

Advent

*A Season of Hope
& Expectation*

Devotional for the Season of Advent – adapted from Discipleship Ministries article “[2017 Advent Home Worship](#)” by MaryJane Pierce Norton

Week 1 – Hope

Read Isaiah 64:8

Reflection:

How do you think this verse gives hope to people?

Think about a potter. A potter takes clay and forms it in a way that is pleasing. That is what God is able to do with each person. We are reminded that we are all the work of God’s hands. Reflect on how we are formed by God. Think about the gifts and talents God has created you with. How do you use these gifts that God has formed in you?

Activity:

Is there someone you know who needs to hear words of hope? Pray for them. Go visit them or send a card to that person this week.

Prayer:

Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words of the Prophet Isaiah that remind us that you are the source of our hope. Help us to live each day, allowing you to form us in a way that brings about your kingdom here on earth. Amen.

Week 2 – Peace

Read Luke 1:47-55

In the Scripture, we hear Mary’s song of praise. There must have been times when Mary was frightened, worried, fearful, and sad. She may not have felt very peaceful as she considered her future. Yet her words help us see the peace that comes when we trust in God.

Reflection:

How privileged we are to have this beautiful song of Mary. Can you imagine her singing the words written in Scripture? It is a testimony to her faith at being chosen as God’s

servant. And because she embraces God's future for her, she faces the future with the assurance of God's peace.

Who are the people in our world who need God's peace? What are your hopes for peace in our world today? How can you help others know God's desire for peace in our world?

Activity:

Read Luke 2:1-20

At the time when Jesus was born, shepherds weren't considered to be very important. They had important work to do, but they weren't people that others might necessarily invite to their homes. Yet they were invited to meet the baby Jesus.

Are there people in your family or community who might not be invited to a Christmas celebration this year? Name those who come to mind that on this Christmas Eve are alone and forgotten. Think of a way you can recognize and remember some of the forgotten people. Pray for the forgotten people in your home, your church, or your community.

Prayer:

Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for those in our world today who seek to act for peace. Help me look for ways to be a peacemaker at home, at church and at school. Amen.

Week 3 – Joy

Read John 1:6-8

Reflection:

Think about a time or a situation when things were dark. This could mean things were literally dark – in the middle of the night when a noise scared you, for instance. Or it could be you *felt* darkness, such as times when you are frightened and feel alone and hopeless. Now remember how it feels to have light – either physically experiencing light that breaks apart the darkness or feeling comforted and joyful because your feelings of darkness have ended. How would you describe those feelings? Is *joy* a word that you would use at this time?

Who in our world need God's joy? What are your hopes for joy in our world today? How can you help others know that God gives joy?

Activity:

Make a list of the things that bring light to your life and make you joyful. Paint or draw a picture of something that makes you joyful. Think about how you might spread this joy with others this week.

Prayer:

Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the joy remembering Jesus' birth brings to us today. Help me live in such a way that my words and actions help others know of the joy you give. Amen.

Week 4 – Love

Read Isaiah 40:1-8

Reflection:

When you think of God's love, you might not always think of the words of the prophets. And, this verse might not be one that comes to mind. But the image of God comforting people is a loving image. The image of God making the rough way smooth is one of love. When have you felt comforted by God's love? What makes you feel that rough times are made easier because of God's love?

Activity:

There are people in our families, neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's love. Select someone to visit today. Visit by phone or in person. Go with others or by yourself. It doesn't necessarily have to be a visit to a home. Maybe there is someone who waits on you at the grocery store or post office. Stop by today and talk with that person. Tell the person you visit how you are reminded of God's love because of what that person has said or done.

Prayer:

Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words found in our Bible that help me remember your love and care. Help me see how I can bring God's message to the people I meet in my school, at my job, and in my neighborhood. Help me be a messenger of God's love for everyone. Amen.

Week 5 – Christ

Read Matthew 2:1-12

Reflection:

It's amazing to think of these persistent travelers who were determined to find Jesus. They traveled with hope and faith in the promise that they would find the new king. Who are the people in our world who need to know of God's promises? What are your hopes on Christmas Day for the world? How can you help people remember God's promises after Christmas Day is over?

Activity:

Identify one thing you are willing to do in the days following Christmas that will help you and others remember God's promises.

Prayer:

Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus for ALL people, not just those in one place at one time. On Christmas Day, help us remember and rejoice again because Jesus was born. May we live every day remembering your love and care and showing that love and care to others. Amen.

Family Resources for Celebrating Advent

Advent is the season when we prepare ourselves to receive God's gift of Jesus. It is a time of "getting ready" for the celebration of Christmas. Here are some ways you can prepare yourself and your family for celebrating Jesus' birth:

- Make an Advent wreath. The wreath, because it is a circle, symbolizes God's never-ending love. The wreath, because it is green, symbolizes life. An Advent wreath contains four candles representing the four Sundays leading to Christmas. Many people place a white candle in the center of the wreath to symbolize Jesus.

You can make a wreath using a styrofoam base, greenery, and purple candles. If you do not have a styrofoam base, place your candles in candleholders. Arrange them in a circle, with the white candle in the middle. Place greenery around the candles.

- Use the [Advent Worship Service for Families](#) and worship together daily during Advent, lighting the candles on your wreath.
- Make an Advent prayer chain. Use construction paper cut into twenty-four strips. Write a prayer concern on each strip. Use tape to tape the first strip into a circle. Take the second strip and insert it into the first strip before taping it into a circle. Continue until you have a chain. On December 4, open your first strip and pray together as a family for what is on the strip.
- Make a family blessing jar. Place an empty jar on your dining table. Each day during Advent, state one blessing for which you are thankful. Write the blessing on a slip of paper and put it in the jar. On Christmas Day, pour out the blessings. Read together and give thanks to God for the blessings you have enjoyed during Advent.
- For each week of Advent, focus on one of the people or groups of people in the story of the birth of Jesus. Tell one another the stories from the Bible about:

Week one: the Prophets

Week two: Mary

Week three: Joseph

Week four: Shepherds

Source: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2017-advent-home-worship>