

Advent at Home

Reflections & Readings

Originally developed by Iris A. Law
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What Is Advent ? A SHORT EXPLANATION

Advent is a special time of year for Christians. In the four weeks before Christmas, we take time to remember the meaning of Jesus's birth.



Many people decorate their houses to get them ready for Christmas. But Advent is about getting our hearts ready, too.



During Advent, as we wait for Christmas, we remember how the world waited for Jesus, our Savior and Messiah, to come.



Every week, we light a new candle in the Advent wreath. The candles represent gifts of the Messiah: hope, peace, joy, and love.



And just as God drew near to us at Christmas, we try to draw near to Him. We pray, worship, read the Bible, and try to be a light to others, just like Jesus is our light.



As Advent goes on, the wreath gets brighter. Finally, on Christmas, we light the Christ candle and celebrate that Jesus is born!



How to Make an Advent Wreath

Materials:

- 5 candles, real or LED (**3 purple, 1 pink, 1 white**)
- wreath base (or use a round plate or tray).
- candle holders
- *optional: decorations for your wreath*

Steps:

1. Gather some candles for your wreath. You can use colored candles or small white candles that you put in colored glass jars or decorate with purple and pink. You should have **3 purple candles, 1 pink candle**, and **1 white candle**.
2. Arrange the purple and pink candles around the wreath base (or round plate or tray) and place the white candle in the center. Make sure you arrange the candles securely so they don't tip over while lit. The purple candles will be your hope, peace, and love candles, the pink candle will be your joy candle, and the white candle will be the Christ candle.
3. You can leave your wreath plain—or you can decorate it! To decorate, arrange greenery around and between the candles or add other small Christmas decorations to the base. Just be careful, if you're using real candles, to keep any decorations safely away from the wicks.

Tip: To make your own wreath base, roll up some chicken wire into a short log and then coil the log into a ring. Use pliers to link the ends of the ring together. You can stick taper candles vertically into the chicken wire's holes and weave greenery in around them to fill in the remaining space.

How to use your Advent wreath:

Set aside a time each week to light your wreath. You can use the reflections on the pages that follow as a guide for weaving scripture, worship, and discussion (or individual meditation) into your candle-lighting time each week. (Safety tip: Don't leave your wreath unattended while it's lit!)

What the colors mean:

Purple = royalty (for Jesus the King), repentance

Pink = joy

White = Christ's holiness

Weekly Candle-Lighting Readings

Week 1: Hope

Candle Lighting

Light one **purple** candle.

Worship (Optional)

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (traditional hymn)

"Hope is Dawning" (Matt Maher)

Reading

Isaiah 9:1–7

Reflection

For Adults and Youth

What does hope look like to you? What are some things that bring you hope in your daily life?

Isaiah compares the Messiah's birth to the dawning of a great light. How does the hope we have because of Christ bring brightness and clarity into our lives?

When did you experience God's hope this week?.

Is there anything that feels especially hopeless to you right now? How might God be bringing you hope in the midst of that?

What are some ways that you can bring God's hope to others this week?

End in prayer.

For Kids

What does it mean when someone says they're hopeful? What makes you feel hopeful?

The Bible talks about Jesus bringing hope like a light in the darkness. Imagine switching on a flashlight while you're walking down a dark hallway at night. The light helps you see where you're going and might also make things feel less scary!

God's hope is a little like that. It helps us see where we're headed and encourages us to keep going when things are hard. God sent Jesus to forgive our sins, so Christians have hope that we can see God in heaven someday. But God gives us hope in our everyday lives, too, like when you see a pretty sunset or when a friend cheers you on while you're doing something hard.

We light candles during Advent because they remind us that Jesus is a light in the darkness. He gives us hope!

Dear God, thank you for bringing us hope through Jesus and for showing me hope in little ways. Help me to keep trusting and hoping in You even when life feels hard. And please show me how to share Your hope with others every day. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.

Week 2: Peace

Candle Lighting

Light two **purple** candles.

Worship (Optional)

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (traditional hymn)

"You Are Holy (Prince of Peace)"

Readings

John 14:27

Philippians 4:4-7

Reflection

For Adults and Youth

What does peace feel like to you in your everyday life? Were there any moments this week when you felt like you experienced God's peace?

In John 14:27, Jesus says that the peace that He is leaving with his disciples is not given "as the world gives." In what ways might the peace of God differ from peace in the worldly sense?

Paul describes God's peace as something that "transcends all understanding" as it guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. What do you think he means by that? In what way does the Messiah bring us God's unique brand of peace?

In what ways do you feel in need of God's peace right now?

What are some ways that you can bring God's peace to others this week?

End in prayer

For Kids

What do you think people mean when they talk about being "at peace"?

What are some things that make you feel at peace inside? What are some things that make you feel at peace with other people?

The Bible tells us there's another kind of peace—God's peace. Often, when people talk about peace, they mean having no worries and not fighting. But God's peace is different. Think about when you're scared—like maybe during a thunderstorm—and your grownup hugs you. You probably still feel a little scared, but knowing that your grownup is holding you helps. God's peace doesn't mean that we don't ever feel scared or mad or sad or worried. But it does mean that even when we do, we can still feel safe and loved—because God is holding us tight!

Christians believe that we can have God's special peace because of Jesus's death and resurrection. That's why we celebrate peace during Advent: Jesus came down to bring us the gift of God's peace.

Dear God, thank you that we can have Your special peace because of Jesus. And thank You that You are always with me, holding me tight even when things feel scary or hard. Please help me to feel Your peace this week, and show me how I can share it with others, too. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.

Week 3: Joy

Candle Lighting

Light two **purple** candles, then one **pink** candle.

