling on social media, gathering with your extended family, or just driving down the road, frustration, disappointment, outrage, and criticism are usually better descriptors of our daily experience than peace.

And it's not hard to see why. Our news apps inundate us with bad news and our social media apps give us a steady stream of images and videos of people with perfect bodies, perfect clothes, and perfect homes, eating perfect food and taking perfect vacations. The world can often make us feel like our lives aren't even remotely close to perfect, and it can leave us discouraged. When we see the source of this standard for what it is - a counterfeit perfection- we can move closer to the truth.

We know that the world lacks peace and it always has, but the good news is that the fourth and final title given to Jesus, the Messiah, in Isaiah 9:6 is *Prince of Peace*. In other words, one of the promises of Christmas is that the kingdom Jesus brings will be characterized by peace. And this hope of peace is future hope – when Jesus comes again the new creation, and you and I, will always be in a perfect state of peace – but it's also present hope. because even though we, as Christ followers, live in this un-peaceful world, we know the Prince of Peace right now.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son - Colossians 3:17

Right now in this moment, Christians live in two very real kingdoms – the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. And what that means for us when it comes to peace is that even though the world around us is full of anxiety, restlessness, and outright anger, we don't have to be. We don't have to be, not because our circumstances and situations lend themselves to peace, but because we know that our present circumstances and situations are not the *only* reality.

Because we've been brought into the kingdom of God through Jesus, we have access to the God who is in control of all things now and we have the promise of a future life with God where no circumstance or situation will exist that will cause anger, disappointment, or hurt. And these truths

mean that we have access to “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” because our peace is anchored outside of ourselves and our world; it’s anchored in the good God who made all things and is sovereign over all things (Phil 4:7).

And that’s good news because it means that while the world around us spirals deeper into outrage, fear, criticism of others, and hopelessness, we don’t have to. We don’t have to read about bad news and be led to fear because we know that God is with us and one day there will be no more bad news. We don’t have to look at the seemingly perfect lives of others and be discouraged because we know that our future heavenly reality will be infinitely greater than even the best present earthly

reality. We can live with true, transcendent peace.

And to live with peace in our world is such a powerful witness for Jesus. It seems like everyone, from nine year olds to ninety year olds, is anxious. And the cultural waters we're swimming in are only making the problem worse. But Christians have an opportunity to be a beacon of light in the midst of darkness because we actually have good reasons to be at peace.

We trust Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We know God, the God of Peace. And we are indwelled with the Spirit, who sows the fruit of peace in our lives. Peace is hard to come by in the world, but it's something most everyone wants. And as children of the God

of Peace, as those to whom the Prince of Peace was sent, peace is available to us.

REFLECTIONS

What circumstances, situations, thoughts, apps, etc. lead you toward anxiety and away from peace?

How does trusting that as followers of Jesus we live in a new kingdom and have access to the God of Peace help you live with more peace in your life?

How can living with a peaceful, non-anxious presence be a powerful witness for Jesus? What/who are some specific circumstances or people that need your peaceful presence.

PRAYER

Prince of Peace, our world and our circumstances are often anything but peaceful. We confess our own responsibility for this lack of peace both in our thoughts and in our actions. Help us trust that you are in control of all things and are making all things new, and help those truths lead us toward peace. As you make us more peaceful, use us to bring a peaceful presence to our world and shine our light for you.

HYMNS & SONGS

Silent Night

O Little Town of Bethlehem

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

Search for redemptionchurch

Songs of Advent

ACTIVITY

Spend some time in silent reflection, clearing your mind of all anxiety and resting in the reality of God. If you are doing this activity with kids you might start with one minute and then try two or three. If you're doing this activity without kids, try doing ten minutes.

To begin, set a timer for the length of time you choose. Once you start the timer, try to clear your mind and focus on who God is. You might reflect on Jesus as your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Other thoughts will come into your mind and that's okay. When those thoughts come, refocus your mind on God and, if it's helpful, you can quickly pray about the thoughts that come up before refocusing your mind silently back on God.

MAY YOU BE FILLED WITH PEACE 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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