



MAKE

HIM,

ROOM

FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

advent guide 2019

A Daily Guide for Advent

Advent. Despite being good news of great joy, this can be one of the busiest, most stressful, and for some, the darkest seasons of the year. What we wish was a time of joy and peace, is instead filled with the noise and busyness of Christmas activities, the stress of strained relationships, or the heaviness of loss and grief. In the midst of this, God is inviting us to let our hearts and minds be tuned to the good news of Christmas. Our hope is that this guide will help you prepare your hearts for Christmas and create space for God to form you through the glorious story of Advent..

Using This Guide

Each week is grounded in our central theme: "Make Him Room." Each day, set aside a little time to read the Scripture passage, engage with the reflection and question, and pray. At the end of the week, we will take time to reflect on what God has been showing us. On Fridays, we will engage in a prayer of examen, a tool Christians have used for centuries to ask God to help them see their own hearts more clearly. On Saturdays, we will confess our sin to Him and hear His assurance of pardon for us. Feel free to do this by yourself or with your family.

Don't feel stressed if you miss a day. Just pick up with the next scheduled day and ask the Spirit to use it how He knows is best in your heart and life.

We hope this helps you prepare room in your heart for what God will show you this Christmas.

Merry Christmas from the elders and staff of Doxa Church!

Advent for the Family

Included at the beginning of each week is the "Advent for the Family" section that may be helpful for families with young kids. Here, you'll find a weekly devotional, recommended readings from Scripture and storybook Bibles, songs, family discussion questions, and prayers to pray together. Parents are invited to use this section to guide your kids through the advent season. You may choose to do this all at once or to spread it out over a few days. Please feel free to use however is helpful for your family.

ADVENT FOR THE FAMILY / WEEK 1

God can do anything, even the impossible. Mary lived according to God's laws and she had no children and was not married, she knew she could not have children until she was married. But God had favor on Mary and chose her to miraculously bring about the birth of Jesus. The Holy Spirit made Mary pregnant so that the baby born would be holy and be called the Son of God. Nothing was impossible with God. Mary was humble and believed that God could do the impossible. To make room for the impossible this advent season, we are to stay humble to see all that God can do.

READ SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:26-38

Younger Kids – He's Here! (pgs. 176-178) in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*

Babies and Toddlers – An Angel Visits Mary (pgs. 266-270) in *The Beginner's Bible*

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Try the Impossible

Supplies Needed: Wall

Ask each member of the family to stand up next to a wall. You will put your right shoulder against the wall and your right foot against the wall. Without your shoulder or foot moving away from the wall, attempt to lift your left leg (it's impossible).

There are many things in this world that seem impossible for us to do, but God can do the impossible - He can do anything. Take the time to remember and reflect on the seemingly impossible things that God has done throughout Scripture.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where have you seen God do impossible things in you and/or your family's life?
- How do we get in the way of God's work in our life?
- How do we stay humble so that we can see God at work in our life?

SONG

O Come O Come Emmanuel (by Bethel Music Kids)

https://youtu.be/rKmmPvGf_Q0

PRAYER

Spend some time in thankful prayer over what you have seen God do in and through your family's life. Call out and thank specific ways you have seen God do the impossible.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

God Does More

READ LUKE 1:26-56 (*46-55 included below*):

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."

REFLECTION

God is graciously present to bring about the miraculous in and through those who want God to be magnified. Preparing room for the miraculous means less of us and more of God. He loves to take unlikely people and situations and bring about what would be impossible for humans. Like Mary. She was of humble means, but God is great and powerful. God had favor on Mary and chose her to miraculously bring about the birth of Jesus. *"He [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David."* When God shows favor on us, He chooses to bring about miraculous work in and through our lives.

Where is God at work in and around me right now?

PRAYER

Father, thank you that your favor is upon me. Where are you calling me to prepare room for you to do your miraculous work in and through my life?

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

Through Humble Means

READ LUKE 2:6-7; MATTHEW 5:3-5

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

REFLECTION

God loves to do great things through humble means. Christ, our savior, came into our world through humble beginnings by virtue of an unwed virgin who gave birth to him in a stable. Jesus continued to model a life of humility and calls us, his brothers and sisters, into that same humility. In Jesus’s first three statements in His Sermon On the Mount, he reminds us that only those who are humble (poor in spirit, those who mourn, and the meek) will receive God’s Kingdom, his comfort, and his provision. Jesus’s focus here in these first three “blessed are” statements are on our being, not our doing. Before he addresses what we are to do, he reminds us who we are; children of God dependent on our good Dad. Only those who understand their own need, sorrow, and dependence are open to receiving all that God longs to give us.

