

# ADVENT

LET JOY RING OUT!

# WEEK 1

THE STRUGGLE TO WAIT

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## Week One Beginning Sunday December 2, 2018

### The Struggle to Wait

#### Materials:

Five Candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white),  
matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired,  
The Jesus Storybook Bible (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

**Introduction:** please read the following out loud

The world around us is dark and troublesome. The headlines reveal a broken world filled with war between nations, natural disasters, poverty, crime, bigotry, and racism, just to name a few. Words like righteousness and justice can seem like impossible dreams that we keep waiting for to come true, but they are elusive.

Advent breaks into this brokenness and points us away from despair and directs us toward hope!

The prophet Jeremiah reveals the plan of God to bring life and light into our darkness. Just when hope has been cut down and it looks like only injustice will flourish, God makes a promise that what looks like a dead stump will spring up with life and bring salvation through the offspring of David.

As you light the first advent candle, remember Jesus, David's greatest son, came to fulfill the promise by becoming our righteousness. We wait, in hope, knowing that He will come again to bring justice to completion.

#### Step 1:

Have a friend or family member light one of the purple candles.

#### Step 2:

Have someone read the following:

*"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" - Jeremiah 33:14-16*

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## Step 3:

If you have children with you, have someone read "Operation 'No More Tears!'"  
pp. 144 - 153 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Sally Lloyd-Jones

## Step 4:

Have someone read the following:

*"Waiting on God is to be busy in service to God and to others, all in full acceptance of his wisdom and timing."—Timothy Keller*

## Step 5:

Have a friend or family member read the following prayer:

*"Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reign with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen."*

## Step 6:

Use the following prompts to reflect:

- Think back to a time when you waited with expectancy. What were you waiting for? How do you experience its fulfillment?
- What are evidences you have seen of brokenness this week? How does looking forward to Christ's coming help you reframe what you have seen?
- Who do you know who is currently experiencing broken relationships, or injustice? How can you BLESS them this week?

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## Step 7:

Sing the following hymn: *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Verse 1

*Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.*

Verse 2

*Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit,  
raise us to thy glorious throne.*

## What is advent?

Advent is a celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and designed to remind us of our need for a savior. The Advent season lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these “last days” (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2), as God’s people wait for the second return of Christ to consummate His eternal kingdom.

The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward to eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that looking back in celebration of what Christ has done in the past, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.

**WEEK 2**  
THE STRAIGHTENED TO WAY

# ADVENT

LET JOY RING OUT

## Week Two Beginning Sunday December 9, 2018

### The Straightened Way

#### Materials:

Five Candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white),  
matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired,  
The Jesus Storybook Bible (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

**Introduction:** please read the following out loud

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way so that we could know the salvation of God. He was crying out in the convoluted wilderness of our sin that there is a way back to God. To our joy and wonderment, the way we prepare isn't by returning through the twisted, rough and rugged path that we had been on. It is a straight path of repentance so that we can receive forgiveness of sins.

As you light the next advent candle, remember that Jesus, our way, has filled the valleys of darkness for us. He has cast the mountain of our sin into the depths of the sea; He has given us direct access to the Father; and He has leveled the playing field so that all may know and experience His saving grace!

#### Step 1:

Have a friend or family member light the candle from last week and one another purple candle

#### Step 2:

Have someone read the following: (if you have small children, you may elect to read the highlighted portion only)

*"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,*

*'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"* - Luke 3:1-6

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## Step 3:

If you have children with you, have someone read “Get Ready”  
*pp. 170 - 175 in The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones*

## Step 4:

Have someone read the following:

*“Repenting means experiencing a change of mind that now sees God as true and beautiful and worthy of all our praise and all our obedience.”—John Piper*

## Step 5:

Have a friend or family member read the following prayer:

*“Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.”*

## Step 6:

Use the following prompts to reflect:

- Think about this past year. What twists or turns did life take? What did you learn about God in those moments? What did you learn about yourself?
- How have the twists, turns, mountains, valleys and rough patches you experienced this year made it easier for you to return to God and experiences his beauty and grace?
- Who among your friends, neighbors, work associates, schoolmates, and loved ones needs to know the good news that God has made a way for them to return to Him? What steps do you need to take to BLESS them?

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## Step 7:

Sing the following hymn: *Come Thou Fount*

Verse 1

*Come, Thou Fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of Thy redeeming love*

Verse 2

*Oh, that day when freed from sinning  
I shall see Thy lovely face  
Clothed then in the blood washed linen  
How I'll sing Thy wondrous grace  
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry  
Take my ransomed soul away  
Send Thine angels now to carry  
Me to realms of endless day*

Verse 3

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let that goodness like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above*

## What is advent?

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The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward to eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that looking back in celebration of what Christ has done in the past, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.

