

advent



Advent is defined by the arrival of something or someone notable, but it also assumes a journey. When we think of Christmas and the incarnation of Jesus, we appropriately gravitate to His journey from Heaven to us. However, during Advent it is also appropriate for us to think of other biblical characters, as well as our own journey to God.

This Advent guide follows key individuals through a portion of their biblical narrative, observing their obedience to God in bringing about His ultimate plan of redemption. Each week also asks you to consider how their stories impact your own. Together we will see how God redeems pain, blesses obedience, and provides for us as we wait on Him - and ultimately how He fulfills all His promises in Jesus.

An Advent wreath is commonly used during this season, both in church settings and in private homes. It is a simple wreath with four candles arranged around the perimeter, one for each week, with a white candle in the center, reserved to commemorate Christ's birth. Each week of Advent, an additional candle is lit until Christmas Eve, when all of the candles are lit, including the central Christ candle.

At Calvary, we follow the tradition of focusing on the virtues of hope, peace, joy and love for the four weeks of Advent. Usually the candles for hope, peace and love are purple (a symbol of the royalty of the awaited Christ) and the one for joy is pink or rose. But if you wish to create your own Advent wreath at home, you can use less traditional colors as needed. (If you are looking for some ideas on creating an Advent wreath, try a quick web or Pinterest search; there are some creative ideas out there!)



The Jesus Storybook Bible

Throughout Advent we will be reading stories from the Jesus Storybook Bible, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and illustrated by Jabo. Copies of this Bible are available for purchase at Baker Book House (2768 E Paris Ave SE). Mention Calvary Church and receive 40% off.

Subscribe to the Advent Email list at mycalvarygr.org to receive content coordinated with this guide on Sundays, Tuesdays & Thursdays throughout the 2020 Advent Season.



hope

Read *The Forgiving Prince*, page 76 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Light the first (purple) candle in your wreath, the Hope candle. Sing a verse of *Silent Night* as you light it.

In the story of Joseph we see hope in the midst of trials and temptations. Joseph's life followed a heart-wrenching rhythm of success and disappointment, yet his hope in God remained steadfast. It took time for Joseph to grow into his gifts, and he spent many years waiting for the fullness of God's plans to be revealed in his life. In spite of repeated setbacks and devastating circumstances, the Lord was with Joseph and continually gave him success no matter where he was to be found.

Have you found that as you have sought to trust and obey God, things have moved from bad to worse? Take hope and remember that the Lord does not waste a thing! Our blessings and our hardships, especially our hardships, are all meant for our good and His purposes and glory.

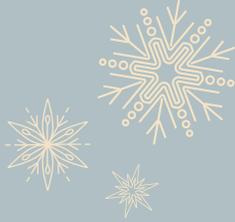
What is Joseph waiting for?

How does this story speak to your life this week?

In what ways do we see Joseph practicing obedience in this story?

a prayer for hope

Think of an area in your life in which you are waiting. Thank God for His presence there with you and for the ways He has provided for you (even those you may not recognize).



peace

Read *The Young Hero and the Horrible Giant* in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 122.

Light the first candle in your wreath, followed by the second (purple) candle in your wreath, the Peace candle. Sing a verse of *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* as you light them.

Peace in the biblical sense is about more than just an absence of hostility, it is a wholeness experienced when one is completely reliant on God. In this story we see someone set apart for God despite being set aside by their family. David was the youngest, the least experienced and the last one you would expect to find victory in this situation. Yet the Lord had chosen him and David chose to rely on God.

When we trust God fully, we experience peace in the midst of our trials, not just in their absence. While David would go on to wait many years for God's promises to be fulfilled, he knew peace because He knew our faithful God. Have you felt called by God to serve in ways you don't feel qualified? Believe this week that God is worthy of our trust and obedience, and experience the peace that comes in following Him completely.

What is David waiting for?

How does this story speak to your life this week?

In what ways do we see David practicing obedience in this story?

a prayer for peace

Pray for God's peace in an area where you are tempted to worry or fear. Pray that God would remind you of His presence when you are tempted.



joy

Read Son of Laughter in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 56 - another story of a couple who received a seemingly impossible gift from God.

Light the first and second (purple) candles in your wreath Light the third (rose) candle, the Joy candle. Sing a verse of Joy to the World as you light the candles.

In one sense, joy is happiness that comes from an unanticipated good. Elizabeth and Zechariah did not anticipate that they would become parents. All outward signs pointed to their bareness, yet inwardly God was working a miracle. In God's power, they would move from a season of endless waiting to welcoming a child who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Talk about a turnaround!

Is there an area of life where you are waiting on God to provide? Are you afraid to anticipate God's goodness because all the outward signs lack promise? May we be encouraged this week to believe big things and trust that God will not leave us without joy. We can anticipate His goodness and rely on His faithfulness, knowing He is at work in all things.

What are Elizabeth and Zechariah waiting for?

How does this story speak to your life this week?

In what ways do we see Elizabeth and Zechariah practicing obedience in this story?

a prayer for **joy**

Pray for the joy of God's presence to fill your heart and mind. Pray for opportunities to share God's joy with others this week (and the courage to act on them when they come!)



love

Read He is Here in *the Jesus Storybook Bible* on page 176.

Light the first, second and third candles in your wreath. Light the fourth (purple) candle, the Love candle. Sing a verse of O Holy Night as you light the candles.

Love in practice is the setting aside of our own interests and desires for the sake of others. Mary's submission to God's will for her life is a gesture of love and a belief that the God who had been faithful to her ancestors would fulfill the promises He had spoken over her. Mary chose to accept her role in God's story and set aside the story she was writing for herself. In turn, her obedience opened the way for Jesus to come to earth.

Has God asked you to walk down a path that is different than expected? Consider this week if there's something you can set aside to open yourself up to the new story God is writing. God's way is often not the conventional road, but when we choose to sacrifice we open ourselves to a love that is greater than anything the world offers.

What is Mary waiting for?

How does this story speak to your life this week?

In what ways do we see Mary practicing obedience in this story?

a prayer for love

Pray for God's love to fill your heart this week. Pray that many would experience God's love, especially this week as the world sees the celebration of Christmas.



Christ

Read *The Light of the Whole World* on page 184 and *The King of All Kings* on page 192 in *the Jesus Storybook Bible*.

Light all the previous candles, in order. Light the central (white) candle, the Christ candle. Sing a favorite Christmas carol as you light the candles.

In Christ we find the fulfillment of God's promises and the embodiment of hope, peace, joy and love. The best of everything God has to offer has been given to us in this one person, Jesus. In Jesus we have hope, because we see that God keeps His promises. We have peace because we are provided a way to be at one with God. In his surrender to His Father, Jesus shows us the source of true joy. And in his sacrifice and obedience we find a love that defies logic with its depth and heart.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, we celebrate the goodness of a God who does not leave us to wait in vain. We praise Him who walks with us on the journey and express our love back to Him with a thankful heart for what He has done for us.

Merry 
Christmas

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