How does a spirit of humility prepare me for God’s miraculous work?

PRAYER

Thank you Father that you are my provider and my provision. You love to do great things through humble means; where do I resist your call to active humility?

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

Hungering for God

READ ISAIAH 55:1-3; JOHN 6:35

"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live."

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

REFLECTION

After sharing the amazing news with her cousin Elizabeth, Mary sings that God has filled the hungry with good things. Jesus came as our bread of life; stating that whoever partakes will never go hungry again. Consider the words of C.S. Lewis; "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea." God creates in us a hunger so that after we've had our fill of fooling about we yearn for a deeper satisfaction that only he can provide.

What do I hunger for?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for your grace. You see I am so easily distracted. Use this Advent season to sharpen my hunger for you, your Word, and your will.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

An Available Heart

READ LUKE 1:38; EPHESIANS 2:8-10

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

REFLECTION

God invites us to prepare room in our hearts for Him to do the impossible in and through our lives. The way we prepare for God's miraculous work is by becoming available. Observe Mary's proper response to God's invitation, "I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to God's word and will." It's out of the overflow of Jesus's grace and mercy that our availability comes. When the bent of our hearts is to say, "yes, I will" then we step into a more fruitful and abundant life.

Am I available?

PRAYER

God, how do you want to use me? I long for a heart like Mary's; show me how to reveal your heart to someone today.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

Acts of Thankfulness

READ LUKE 1:46-48; COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

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;

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

REFLECTION

As she realized how blessed she was, Mary's heart overflowed in a beautiful song of thanksgiving. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." During Advent we often pause and reflect on what Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us. We acknowledge that in his coming, we the Church, live in him, are rooted in him, and are being built up and established in him. This leads us to respond out of an overflow of what we have received. The scriptures say that our response to such a gift is gratitude which gets expressed as the act of thankfulness.

*Thanksgiving is an action; am I regularly acting upon
my gratitude for and to God?*

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for the specific ways you see me and know me. May my feelings of gratitude overflow as praise and acts of thanksgiving. Make my life a conduit of your miraculous work.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

Weekly Prayer of Examen

READ PSALM 139:1-2, 7

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

EXAMEN

The Father invites us to make room in our hearts for Him to do the impossible in and through our lives. Where is he calling you to prepare room for him to act? Spend some time reflecting on the themes of this week paying special attention to any areas where you may have felt the Spirit's conviction or kindness, where you felt gratitude or praise, or where you had a new insight or direction. Is there a truth He's asking you to believe about yourself? Is there something He is asking you to stop doing or start doing? Is there an area where He'd like you to dig a little deeper?

Pray as you feel led.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. - Psalm 51:10-12

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

Confession and Assurance of Pardon

READ SCRIPTURE

Revisit the scripture for the week, noting where the Spirit might be asking you to linger. (Luke 2:6-7, Matt 5:3-5, John 6:35, Isaiah 55:1-3, Luke 1:38, Eph 2:8-10, Luke 1:46-47, Col 2:6-7)

CALL TO CONFESSION

Psalm 40:8-10

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Oh God, my Lord, Father, I confess that I am full of vanity and fear. I often believe I am more, and you are less, and I dismiss the possibility of your miracles in favor of practicalities. I live in scarcity like an orphan in need of self-protection and hoard your precious gifts. I have been proud, slow to receive your mercy, and take your grace and steadfast love for granted. In doing this I have sinned against you and hurt others. Forgive me, Father. Jesus, your faithfulness has brought about my salvation. You proclaim God's deliverance and glory through your Word, your life, your death, and your resurrection. Now, through the gift of grace, your righteousness has become my own. I have been slow to speak of the miraculous work of your salvation. Thank you, Jesus, for your faithfulness in the face of my own faithlessness. Holy Spirit, I cannot save myself. Help me to not hide Jesus's deliverance in my heart, but instead delight to do your will. Thank you for pursuing me with a kindness that leads to repentance. Rescue me each day from self-sufficiency and enable a heart that overflows with joy and hope that is rooted in Jesus. Help me turn from my sin by clinging to the cross and remembering I am secure--hidden in God with Christ. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Romans 5:1-6: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.