Worship (Optional)

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" (traditional hymn)

"Holy Is the Lord" (Chris Tomlin)

Reading

Luke 1:39–56

Reflection

For Adults and Youth

What brings you joy in your everyday life? What are some things that brought you joy this week?

Mary and Elizabeth are overjoyed by the news that Mary will be carrying the Messiah, and Mary even breaks out in a spontaneous song of praise. What are some of the things Mary praises God for in her song? Why do you think she feels so joyful about them?

The joy candle is the only pink one on the wreath. Its color marks a shift to a lighter tone after the more somber themes of hope and peace—but it also reminds us of the unexpected nature of God's joy. The joy of the Lord has a tendency to spring up even during dark or difficult times—and to surprise us when we least expect it. Have you ever been surprised by His joy in this way?

In what ways are you in need of God's joy right now?

What are some ways that you can share God's joy with others this week?

End in prayer.

For Kids

What does it mean when someone says they're joyful? What makes you feel joyful?

In the story we read, Mary and Elizabeth are joyful because Jesus, the Savior that they've been waiting for their whole lives, is coming—and Mary gets the special honor of being his mom!

Lots of things can bring us joy, but Christians believe that the most special one of all is the joy of knowing God. And, of course, the reason we get to know God is Jesus! That's why it's such a joyful thing to celebrate Jesus's birth at Christmas—and why we light a candle of joy during Advent, too.

Dear God, thank you for happiness and for the things that make me feel joy every day! And thank you for the joy of knowing God through Jesus. Please help me to always look for Your joy. And please show me how to share your joy with others, too. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.

Week 4: Love

Candle Lighting

Light two **purple** candles, then one **pink** candle, then another **purple** candle.

Worship (Optional)

"Come, O Long Expected Jesus" (traditional hymn)

"Love Came Down" (Brian Johnson)

Reading

1 John 4:7–16

Reflection

For Adults and Youth

In your everyday life, what makes you feel loved?

According to John, why should we love one another? How does God provide the ultimate standard of love? (And how does Christmas play a part in that?)

Jesus commands us to love one another (John 13), but that's not always easy! What are some things that get in your way when you are trying to love others?

God often makes His love known to us through other people. What were some ways in which you've experienced God's love through other people?

Are there any areas of your life in which you feel hungry for God's love and mercy right now?

What are some ways you can practice caring for others with a Christlike love this week?

For Kids

Who are some people that you love?

The Bible says that Christians must love one another because God loved us first. Did you know that God's love for us is bigger and wider and deeper than you could ever imagine? When somebody loves you that much, you just have to share!

Loving others isn't always easy. Jesus even tells us to love people we dislike! Fortunately, God loves us so much that He gives us many chances. He even sent His son Jesus to save us from our sins. That's why we light a candle of love during Advent. Jesus's birth at Christmas is all about God's love.

Dear God, Thank you for the people in my life who love me, and thank you for loving me so much that you sent your Son to die for my sins. Please teach me how to love other people just like you love me — and to keep trying even when it's hard. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.

Christmas Eve or Morning: The Christ Candle

Candle Lighting

Light all the **purple** and **pink** candles, followed by the **white** Christ candle.

Worship (Optional)

If Lit on Christmas Eve:

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (traditional hymn)

"Silent Night" (traditional hymn)

If Lit on Christmas Day:

"Joy to the World" (traditional hymn)

"Go Tell It On the Mountain" (traditional gospel hymn)

Reading

Luke 2:1–21

Response

End in prayer; then, go celebrate with joy. Merry Christmas! Jesus is born.

More Resources

Where to Purchase Advent Wreaths and Candles

You can buy premade advent wreaths at Christian bookstores and church supply companies (such as Christianbooks.com or Lifeway). There are also plenty of beautiful options on Etsy and, occasionally, among the seasonal offerings at craft stores like Michaels.

More Ways to Make Advent Meaningful

An advent wreath isn't the only way to celebrate advent! Here are some ideas that you can use in addition to (or even instead of) a wreath:

Advent Scripture or Prayer Calendar

Prepare a series of small, numbered containers that you can open to count down the days of Advent leading up to Christmas morning. In each container, place a new scripture passage to read or the name of someone to pray for. (Many secular Advent calendars also have a small treat inside for each day; for kids, you might consider adding fun surprises or creative activities to help them better engage with the daily spiritual application, as well.)

Advent Devotionals

Find some time to wait on God each day via a guided advent devotional. You can purchase a book that suits your interests, use an app, or look online for a free devotional. Christian organizations that serve students will sometimes also offer free devotional content via social media during Advent.

Make Chrismons

Many churches display Chrismons, traditional ornaments that depict symbols of Christ, in their sanctuaries during Advent, but you can make your own to use at home. There are some great tutorials for making Chrismons available online. You can follow the traditional patterns or create your own designs that remind you of who Christ is.

Serve or Give Together

Mark the season by serving with family or friends: purchase items for a mitten tree, pack a box for Operation Christmas Child, donate to a local ministry that serves the poor, put together care packages for students, deliver groceries to the elderly, collect books for prisoners, or anything else that you feel called to do.

Other Daily Practices

Come up with your own daily practices that allow you to seek hope, joy, love, and peace and to draw near to God's heart during Advent. Try taking a short prayer walk outside once a day when the weather permits, stringing together a paper chain of daily prayers, journaling or making things to help you reflect on the week's theme, or even listening to worship music to still your heart for a short time each day.

Coloring Pages

Use the following coloring pages to supplement your family's Advent practice. Kids can color in a version of the comic from the beginning of this packet independently or color along as you read the text and discuss it. They can also color in the various candles on the following page as they learn what each stands for. (For a low-prep Advent celebration, coloring a new candle each week could even stand in for lighting real candles.)

Pages Included

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Advent Wreath Coloring Page

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Words, characters, and illustrations by Iris A. Law, 2020

