

West Family Advent Liturgy

A guide for enjoying Jesus in the Christmas season

:Written by Amber West

Set-up:

- Buy or make an [advent wreath](#)- You can use any color of candles, but traditionally, you would include four candles around the wreath (three purple, one pink) and one larger white candle in the center.
- The Advent wreath comes from northern Europe where evergreen trees carried a special symbolism during their long, cold winters. Winter often symbolizes death in literature and nature; the wreath is a circular, unending shape of evergreen that symbolizes ongoing life in the midst of that darkness and even death. The candles bring warmth and comfort as these days coincide with the days around winter solstice, the darkest and longest nights of the year.
- We light one new candle each week to symbolize the coming of the Light of the World. We can focus and feel that warmth as we reflect each night on what that coming means in our lives.



Why Advent?

- To celebrate or not to celebrate? Every parent knows that Christmas can easily become a bank-breaking holiday of presents, business and frayed nerves. Many of the common Christmas traditions are rooted in a pagan holidays such as Yule, Saturnalia and the winter solstice. There are plenty of reasons to just call the whole thing off! Doesn't this make Christmas even more appropriate for us as believers in a God who seems very interested in turning the profane into the

holy? Praise God that we were dead to our sin, but the Lord has made us His righteousness through Jesus! (II Corinthians 5:21). Let's use our own Advent tradition to reclaim this holiday, teach our children the warmth of Jesus, and renew our hearts in the process.

- This beautiful tradition dates back to the Fourth Century! It is a process that has been rewritten over and over again for a couple of purposes including the preparation for baptism and in general the waiting for the second coming of Jesus.
- The word, advent (Latin *adventus*) means "the coming" and we apply that not only to the original coming of Christ to us on earth as Jesus, as well as his eventual return one day. Perhaps most meaningfully, we walk through the advent process to reflect on the places in our lives where Jesus desires to come.
- [Here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) are a few good resources if you want to read more about it.
- As we reflect, we pray for God's unfolding promise, plan and redemption known and clear in our lives so that He may come in!

Week 1: *Hope* [The Message of the Prophets]

Sunday - What is Advent?

Concept: Discuss what Advent is and that we do it to prepare our hearts to understand the full meaning of christmas. As Richard Roar says, Advent is not so much a waiting for a baby to be born, but rather "an asking for history to be born" as designed and full of the Holy Spirit. Each week we will light one candle to represent the light of Christ coming into us, renewing our hope in that longing for the ways of the Messiah to be in everything we see and everything we are.

We light a candle because Jesus is a transformative light. Things in our lives change when we turn to Jesus, when we live in his ways, when we pray, when we join his community - when we turn to Jesus, we welcome the coming of his redemption and restoration. We prepare our hearts these four weeks in order to make room for all that Jesus is and brings.

Chat: What does it mean for the people to see a great light? What beautiful things have you seen in your life or in history because of Jesus?

Light the first candle (purple).

Isaiah 9: 2-4

*2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;*

*Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.*

3 You will multiply the nation,

*You will increase their joy;
They will rejoice in Your presence*

*As with the joy of harvest,
As people rejoice when they divide the spoils.*

*4 For You will break the yoke of their burden and the
staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as
at the battle of Midian.*

John 1:1-5

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the
beginning with God 3 All things were made through
him, and without him was not anything made that was
made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of
men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness has not overcome it.*

Activities:

<p>Pray: Thank God for his desire to redeem and restore, and for the care to communicate with us over so many years and people. Pray that just as a light enters and touches everything, he will also shine into our lives, making everything clear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make or set up an advent wreath and talk about the big concept of the Light coming into the world and the symbolism of the candles. • For Kids: Game - A Light in the darkness (see Appendix B below) <p>Songs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oh Come, Emanuel • In the Bleak Midwinter
<p>Monday - Hope for Each One</p> <p>Concept: God has been giving his promise of hope throughout history, especially through the prophets. Here Isaiah records a messianic prophecy about who Jesus is and how He sees us with unsearchable understanding! God sees each individual and promises strength. He does not give up or grow tired. He has great promises for those who choose to hope in the Lord.</p> <p>Chat: In our world, there are so many things and people that offer great rewards if we put our hope in them; just consider the last commercials you saw on your tv or internet window. What tempts you to misplace your hope? What do these promises in Isaiah mean to you right now?</p> <p>Pray: Thank God that he is the source of our hope. Ask God to shine a light in your heart to reveal any targets of false hope and then pray that he will speak to you about what His hope looks like in those places.</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Context: Isaiah was a prophet in Jerusalem who wrote and spoke in order to wake Israel up to the living God, but more importantly he gave MANY extremely detailed prophecies of Christ, including the announcement of his coming, his virgin birth, His sacrificial death, and His eventual return to claim His people. This book stands as a testament of HOPE in a God who saves His people from themselves (Insight). Chapter 40 reveals a thematic shift from comfort to making God's glory known. (I like this source on the whole chapter.)</p> <p>Isaiah 40: 28-31 <i>28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives strength to the weary, And to the one who lacks might He increases power. 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, 31 Yet those who hope in the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.</i></p> <p>Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share one place where you desire God to renew your strength and hope.
<p>Tuesday - Hope for Nations</p> <p>Concept: Isaiah reveals not just a promise of hope, but the depth of Him in whom we hope - the messiah promised would be righteous, just, and faithful. Not only would that messiah be interested in restoring individuals, but society as well, even nations. Sometimes the world seems so overwhelming, so complex in its problems and needs. This scripture reminds us to hope for those places too. It promises that God won't even break a bruised reed. We can trust Him to see all the details not just for each person, but for the</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Isaiah 40: 1-4 <i>1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.</i></p>

<p>nations. This is a time where we can lay our worries and anxieties to rest, fully placed on the shoulders of our savior. As we cast our cares on Jesus, perhaps there will be more room in our hearts to receive him as our Hope.</p> <p>Chat: Where do you desire to see God bring justice in your community or nation? What worry has been “taking up space” in your mind? Is there a place where you or I might be able to support God’s desire for justice and fairness?</p> <p>Pray: Let us renew our hope that Jesus and his followers can enact the Kingdom of God to bring hope to our city and nation. Pray that like this prophesy about Jesus, we also will not give up or be discouraged until He establishes justice on earth.</p>	<p>Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like the wailing wall, let’s create a little record of our prayers. Consider and record a few places in your life or the world that feel impossible to fix. Those could be things from the past too. Write down anything in your life that needs God to come in and redeem or restore. Roll or fold those up and tuck them into the advent wreath until later. Let’s commit to entrust those worries and trouble spots to Jesus and trade them for his rest and peace. <p>Songs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oh Come, Emanuel Oh Come All Ye Faithful
<p>Wednesday - Shema</p> <p>Concept: The Israelites had a repeated prayer to remind them of the Hope they have in God. According to Jewish tradition, the <i>Shema</i> is the most important prayer and it is said in the morning, in the evening, before a person dies. The children are taught to whisper this before going to sleep. It is the final prayer of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. This prayer holds the essence of their beliefs - that the Lord our God is ONE! This prayer is cool because the word one is a pun - it can be used in multiple ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is ONE true God. The Trinity is One (If we apply a messianic NT application). God is ONE, meaning that He is whole, sing-minded, solid, holy, pure, incorruptible, timeless, trustworth.... We could go on and on with this beautiful thought! Extending on that, we are to be one as He is one - solid, whole, complete.. “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.” - John 17:20-23 <p>Chat: What is implied in the concept of God benign ONE. Why is that so important for us in our lives? What does it mean for us to be one as He is one?</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Context: Consider the ancient Greeks. Their gods were not one in any respect. There were MANY gods with MANY conflicting natures and desires. How could a person know the way to guide their lives morally or even practically? Our world is just as duplicitous in its advice... Will you pursue money, or health, or success, etc...</p> <p>Deuteronomy 6:4-9 <i>4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.</i> (Want to read it in Hebrew? Click here.)</p> <p>Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pray the <i>Shema</i> aloud with your loved ones. Write the <i>Shema</i> somewhere that you’ll see it and pray it in the morning and night, perhaps on your mirror with an erasable marker, perhaps by your coffee pot. :) Let this become a mantra to help you continually consider the beauty and implications of our Lord being ONE.

