



## An Advent Reading Guide

Advent is here. Our waiting has begun.

We do not have to rush into Christmas. Rather Advent is a time of slowing down, a time to remember that God came to be with us, that God is with us now and that God is coming again to make things right. Advent reminds us that the story of God's love, woven throughout the promises of the Old Testament, the story of the Nativity and the gift of life with Jesus, is extraordinary.

Advent keeps our eyes and hearts and souls wide open to Jesus and what His coming means for our lives.

### *Opening Prayer*

O God

Gather me now

To be with you

As you are with me

Soothe my tiredness

Quiet my fretfulness

Curb my aimlessness

Relieve my compulsiveness

Let me be easy for a moment

O Lord

Release me

From the fears and guilt

Which grip me so tightly

From the expectation and opinions

Which I so tightly grip

That I may be open

To receiving what you give

To risking something new

O God

Gather me now

To be with you

As you are with me

Amen

— Ted Loder

## Week 1: Hope

### *Prayer*

Oh God, we wait in this darkness for you. Spark the light again in our hearts. Let your light grow and glow with the warmth of hope. We lay our fears and our hurts before you. We set down the burdens of care, injustice and hurry. Speak to us of the wonder of that first Advent 2,000 years ago, when you so lovingly set into motion the great rescue plan you'd been preparing from the foundations of the earth. We remember the hope of the shepherds, whose hopeless lives were illuminated and transformed when you told them you'd done something new. Speak that hope to us, and fill us with the delighted wonder of Mary, who felt you yourself grow in her teenage belly. And help us to recognize your comfort as we set aside our own expectations this season. Come, oh Lord, and work a miracle in us.

Sunday: Isaiah 9:2-7

Monday: Isaiah 52:7-10

Tuesday: Isaiah 40:1-5

Wednesday: Psalm 89:1-4

Thursday: Isaiah 60:1-5

Friday: John 1:1-5

Saturday: Isaiah 43:15-21

## Week 2: Peace

### *Prayer*

We are hungry, God, for your peace. We desire your true justice, not the false promises of the powerful who oppress. We long not just for band-aid solutions but for inner healing, for ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods and city, and our country. Make us the bearers of your new kingdom. Let us be the prophets of this age, those who speak confidently about the peace you ushered into the manger with you that remarkable first Christmas day. Let us remember that you were the peace-bringer, even as a small child when you and your parents had to flee the ruler of the day. You were born to establish God's righteous rule and reign on this violent earth, and you are establishing it still today. Start in our own hearts, Jesus, and help us to be still before you now.

Sunday: Luke 1:26-38, Matt 1:18-24

Monday: Isaiah 11:1-10

Tuesday: Zechariah 6:12-13

Wednesday: Malachi 3:1-6

Thursday: Mark 1:1-3

Friday: John 14:25-27

Saturday: Psalm 85:8-13

## Week 3: Joy

### *Prayer*

We seek you during Advent, King Jesus. Wise men crossed deserts, mountains and forests to find you. When they discovered you at last, they were overjoyed. But we tremble with the great mystery, Jesus, that you found us. You crossed sin and death to save us, to bring us close to yourself. You have discovered us, and we are overjoyed. We cry out with the prophet Isaiah: "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way" and we say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come to save you." With the psalmist we humbly ask, "Restore to us the joy of our salvation." Teach us true joy this season, most gracious God.

Sunday: Matthew 2:1-10

Monday: Luke 1:5-16

Tuesday: Luke 1:8-25

Wednesday: Luke 1:39-56

Thursday: Luke 1:57-66

Friday: Luke 1:67-80

Saturday: Isaiah 35

## Week 4: Love

### *Prayer*

God, please open our hearts and minds up wide this week, that we may understand your love in a fresh way this Christmas. We're told in scripture that it was your zeal that put Jesus on David's throne to rule forever in justice and righteousness. He came to save us because of your consuming devotion to us, your passionate love for us, your intense enthusiasm to rescue us. It seems you really want us to know, oh Lord, that Jesus' coming was no accident. He was no afterthought or Plan B, but your design to draw us into your love. Help each one of us to consider what that truly means. Wherever we are in our own individual stories this year, you invite us to become part of your great story of love. Make us participants in your story, and then send us out into the new year ready to live and share your love.

Sunday: Luke 2:8-15

Monday: Isaiah 9:6-7

Tuesday (*Christmas Day*): Luke 2:6-7, 13-20

Wednesday: Matthew 2:1-12

Thursday: John 1:7-14

Friday: 1 John 4:9-13

Saturday: John 15:9-15