

# **FAMILY**

# **DEVOTIONAL**



# **Advent Year C**

# **By: Ariel Williams**

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For additional information contact Ariel Williams at:

- Email: [vivajavaluia@gmail.com](mailto:vivajavaluia@gmail.com)
- Facebook: sassyariel80
- Twitter: sassyariel80



## **ADVENT – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?:**

The four weeks before Christmas mark the season of Advent, from a Latin word for “coming” or “arrival.” We are preparing to celebrate the arrival of Godself, who became human in the form of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The church has observed a season of preparation before Christmas since the time of Bishop Perpetuus of Tours in 490 C.E. The themes of Advent include hope, darkness/light, repentance, watchfulness, preparation, expectation of Christ’s birth at Christmas, & the anticipation of his coming again. The colors of the season is blue or in some instances, purple. Blue suggests hope. Purple is an older tradition that represents royalty and the coming of a king.

## **ADVENT AT HOME:**

The month of December is a busy time. These four weeks are filled with church services, concerts, parties, cleaning, decorating, etc. It can be exhausting and frustrating, but it’s exciting too! I encourage you all to spend time as a family, in Advent, reflecting and preparing. This devotional resource is intended to give you tools to have family devotions around an Advent Wreath. If you don’t have an Advent wreath, 5 pillar candles (one for each week and one for Christmas) will work as well. Although there is a devotion for each day, don’t worry if you are unable to come together as a family every single day of Advent. Even once a week is a wonderful recognition of the season and will help prepare your family. The Sunday devotions are slightly longer so this would be a good option for weekly rather than nightly devotions. The weekly devotion is the same each night. As we steep in the Word, through repetition we often hear new things and the stories are written differently and more deeply on our hearts. Devotions are one way to reinforce Advent at home. Some additional ways to incorporate Advent into your home life are:

- \* **Caring Conversations:** While decorating your house and tree, discuss that decorating is part of our preparation and anticipation of Christ’s coming.
- \* **Service:** Find time to serve others and discuss Christ’s service to us. (Ring bells for Salvation Army; volunteer at a food bank or soup kitchen; donate old toys to Goodwill or a Domestic Violence Shelter.)
- \* **Rituals & Traditions:** We all have rituals and traditions surrounding the season. (Baking goodies; decorating; Christmas Caroling; etc...) Keep doing what you have always done! Discuss WHY you do it... where it came from... who started it.

## **THE ORIGINS OF THE ADVENT WREATH:**

The origins of the Advent wreath are found in the folk practices of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples who, during the cold December darkness of Eastern Europe, gathered wreaths of evergreen and lighted fires as signs of hope in a coming spring and renewed light. Christians kept these popular traditions alive, and by the 16th century Catholics and Protestants throughout Germany used these symbols to celebrate their Advent hope in Christ, the everlasting Light. From Germany, the use of the Advent wreath spread to other parts of the Christian world. Traditionally, the wreath is made of four candles in a circle of evergreens. Three candles are violet or blue and the fourth is rose or purple, but four white candles or four violet candles can also be used. Each day at home, the candles are lighted, perhaps before the evening meal-- one candle the first week, and then another each succeeding week until December 25th.

# **FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT:**

## **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as our nights grow longer and our days grow short, we look on these earthly signs – light and green branches—and remember God’s promise to our world: Christ, our Light and our Hope, will come with great power and glory. Give us strength to remain alert as we wait, knowing that the time is near. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

## **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Jeremiah 33: 14-16 OR “A Child Called Immanuel” (Pg. 168) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

## **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first candle:

Rejoicing we remember your promise, O Christ. Like the light from this candle, may your blessing come upon us, brightening our way and guiding us by your truth. Christ our Savior bring life into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for your coming.

## **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

## **Gospel Reading:**

Read Luke 21: 25-36 OR “Be Ready” Pg. 346 in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

## **Discuss:**

- Who must we be alert for?
- What signs will indicate that Christ is near?
- How can we prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming?

## **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, you provide good and gracious gifts to us as signs of your abiding love and of your imminent coming. Help us to share these gifts with others and to receive them with a grateful heart. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## **Bless:**

Child of God, the time is drawing near, look to the heavens, be patient and wait.

## **ADVENT WEEK 1:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first candle:

O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, desire of every nation, Savior of all peoples, come and dwell among us.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel Reading:**

Read Luke 21:25-36 OR “Be Ready” Pg. 346 in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

### **Activity:**

Create a Bible Verse Advent Chain. (See Appendix A for instructions and templates.) Tear off one link each day and read the Bible verse for the day.

### **Pray:**

Heavenly Father, you provide good and gracious gifts to us as signs of your redeeming love and of your imminent coming. Help us to share these gifts with others and to receive them with a grateful heart. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, the time is drawing near, look to the heavens, be patient and wait.