<p>Pray: Praise God for his beautiful and singular nature. He is holy and perfect, unchanging and complete. Pray that he will make us one (as a whole individual person) and make our people one (as a unified body of Christ). Invite his light of hope into your desire to unity with that complete and trustworthy Messiah.</p>	
<p>Thursday - Hope in a Holy Messiah</p> <p>Concept: The prophet Isaiah foretold of a coming messiah, giving vision of hope in His name, Emmanuel. Isaiah 61 is the scripture Jesus read in the temple to claim his position as Messiah. In Luke 4:18 Jesus opens the scroll in the synagogue and reads the words straight out of Isaiah 61 and everyone knows his intention and the whole batch of messianic scriptures that went with it, including the claim of supernatural birth and holy identity as God's son. Considering Isaiah 61, Jesus' identity and calling cannot be mistaken. He is the messiah, empowered by the Father and Holy Spirit, anointed to change everything, bring freedom and justice. He intends to make us Oaks of Righteousness. He is Emmanuel, God with us.</p> <p>Chat: What does Emmanuel mean? What does this mean for us if we believe that is true in our lives as well? Are there any misperceptions about the Messiah we may need to give up or correct in order to make room for the powerful identity of hope which He has claimed in Isaiah? What does it mean to have the Isaiah 61 God with us?</p> <p>Pray: Ask God for a renewed hope in the places once accepted as irreparable. Invite the Lord to speak to you about how those places may be redeemed or restored. Ask God to be your vision of justice rather than your circumstance.</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Context: Isaiah 61 is the scroll Jesus read and claimed as being about himself. Do a quick internet search - How long before Christ was this prophecy?</p> <p>Isaiah 7: 14 <i>14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Emmanuel.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 61:1-3 <i>1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.</i></p> <p>Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chant Prayer: First pray Isaiah 61 out loud together. Thank God for answering that Messianic calling. Then pray it again, knowing that God has also anointed you to do all those things in the world as we love others and enact his Kingdom. <p>Songs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oh Come, Emanuel
<p>Friday - Hope Even in Dead Places</p> <p>Concept: The Israelites thought God's promises of a nation and identity were dead forever. Like the Isaiah 11 scripture, we have stumps in our lives. We may feel or believe those things, those relationships, those dreams, those personal places have been cut off, never to come back to life. And from those, it takes great courage to ask</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Scripture Context: Why did the Israelites feel like a dead stump during this time? What exactly was God's promise in verse 1 for them? (Internet Research-grab your device and share what you find at the table.)</p> <p>Isaiah 11: 1-10 <i>1 Then a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, And a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.</i></p>