# WEEK 3

THE SINGING WALK

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## Week Three Beginning Sunday December 16, 2018

### The Singing Walk

#### Materials:

Five Candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white),  
matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired,  
The Jesus Storybook Bible (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

#### **Introduction:** please read the following out loud

This time of year can leave us feeling very empty because we can go from one meaningless activity to another. Getting our families gifts is supposed to refresh our love for the ones we care about, yet, by the time we have the perfect present and have attended a bunch of social functions we feel depleted, not energetic.

We can think that all that we spend in time, energy and money will save the day. Surely, we can have the perfect Christmas this year. We look to the holidays as some kind of functional Savior. The perfect tree, the perfect presents, the perfect meal...

Advent is a time for us to pause. We slow down, even if it's just for a moment to consider that God doesn't just save us, He is our salvation.

#### **Step 1:**

Have a friend or family member light the candles from the past two weeks and the pink one for this week.

#### **Step 2:**

Have someone read the following:

*“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.’ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. ‘Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.’” –Isaiah 12:2-6*

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## Step 3:

If you have children with you, have someone read “Running Away!”  
pp. 272 - 279 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Sally Lloyd-Jones

## Step 4:

Have someone read the following:

*“Restlessness and impatience change nothing except our peace and joy. Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly on Him who has all things safely in His hands.” - Elisabeth Elliot*

## Step 5:

Have a friend or family member read the following prayer:

*“O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
– Prayer for Peace of St. Francis of Assisi*

## Step 6:

Use the following prompts to reflect:

- Consider this past year. Where did you experience fear? How did you approach God with trust in those moments? What are some ways that you experienced his strength in those moments?
- Joy isn't the absence of difficulty. Isaiah says that joy is like drawing water from well. What are you currently thankful for? How has God worked mightily on your behalf?
- Joy rises in our hearts as we tell of God's mighty deeds. Who can you BLESS by sharing the stories of God's ongoing work in your life? Pray for them and look for an opportunity to share. Invite them to the Jubilee Christmas Service on December 23rd.

# ADVENT

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## Step 7:

Sing the following hymn: *Joy to the World*

Verse 1

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come:  
let earth receive her King!  
Let every heart prepare him room  
and heaven and nature sing.*

Verse 2

*No more let sins and sorrows grow  
nor thorns infest the ground:  
he comes to make his blessings flow  
far as the curse is found.*

Verse 3

*He rules the earth with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love.*

## What is advent?

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The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward to eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that looking back in celebration of what Christ has done in the past, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.

# WEEK 4

THE SAVING WILL

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## Week Four Beginning Sunday December 23, 2018

### The Saving Will

#### Materials:

Five Candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white),  
matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired,  
The Jesus Storybook Bible (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)

**Introduction:** please read the following out loud

These last few days before Christmas it seems like there is so much to do. We have to get those last minute gifts. We have to grocery shop. We have to bake, cook, clean. The list seems endless.

In these intense moments of numbing busyness we can forget that these actions were all the result of our own decision-making. Somewhere in there we had a desire to get our family together and celebrate the birth of Jesus, and we enacted our will to make decisions that we now feel obligated to follow through with. I know in this moment it may not feel like a choice, but it was. We make decisions because we have a will.

The good news about advent is that God has a will and has expressed His great desire to get His family back. He has exercised His will and has acted on our behalf to show us mercy instead of judgment; grace instead of condemnation! His will leads to action that turns the world upside down.

Life is no longer focused on all that we have to do, but all that He has done. It's no longer focused on me, but intensely focused on others. It's life no longer self-centered, but Christ-centered.

As you light the candle and read the Scripture, pay attention to the statements following the phrase, "He has..." Notice what the Lord has done to get his family back!

#### **Step 1:**

Have a friend or family member light the candles from the past three weeks and the last purple one for this week (*the white one is for Christmas day*).

