

Celebrating Advent
Pastor Edward Conway, D.Min.

Introduction

Advent means “arrival”. Beginning the Sunday after Thanksgiving (November 28), we will begin the 4-Sunday journey through this beautiful season together. Our Sunday gatherings will include singing Christmas Carols, bible readings, and lighting the advent wreath candles.

We will explore how a personal relationship with Jesus brings about growth in four areas: hope, love, joy, and peace. Growth in these areas is a remedy for the cultural stressors and expectations which may increase anxiety, depression, and relational conflict. Grace for growth is accessed by renewing our thought life (2 Corinthians 10:5; Proverbs 4:23) and walking in our new life in Christ (Ephesians 4:17 – 5:21; Colossians 3). Our hope is that you would journey along with us so that we can flourish together in the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Theological Foundations

- **Hope** – The source of hope is Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can resist excessive anxiety about the future and rest in the promises of God. ***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*** (Romans 8:32; 15:13; cf. John 4:13-14; 14:1-3; Romans 8:32, 1 Jn 5:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-6, 13; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Cor 4:16-18)
- **Love** – The source of love is God who manifested His love by sending His Son. Therefore, we can resist the tendency to be self-centered and relate to others from the place of being loved, accepted, and forgiven in Christ. ***In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*** (1 John 4:9; cf. 1 Jn 3:1, 16-18; 4:7-21)
- **Joy** – The source of joy is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are not dependent on circumstances, emotions, or our own resources but can access joy through abiding in God and His Word. ***For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*** (Romans 14:17; cf. John 15:16:22; Luke 6:22-23; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 15:13; Philip 1:25; 2 Cor 1:24; Rom 5:3-4; 15:13)
- **Peace** – The source of peace is justification by grace through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can resist the need to control people, events, and circumstances for God has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds. ***Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** (Romans 5:1; 3:24-26; 8:6, 14:6; 15:13; Colossians 1:13-15, 20; Philippians 4:7-8)

Practical Suggestions

- Morning Devotions – Start your day off with a focus on Christ through bible reading and prayer. Resource: www.intouch.org/daily-devotions
- Family Dinners – Establish a dinner time, sit around a table, and use a family Advent program. Resources: FocusOnTheFamily.com/Advent or ChristianBook.com.
- Church Life – Surround yourself with people of faith and hope! Let a few people know what you need, and if you don't feel you have a friend, please reach out to a small group leader, elder, or pastor.
- Self-care. Take good care of yourself by not overeating, getting enough rest, and don't self-medicate (alcohol, over-the-counter pain meds, prescription meds, or even pot). A second area of self-care is give yourself grace; be patient with yourself. If you're feeling a sense of loss or stress, it's okay, feel it; your feelings are valid. If you have toxic family members, create good boundaries. Take care of yourself!
- Do Fun Events – Movie night with popcorn, bake cookies, build a gingerbread house, play board games, caroling in your neighborhood or a nursing home, build a campfire in the backyard and roast marshmallows, build a snow fort, car ride to look at Christmas lights, attend a living nativity, visit a museum, or take a school musical.
- Be a Blessing - It's amazing what blessing other people will do for your own well-being. Here are 20 ideas: <https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/holidays/featured-holidays/christmas/20-ideas-for-serving-others-as-a-family-this-christmas/>