<p>Jesus how He might go about bringing a new sprout of life. By renewing our hope and asking God about the “dead places,” we make room for the King to come in and establish his kingdom in our lives and hearts.</p> <p>Chat: What dead places in your life would you like God to come and heal, renew or revive? What can we draw from the fact that the image suggests a sprout growing, rather than a fully and instantly restored whole tree? Look for (or even highlight) each paradox in this excerpt. So often we say, “that’s just the way it is,” but here God proves otherwise. What situations in our own lives do we write off as “that’s just the way it is”? What does God have to say about those places?</p> <p>Pray: Thank God for being all those things in Isaiah 11 and for His desire to come and restore our past, our present and our future. Invite Him to speak to us about all the places in our lives that feel dead to us, and how/where he’d like to come in! Advent means “the coming” after all! We wait for him to come, but perhaps He is waiting for us to ask?</p>	<p><i>2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, Or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, And with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, And faithfulness the belt of his loins. 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fattened steer will be together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. 10 Then on that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal flag for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.</i></p> <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For kids: Color the Jesse Tree sheet (Voskamp book, chapter 1 pairs nicely here). <p>Songs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oh Come, Emanuel
<p>Saturday - An Ebenezer & the Jesse Tree</p> <p>Concept: God sent prophets to tell people to hope and wait for Christ, the light and hope of the world, but did you know that hope is mentioned 129 times in the Bible! The words “Fear not” are mentioned 365 times! If you consider faith to be the opposite of fear, another way to say faith is a determined hope in the Lord. How can any of God’s work happen if we don’t first hope? Let’s make a marker of God’s hope - just like the people of old made ebenezers of God’s faithfulness, create your own ebenezer to hang on the tree.</p> <p>Chat: Do you agree that hope and fear are opposites? Is it possible to have faith without</p>	<p>Light the first candle (purple).</p> <p>Quick search: Find a favorite verse about hope, faith or bolstering oneself against fear. Here are a few of my favorites:</p> <p>Psalms 31:24: <i>Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.”</i></p> <p>Ephesians 1:18: <i>I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.</i></p> <p>Romans 15:13: <i>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.</i></p>

<p>hope? What does it really mean to have hope? What gets in the way of us renewing our hope about tough situations? What keeps you from hoping? In the past, how has God brought redemption and peace in a different way than you thought or wanted.</p> <p>Pray: Continue to ask God where He might like you to renew hope in his love and intentions for your life. Pray your chosen verse over your life and those you love.</p> <p>Jesse Tree Decorating - Decorate your tree! Reclaim this tradition for Jesus. This is our very own Jesse tree - a symbol of God's evergreen promise to come and bring redemption and restoration into our own lives. especially in the places that felt like a dead stump. This is God's ultimate gift and why we bring gifts as well.</p>	<p>Psalms 119:114: <i>You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.</i></p> <p>Hebrews 10:23: <i>Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."</i></p> <p>2 Timothy 1:7 <i>For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind.</i></p> <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an ebenezer in the form of a beautiful ornament or bookmark with one of the verses about hope. Hang it on your tree or give it as a gift to someone who needs to be reminded that we can renew our hope in Jesus even when a situation seems beyond hope. <p>Songs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come Thou Fount • Oh Christmas Tree - Aretha Style
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Appendix B - Games & Activities:

Children's Game: Light in the Darkness

- Supplies: a small container and flashlight for each person
- Round 1: When I turn out the lights, take a careful walk around, keeping your container over your flashlight. (After a short time to experience the darkness, turn on the lights. Ask what it was like to have your light hidden in darkness?)
- Round 2: Elect one person to turn on their light. (After a short time to experience the darkness, turn on the lights. Ask about how much that one light helped everyone. Was it able to help you who had no light? - Just like the light of one believe helps others.)
- Round 3: All members may uncover their lights. (After, discuss the way God's light in our lives guides us, helping us to walk safely, quickly, and with clear vision.)
- After the game discuss: How much darkness does it take to overcome light? How much light does it take to overcome darkness?
- This game is found in the book, *Christ in Christmas: A Family Advent Celebration* (Dobson, Swindoll, Montgomery & Sproul).

Resources for Kids:

- Use [these coloring](#) sheets with Ann Voskamp's beautiful book, *Unwrapping the Greatest Gift*. (Gorgeous pictures, beautiful descriptions of the warmth of the Father-well worth the buy.)

Resources

- ESV Bible
- [Insight.org](#)
- [Hanukkah Classes](#)
- [Ebeneezers](#)