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LET JOY RING OUT

## Step 2:

Have someone read the following: (if you have small children, you may elect to read the highlighted portion only)

*"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.'"*

### Mary's Song of Praise

*And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.'"*

—Luke 1:39-55

## Step 3:

If you have children with you, have someone read "Get Ready"  
pp. 170 - 175 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Sally Lloyd-Jones

## Step 4:

Have someone read the following:

*"When Jesus gets a hold of us, Jesus revolutionizes our lives; he turns everything upside down and we look at the world differently."—Edward F. Markquart*

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## Step 5:

Have a friend or family member read the following prayer:

*“God our Father, out of loving obedience to you, and out of love for all that you created through him, your Only Begotten Son became human and dwelt among us. He was born as a baby, just like us. He went through the joys and sufferings of living, just like us. He suffered and died and rose again, just for us. Give us hearts of repentance, so that we may weep for the One who was pierced for our sins, and rejoice as our sins and impurities are washed away. We ask through Christ, our Lord. Amen.”*

## Step 6:

Use the following prompts to reflect:

- Think about the places where you have experienced emptiness, hunger, or humility this year. How has God met you in those moments? How can this Christmas reflect the way God has turned your world upside down?
- Who do you know who is in need of strengthening? Who is vulnerable and in need of help? How do you sense God calling you to magnify the Lord to them?
- How has God used you and your family to meet the needs of others over the past year? How can you remember and rejoice this season?

## Step 7:

Sing the following hymn: *O Holy Night*

*Verse 1*

*O Holy night, the stars are brightly shining  
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining  
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn*

*Chorus 1*

*Fall on your knees  
O hear the angel voices  
O night divine!  
O night when Christ was born  
O night divine!  
O night, O night divine!*

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## Step 7: cont.

Verse 2

*Truly He taught us to love one another  
His law is love and His gospel is peace  
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother  
And in His name, all oppression shall cease  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we  
Let all within us praise His holy name*

Chorus 2

*Christ is the Lord  
O praise His name forever  
O night divine!  
O night when Christ was born  
O night divine!  
O night, O night divine!*

## What is advent?

Advent is a celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and designed to remind us of our need for a savior. The Advent season lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these “last days” (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2), as God’s people wait for the second return of Christ to consummate His eternal kingdom.

The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during advent, looks back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward to eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that looking back in celebration of what Christ has done in the past, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.

**CHRISTMAS DAY**  
THE SOVEREIGN WONDER

# A D V E N T

LET JOY RING OUT

## *Christmas Day, December 25, 2018*

### *The Sovereign Wonder*

#### *Materials:*

*Five Candles (ideally 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white),  
matches or a lighter, a Bible and, if desired,  
The Jesus Storybook Bible (ISBN: 978-9-310-70825-4)*

#### **Introduction:** *please read the following out loud*

It's easy to look around at Christmas decorations, family gatherings, presents, parties and feasts and think that they should elicit joy. No doubt all these things promote a sense of happiness, celebration and mirth, but they can also actually cover up joy rather than create it.

Christmas joy is more than glitz and glamour. It's more than the good feelings of loved ones nearby. It is the start of a revolution of light replacing darkness, oppressors and oppression being broken and removed.

Christmas joy is revealed through the Sovereign plan of God for salvation being displayed on the world scene as Jesus our Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace is born into a world marred by sin!

The joy and gladness available at Christmas is described as multiplying and increasing in the same way that a farmer would celebrate the exponential harvest of his crops from just a few seeds, enough to share with everyone. It's put in warrior language that celebrates treasure that is found at the end of a long fought battle to free the captives!

As you read today, let your heart be filled with wonder at God's Sovereign plan to give His One and only Son so that we might have life forever with Him!

#### **Step 1:**

Have a friend or family member light the candles from the past 4 weeks and the white one for Christmas Day.

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## Step 2:

Have someone read the following:

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness.” - Isaiah 9:2-7*

## Step 3:

If you have children with you, have someone read “The Light of the Whole World” pp. 184 - 190 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Sally Lloyd-Jones

## Step 4:

Have someone read the following:

*“The Christian life begins not with high deeds and achievements but with the most simple and ordinary act of humble asking...Don't be put off by the ordinariness of the means of joy, for in that ordinariness is hidden the extraordinary riches of the gospel.” - Timothy Keller, **Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ***

## Step 5:

Have a friend or family member read the following prayer:

*“Father God, We thank You and praise You today for the miracle of Your Son's birth. Thank You for bringing great JOY to the whole world! Thank You for giving us the assurance that because You came to us in the form of a human, we who believe in Jesus can know with absolute certainty that we'll spend eternity with You.”*

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## Step 6:

Sing the following hymn: *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

Verse 1

*Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th' angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!"*

Verse 2

*Christ, by highest heaven adored:  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of the favoured one.  
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;  
Hail, th'incarnate Deity:  
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel!  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!"*

Verse 3

*Hail! the heaven-born  
Prince of peace!  
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die:  
Born to raise the son of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King !"*

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The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus. In the same way, the church, during advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward to eager anticipation to the second coming of Christ. The bottom line is that looking back in celebration of what Christ has done in the past, fills us with joy, peace, and faith about what Christ has promised to do in the future.