



Eternal Church Advent Study Guide

• Personal and Family Study •

1 Peter 1:8–12 (ESV)

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

What are we waiting for...and for whom?

It seems like we have been doing plenty of waiting over the past 2 years. We look around and an overwhelming majority of us find this world less of what we had ever envisioned for it. We know that things are not the way they should be, and we wait with expectation for a new or better day.

This is the theme of "Advent," which is a word derived from the Latin word for "coming" or "arrival." This season is about remembering the past promises of God, the way in which He has fulfilled those promises in His only Son and the hope and expectation for His second advent in glory, when all things sad will come untrue.

HISTORY AND TRADITION

The Advent season lasts for four Sundays. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, or the nearest Sunday to November 30. Advent ends on Christmas Eve and thus is not considered part of the Christmas season. This year Advent will begin on Sunday, November 28 and conclude on Friday, December 24. The Advent celebration is both a commemoration of Christ's first coming and an anticipation of His second coming. As Israel longed for their Messiah to come, so Christians long for their Savior to come again.

There are a variety of ways to celebrate the Advent season, depending on tradition and background. Many people use an Advent calendar, typically made up of 24 “windows” containing Scriptures, stories, poems or gifts, to count down the days until Christmas. As each window is opened and the final day draws closer, expectation increases. This reminds us of the hopeful yearning God’s people experienced as they longed for the promised Messiah to come. Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. Each week a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The last candle, called the Christ Candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to represent the eve of Jesus’ arrival on earth. Regardless of the tradition, Advent can be a significant time in the life of the church.

USING THE GUIDE

This guide contains five weeks of material, with both a study to complete on your own as well as a discipleship plan to assist families in navigating the Christmas season intentionally with spiritual emphasis. The family portions are designed to work for families of all shapes and sizes and do not require burdensome preparation. However, please look ahead at the activity sections to get the most for your family from this resource.

The Advent study walks through the narrative of Jesus’ birth and coincides with the sermon themes each Sunday. It begins in the Garden with God’s promise of a Savior and ends with a mournful and eager anticipation of Jesus’ promised return. In the middle, God reveals His unshaking faithfulness in sending the promised Rescuer to a world He loves dearly.

We will see His love for the outsider as He proclaims the news of His Son first to lowly shepherds. We will be warmed by His missional love which desires all nations to come and worship His Son through the Magi’s journey.

Even if you know the Advent narrative well, don’t rush past what God has for you in this season. For many, this may be the first time to consider all that God is saying through the birth of His Son. For others, it will be an opportunity to rediscover the way God intimately works in the details of life in hidden and mysterious ways for His glory and the good of man.

For all of us, may this season be one marked by hope, expectation, remembrance and worship. The King has come and is coming again! We still wait, but we are waiting for a reason.

THE WAITING PLACE

You should find a packet of cards attached to the Advent Guide. We are asking everyone, adults and children alike, to answer a simple question, and write the answer down anonymously on the included card, one card for each willing participant.

The question is: *What is one thing for which you are waiting on God?*

There is no right answer. We know that the answers that our people will submit could be serious and sobering, as well as light-hearted and even funny.

You may want to take time to talk to God about what is bubbling up in your heart.

Please bring that card at some point during the 4 weeks of Advent services at Eternal Church, and clip it onto a board we are calling "The Waiting Place."

This will become a communal place for our covenant family to gather and read responses, laugh, cry and pray over what is revealed in the writing on those cards. Remember to make your "wish" anonymous.

Let's see what God does with our prayers and wishes this Christmas season!

A NOTE FOR FAMILIES

The Advent season will pretty much be as significant as you desire to make it. In the absence of intentionality, the Christmas season will fill family life with a myriad of activities, obligations and secular traditions. Right now, before the calendar begins to overflow, set aside a few minutes to consider what you want this season to be for your family. Make a plan that will include daily activities and weekly gatherings for your children so that your Christmas will not be swallowed up by lesser things.

To encourage you toward that end we have included a family portion in this Advent Guide to help assist your family in your time together. We wrote these portions with preschool and elementary-aged children in mind. If you have older children, consider having each member work through the Personal Study section, instead of reading the Family Discipleship section, and then come together to talk about what you have discovered.

Please look ahead in each "Family Discipleship Section" to the Family Activities listed. You will want to do this well in advance so you can be prepared with all the needed resources and ideas available to the family each week.



PREPARING FOR ADVENT: Links provided for ideas here:



- **Plan your dates and work your plan. What are the 5 dates on 5 consecutive weeks you can clear for your family discipleship time?**
(Week 1 = November 28-December 4)
(Week 5 = December 26-January 1)
- **Make or purchase an Advent Wreath for your family to use in the home every time you come together to share and remember.**
[Refrigerator version for smaller children](#)
[Wreath for lighting real candles](#)
- **Make or purchase an Advent Calendar so the children can count down the days.**
[Calendar Idea](#)
- **Purchase an interactive [Jacquie Lawson 2021 Advent Calendar](#) for your computer.** Although this Advent Calendar does not follow the Biblical story, it is a fun and beautiful way to engage the family on a day-to-day basis
- **Purchase a manger scene that can be handled and played with by children.**
[Children's Manger scene idea](#)



All resources with this icon can be found by going to the web page::