## **SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as our journey continues, we look to these greens and candles as signs to us that life and light are coming. We listen for the voice crying out from the wilderness. We look to prepare the way of the Lord. Give us patience as we keep awake and as we prepare for your coming. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

### **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Malachi 3:1-4 – OR read “A Good Ruler” (Pg. 178) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first & second candles:

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son. As we light these candles, may we become blessings to one another. Make us your messengers to the world. Use our voices. Guide our way. Let us be the ones crying out as we prepare the way of the Lord.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel:**

Luke 3: 1-6 OR “John the Baptist” (Pg. 234) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible)

### **Discuss:**

- Who was preparing the way for Jesus? How did he do this?
- Who prophesied that John would do this?
- How can we help prepare the way for Christ’s coming?
- How can we be God’s messengers?

### **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, help us to look to your word. Bless those in our lives who are your messengers to us; our Bishops, Pastors, Youth Ministers, and Church Leaders. Make us your messengers also. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, listen for God’s message, hear the voice crying out, and prepare the way of the Lord.

## **ADVENT WEEK 2:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first & second candles:

O King of all nations, Jesus Christ, only joy of every heart, come and save your people.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel:**

Luke 3: 1-6 OR “John the Baptist” (Pg. 234) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible)

### **Activity:**

Option 1: Send a message or prayer to a family member or friend telling them of Christ’s coming. Write a letter or card, send an email, a text message, etc...

Option 2: Make handmade Christmas Cards and send them to your Pastor, Youth Minister, or other Church Leader thanking them for being a “Messenger” in your life.

**Don’t forget to remove a link each day from your advent chain!**

### **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, help us to look to your word. Bless those in our lives who are your messengers to us: our Bishops, Pastors, Youth Ministers, and Church Leaders. Make us your messengers also. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, listen for God’s message, hear the voice crying out, and prepare the way of the Lord.



## **THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as we draw closer and closer to your coming, these candles and branches remind us of the frailty of life. The branches grow dry and brittle. Strengthen our will to act as your messengers. Grant us patience and guidance as we remain alert and anticipate your coming. Inspire our faith, and transform us through your grace. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Zephaniah 3:14-20 OR read “God’s Peaceful World” (Pg. 172) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, & third candles:

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son. As we light these candles, we are reminded of the constant renewal of our faith. You came to teach, to heal, to spread peace, and to inspire. You are the potter, we are the clay. Make us vessels of your loving grace.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel:**

Luke 3:7-18 OR “Jesus the Word” (Pg. 240) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible).

### **Discuss:**

- Who did people think John might be?
- Who did John tell him he was?
- What was John’s mission or job?
- Would you have wanted John to baptize you? Why or why not?
- What message do you think God is calling you to deliver? How can you do this?

### **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, you enable and equip all of your messengers. Thank you for sending them to us. Strengthen and empower us to listen and spread the message to others. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, deliver God’s message, anticipate Christ’s coming. He is near!

## **ADVENT WEEK 3:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, & third candle:

O Key of David, Jesus Christ, the gates of heaven open at your command, come and show us your mercy.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel:**

Luke 3:7-18 OR “Jesus the Word” (Pg. 240) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible).

### **Activity:**

Play Holiday “Would You Rather” as a family. (See Appendix B)

Don't forget to remove a link each day from your advent chain!

### **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, you enable and equip all of your messengers. Thank you for sending them to us. Strengthen and empower us to listen and spread the message to others. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, deliver God's message, anticipate Christ's coming. He is near!



# **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT:**

## **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as we feel your imminent presence, the light and greens encourage us and excite us. We give thanks for all of the Messengers in our lives who share the good news. Help us serve others this season and to always be humble and grateful. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

## **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Micah 5: 2-5a OR read “God Will Bring Peace” (Pg. 164) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

## **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, third, & fourth candles:

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son. As we light these candles, we magnify and praise your name. Our spirits rejoice in knowing that you are near. You send forth your Messengers and Servants. Make us your servants and strengthen us to reach out to those in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

## **Gospel:**

Luke 1: 39-55 OR “Mary Visits Elizabeth” (Pg. 202) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible)

## **Discuss:**

- What did Elizabeth do when Mary arrived?
- How did Elizabeth know that Mary was pregnant with God’s son?
- How did Mary respond to Elizabeth?
- How do you share exciting news?

## **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, we, like your messengers and servants, honor and magnify your holy name. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, equip us, and make us your servants. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## **Bless:**

Child of God, holy servant, little angel, go out and show the world that Christ’s coming is upon us.

## **ADVENT WEEK 4:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, third, & fourth candles:

O Key of David, Jesus Christ, the gates of heaven open at your command, come and show us your mercy.

### **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

### **Gospel:**

Luke 1: 39-55 OR “Mary Visits Elizabeth” (Pg. 202) in the Spark Story Bible (or in your favorite story Bible)

### **Activity:**

Option 1: Bake Christmas goodies and take them to a friend, relative, or church member who could use a visit and some good news.

Option 2: Call or send a letter in the mail (the old fashioned way!) with some good news to a friend or family member.

Don't forget to remove a link each day from your advent chain!

### **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, we, like your messengers and servants, honor and magnify your holy name. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, equip us, and make us your servants. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### **Bless:**

Child of God, holy servant, little angel, go out and show the world that Christ's coming is upon us.



