

2. Read Scripture and Reflect:

- On the Sundays leading up to Christmas, or even during the week, find a devotional to read individually (or together as a family).
- Read sections of Scripture that talk of Jesus' First Arrival + Second Coming.
- Consider fasting (substituting for Prayer, Scripture and Reflection).
- Ask meaningful questions about what God might be preparing in you during this season of waiting. Journal or write down your thoughts.

3. Have a Special Time of Prayer with Your Family on the Each of the Four Sundays and Christmas day.

- Share together different thoughts of what it means to wait on Christ.

4. Share meals with new friends.

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

DEVOTIONALS for Adults, Teens and Families

- Book: "Come, Let Us Adore Him: Devotional" (by Paul Tripp) – available at Amazon or Lifeway
- Free Devotional: "The Advent Project" (from Biola University) - <http://ccca.biola.edu/advent/>
Go to the website and select the corresponding calendar day. Each day contains a work of art (visual, music, poetry or other mediums), Scripture and Devotionals.
- Free Devotional: "Advent Adoration" (on YouVersion Bible App) 
- Free Devotional: "Finding Your Way Back to God" (YouVersion Bible App) 
- Free Devotional: "The King is Coming" (on YouVersion Bible App)

DEVOTIONALS/STORIES for Kids and Preschoolers

- Book: "The Littlest Watchman: Watching and Waiting for the Very First Christmas" (by Scott James) – available at Amazon or Lifeway
- Devotionals. Download the "Bible App for Kids" (by YouVersion Bible App) for kid-based devotionals, videos, animated stories and more about Advent and Christmas. 

MUSIC of Advent

- Spotify Playlist: listen to **Bethany's Advent Songs of Reflection and Anticipation** playlist!
 - o Follow the link to listen: <https://goo.gl/xnpuVs>



WHAT IS ADVENT?

The term “advent” comes from the Latin word (“adventus”) which means “coming.” In early church history, the Church marked the occasion of the first coming of the Savior (the birth of Jesus) by creating and celebrating a season known as “Advent.” This tradition is not found anywhere in Scripture, but was celebrated by the church as a way for believers to prepare their hearts for Christmas Day. As Pastor John Piper once said, “Advent is an annual season of patient waiting, hopeful expectation, soul-searching, and calendar-watching marked by many churches, Christian families, and individual followers of Jesus.”

WHEN IS ADVENT?

The Advent Season is recognized beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas. It lasts four weeks and concludes on Christmas Day. It is marked by counting down each of the four Sundays, usually by lighting candles. **Advent always comes at just the right time.** In the midst of a troubled year, a busy school year or schedules, hurts, triumphs, successes, loss, grief, and uncertainty, our weary bodies and hearts reach out and long for a reminder of hope. Our souls cry out for peace – or “shalom,” which is Hebrew for ‘peace’. Advent is a beautiful season for renewal that reminds us that this peace can only be found in the *Prince of Peace*, Jesus. The One who came, and will come again for us.



LIGHTING CANDLES

Symbolizing the four Sundays until Christmas, early church tradition has incorporated the lighting of five candles to mark the occasion and to be a visual reminder of the Sundays remaining. Traditionally, each candle has its own meaning. There is not a mystical or spiritual power in the lighting of candles, just symbolism for believers to remember the occasion and purpose of the Jesus’ birth. The symbolism of the candles and the order to light them is as follows:

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|-----------------|---|
| Fire | Jesus is the LIGHT of the World, coming to bring Light into Darkness and Life from Death. (John 8:12, Isaiah 9:2, Revelation 22:5) |
| Candle 1 | Often a purple candle and called the Hope or Prophecy Candle . Believers light this candle to symbolize HOPE and draws us to remember the hope offered through Jesus, our Redeemer. <i>[Light this candle <u>four Sundays</u> before Christmas to mark the start of Advent.]</i> |
| Candle 2 | Often a purple candle and called the Love, Comfort or Bethlehem Candle . Believers light this candle as a part of |

preparation to receive the Love of Christ. Thus we *Prepare Him Room*. *[Light Candle 1 and add this candle three Sundays before Christmas.]*

Candle 3 Often a pink candle and called the **Joy or Shepherd’s candle**. Believers light this candle to symbolize the proclamation of Jesus birth to the shepherds (the lowest people) and to the world. *Joy to the World the Lord has come!* *[Light Candles 1 and 2, then add this candle two Sundays before Christmas.]*

Candle 4 Often a purple candle and called the **Peace or Angel’s candle**. Believers light this candle to remember Jesus as God’s fulfilled promise to redeem and reconcile mankind to Himself; to establish *Peace on Earth on whom His favor rests*. *[Light Candles 1, 2 and 3, then add this candle the last Sunday before Christmas.]*

Candle 5 Often a white candle and called the **Christ candle**. Believer’s light this candle to celebrate the Newborn King! *God is with us!* *[Light all four candles from previous weeks, then add Christ candle on Christmas Eve or Day.]*

WAITING IS PREPARATION: Practical Ideas for Celebrating Advent at Home

Advent is not a passive season of sitting and watching. It is an intentional season of worshipful waiting. Not the coming *presents*, but to remember the *presence* of the promised, Coming Savior who came to give us the ultimate gift – Peace between us and God. Let us “prepare Him room” as we seek to grow closer to Him this Advent season. **Here are some practical ideas to celebrate Advent together:**

1. Countdown to Christmas:

- Light your own candles at home each of the four Sundays, and light the 5th one Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- Use a calendar to count down and highlight or circle the FOUR Sundays leading up to Christmas.
- Buy kids their own Advent Chocolate calendar and then on the Sundays read Scripture together before they can open those panels on their calendars.