



**MAKE  
HIM  
ROOM  
FOR THE UNEXPECTED**

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 2**

Joseph had plans to marry Mary and start a family, but his plan was interrupted by the unexpected work of the Holy Spirit. He thought Mary had done something wrong and wanted to stop his original plan by breaking up with her. But God had a better plan! Joseph was going to be the adoptive father of Jesus, the Savior of the world! God's plans are always best. We can learn to listen to God's plans by submitting all of our life to Him.

### **READ SCRIPTURE**

Mathew 1:18-25

Younger Kids – He's Here! (pgs. 180-182) in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*

Babies and Toddlers – Baby Jesus is Born (pgs. 271-276) in *The Beginner's Bible*

### **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

#### **Remote Control**

Supplies Needed: A toy that has a remote (or a TV remote will work)

Find something in the house that has a remote control (a remote-controlled car would be best). Ask the kids what the object is currently doing – absolutely nothing. Currently it is in control of itself and it is doing nothing. Now what happens when you take control and use the remote? We are like this object, when we try to control ourselves and make our own plans we are not living to our fullest potential and the way God created us to be. But when we submit to God's control of our life we can trust that He is leading us in the best path for us.

### **FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What are some plans that you have had that were not the best for you?
- What areas of your life do you need to submit to God?
- How is the plan to bring Jesus into the world the best plan for us?
- How was Jesus the unexpected King?

### **SONG**

Sent from Above (by Simon Parry) - *ASL Provided*

<https://youtu.be/QM5kzo4gQbs>

### **PRAYER**

Spend the first part in thankfulness for God's great plan to save us from the punishment of sin by sending Jesus to rescue us. Then spend some time praying for current areas in your life that need to be surrendered to God and His plan for your life.

# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

## God's Plans Are Better

### READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

### 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.

*Is there room in my life for God to do the unexpected?*

### PRAYER

Father, thank you that you are actively at work in my life. I pray you would enable me to live a more expectant life; watching for you to show up, intercede, and transform.

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

## God's Plan is Good

### READ JOHN 3:16-17

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

### REFLECTION

Joseph had a plan. He found a girl, got the ring, set the date...and then the Holy Spirit interrupted his plan. Mary became pregnant, and Joseph, the honorable man that he was, intended to protect Mary's reputation by divorcing her quietly. However, God had a different plan in mind. God purposed that Joseph would be the adoptive father to Jesus, the Savior of the world. Joseph listened and acted in faith doing everything God asked of him. In trusting God's plan was better than his own, Joseph fulfilled God's prophetic word and was used to raise the One who would become the Savior of the world.

*Do I believe and trust that God's plans are good?*

### PRAYER

God, thank you that your plans are good. You see where and when I am prone to doubt you and lean on my own understanding. In those moments quicken my heart to remember that I believe and trust in you and then help my unbelief.

# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

## Not Our Way

### READ ISAIAH 55:6-9

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### REFLECTION

God has plans that we know nothing about. Amazingly, he chooses to accomplish those plans in and through our lives. Often this will require us to change our plans to line up with his. Part of preparing Him room is preparing our hearts by cultivating a willingness and readiness to realign our plans with God's plans. The way we do this is by daily submitting our hopes, dreams, and future to God.

*Where do I need to align my plans with God's plans?*

### PRAYER

Father, help me to be honest about the plans I make. Are they birthed in fear or greed or in a desire to serve and please you ... or in a combination of conflicting motivations? In faith, help me to submit my plans to you.

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

## Hearing His Voice

### READ JOHN 10:27-28

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

### REFLECTION

Joseph was ready to listen to God's voice when the angel Gabriel appeared to him. Sometimes we forget to listen for God's voice in the midst of our plans. We can regularly go to him, talk to him, and lay our life before him, but still not listen to what he has to say to us. Advent is a fresh invitation from God to hear the voice of our Shepherd. Jesus says he knows us and has given us the safety and security of eternal life. Do we hear his voice? And, when we hear it, do we follow it?

*Am I stopping to listen to you Father?*

### PRAYER

Spirit, thank you that you speak to me. Help me to listen so that I may hear what you are speaking over me and to me. Help me to cultivate a posture of pausing to listen and a readiness to change or redirect based on what I hear.

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

## Obeying His Voice

### **READ MATTHEW 1:24-25; 2:13-15; 2:19-23**

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

### **REFLECTION**

As we follow the advent narrative, we see three times where Joseph, the father of Jesus, not only heard the voice of God, but heard and then obeyed. There is a big difference between listening for God and hearing from God and then "getting up" and acting on what God has said. Sometimes what God asks of us is hard, inconvenient, or confusing. Joseph models a heart that pleases God; a heart of faith that trusts and moves forward without first needing to know all the details or what comes next.

*When am I tempted to ignore what God is asking of me?*

### **PRAYER**

Father, I'm tempted to only act when it makes sense or I can see a way forward. Help grow my capacity to trust in you and obey what I hear.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

## 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 unexpected 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 14

## 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

Matthew 6:25, 32-33

Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Father forgive me for not preparing my heart for your plans. I have been lazy, fearful, and at times willfully disobedient to your call on my life. I have rejected practices of grace and mercy toward myself and others. You always meet my needs, yet I don't trust you will continue to do so. Please forgive my lack of trust and faithfulness, it prevents me from submitting my plans and purposes to you. Jesus, everything about your coming was so unexpected. Help me create room in my life so that I may live a life of expectancy; expecting you to speak, show up, provide, and act. You went to the cross for the very sins I am confessing today; thank you that I am a child of the King with a place in his Kingdom because of your willing sacrifice. Spirit, I pray for the grace to submit to God's call in and through my life. Lead me with power and presence in a life of faith knowing that the Father's plans are not only trustworthy and good, but also take into account every little detail of my life.

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Isaiah 43:1-3b

But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.