# **CHRISTMAS EVE:**

## **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as our journey reaches its culmination, the beauty of these lighted candles surrounded by greens reminds us that there is always light to be found in darkness. Christ our light and our hope, has come! Let our lights shine bright, always in honor of you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Isaiah 9:2-7 OR read “A Child Called Immanuel” (Pg. 168) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

## **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, third, & fourth candles:

O Wisdom, holy Word of God, Jesus Christ, all things are in your hands, come and show us the way to salvation.

## **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

## **Gospel:**

Luke 2: 1-20 OR “Jesus is Born” in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible)

## **Activity:**

Enjoy Christmas Eve with your family and friends!

Don't forget to remove a link each day from your advent chain!

## **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, you came into the world, not to condemn the world, but to redeem the world. We celebrate your coming just as the Angels, Shepherds, and townspeople of Bethlehem celebrated your coming so long ago. Glory to you in the highest and peace to our brothers and sisters on earth! Show us the way to proclaim your birth! In Jesus name we pray, amen.

## **Bless:**

Child of God, Christ is with us, go proclaim his birth!

# **CHRISTMAS DAY:**

## **Opening Prayer:**

Holy God, as we gaze upon this light, we are reminded that you sent your son on this day to bring light to all peoples. You are the light in the darkness. The beauty of these lighted candles surrounded by greens reminds us that there is always light to be found in darkness. Christ, our light and our hope, has come. Let our lights shine bright, always in honor of you. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

## **Words from the Prophets:**

Read Isaiah 52: 7-10 OR “A Ruler from Bethlehem” (Pg. 194) in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible.)

## **Candle Lighting:**

Speak these words while lighting the first, second, third, & fourth candles:

O Wisdom, holy Word of God, Jesus Christ, all things are in your hands, come and show us the way to salvation.

## **Highs & Lows:**

Share the best and worst parts of your day.

## **Gospel:**

John 1: 1-14 OR “Jesus the Word” in the Spark Story Bible (or a similar story in your favorite story Bible)

## **Activity:**

Enjoy Christmas Day with your family and friends!

## **Pray:**

Gracious Redeemer, you came into the world, were made human in flesh and bones. You lived among us and showed us your glory, full of grace and truth. Today we celebrate your birth and rejoice in your coming. We look forward to your return with grateful anticipation. Protect us, guide us, give us patience, and hope. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

## **Bless:**

Child of God, Christ is with us, proclaim his birth and spread God’s word!

# **APPENDIX A:** **ADVENT CHAIN**

Print the sheets below on colored paper. Cut out each Bible verse and create an interlocking chain with the Bible verse strips. Make sure the dates are in ascending order.



**Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> - John 1: 1-5**

**Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> - Isaiah 11: 1-10**

**Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> - Luke 1: 5-10**

**Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> - Luke 1: 18-25**

**Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> - Matthew 1: 18-21**

**Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> - Luke 1: 39-45**

**Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 1-5**

**Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 8-12**

**Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 15-18**

**Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> - Micah 5: 2-5**

**Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> - Matthew 2: 3-6**

**Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> - Matthew 2: 9-12**

**Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Isaiah 9: 2-7**

**Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>-Jeremiah 33: 14-16**

**Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> - Luke 1: 11-17**

**Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> - Luke 1: 26-38**

**Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 1: 18 - 21**

**Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> – Luke 1: 46-56**

**Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 6-7**

**Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 13-14**

**Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> - Luke 2: 19-20**

**Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> - Matthew 2: 1-2**

**Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> - Matthew 2: 7-8**

**Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> - John 1: 14**

# **APPENDIX B:**

# **WOULD YOU RATHER...**

have to loudly sing the chorus of Jingle Bells every time you walk into a room for a week or have to wear a Santa suit to school every day for a week

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be present for Jesus' birth or be present for Jesus' ministry

---

make presents for your family instead of buying them or make ornaments for your Christmas tree instead of buying them

---

be visited by an angel or be visited by shepherds

---

have a snowy Christmas or have Christmas on the beach

---

have a live Christmas Tree or an artificial Christmas Tree

---

give or receive

---

spend Christmas at home or travel to be with family

---

have no one be homeless or have no one go hungry again

---

ride in a one horse sleigh or a bobsled

---

see no more disease or no more poverty

---

be a Wise Man or a Shepherd

---

visit the North Pole or visit Bethlehem

---

receive socks for Christmas or receive a dictionary for Christmas

---

be given \$100 for Christmas to buy things for yourself or be given \$1000 before Christmas to use to buy gifts for other people

---

go caroling or put up Christmas decorations

---

be Mary or Elizabeth

---

see *the Nut Cracker* or dance in *the Nut Cracker*

---

spend a day watching Christmas videos or spend a day Christmas shopping at the mall

---

give someone something they really want or something they really need

---

be God's messenger or God's witness

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- **Weekly and Daily Texts based on the Revised Common Lectionary for Year C.**
- **Portions of the weekday opening prayers were taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's worship resources website.**