



Dearest Child of God,

The advent season is an invitation for us to stop and quiet ourselves as we expectantly anticipate the coming of Christ, our Messiah. As you prepare for this study, consider eliminating distractions that might disturb your attention: technology, projects, or chores. This study can be done individually or within a community; so, gather your family or connect with your small group to prepare your hearts to celebrate the birth of Christ.

As you begin, be attentive to your surroundings; light a candle, build a fire, or sip a cup of hot chocolate or tea. Pair this journal with our four-week podcast series to enhance your wonder. If you have a variety of age groups walking through this advent study together, encourage the littlest ones to draw what they hear being read aloud to them, and engage them with opportunities to reflect verbally through the questions and prayer time.

However you use this resource, we pray that in the midst of this season the hope, love, joy, and peace of Christ will be with you.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6-7.

From our family to yours,

Awana



Definitions

Yahweh: The personal name of God. In Hebrew, it is only four letters (YHWH) and the Hebrew people revered the name of the Lord so deeply, they wouldn't speak His name out loud.

Provisions: The act or process of providing.

Week 1: Sunday, November 29

Virtue: Hope

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26-31

Story Summary

Let's wonder together: what must it have been like for Adam and Eve to look out over all that God had created and see beauty and provision for their future? God had given them *everything* they needed for living, and He didn't limit his goodness to mankind; He abundantly provided for the wildlife of the earth, the birds, the crawling creatures. Everything with breath in it was given *every green plant* for nourishment.

In this rare moment of perfection, **hope** filled the earth. Mankind and its creator, who they would later learn was named Yahweh, would have quite the journey ahead. But for now, through the power of what God had done, mankind would give back in worship by cultivating a world that reflected its creator.

Wonder Questions

For you:

- If you were in the garden at the time of creation, what would be your favorite thing to cultivate?
- Does God still provide abundantly for mankind?
- What good things has God created you to do?

For your family:

- In what ways can we see hope in the provisions God gave mankind and all He created?
- In what ways can we see hope in the life and provisions God has given us?
- How can we bless others around us with the hope and promises of God?

Lord, we come to this Advent season with hearts full of hope as we look to Jesus coming to earth as your Son. May we see you in this season, and may we show your goodness in everything we say and do. Bring to us opportunities to serve those are suffering; open our eyes to the needs around us that we may bless others through your Name. Amen.



Definitions

Redeem: To make good

Tree of life: A tree planted in the garden that could keep life as it was in that moment for eternity.

Week 2: Sunday, December 6

Virtue: Love

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:1-13, 22-23

Story Summary

Do you remember that perfect moment of hope when mankind existed alongside Yahweh? We were working and cultivating the earth in obedience to our creator when a split-second decision broke our relationship with God and became the first act of disobedience in history. God's gift of life was eternal; Adam's and Eve's act of disobedience disrupted the perfect balance of relationship in His garden. Our loving Yahweh knew that eating from the tree of life would keep us in that broken system of evil with no hope for redemption *forever*.

So what did he do? The Lord made them clothing from the skin of an animal and *He sent them out*, removing them from the garden. God's judgement would be upon them, and life outside the garden would be *hard*. Imperfect. Broken. However, mankind also experienced God's **love**. With sin now in the mix, the greatest act of love God could offer in this moment was to keep mankind out of the garden (away from the tree of life!) so that He could redeem and restore us through what was to come: a solution for *all* mankind for eternity, through His Son, Jesus.

Wonder Questions

For you:

- Do you ever wish we could go back in time to keep Adam and Eve from committing that first act of disobedience?
- Has God ever kept something from you out of His loving mercy? What did that act of mercy look like?

For your family:

- What would our family be like if we consistently chose disobedience in our relationships with each other?
- What would it feel like to be stuck in sin and brokenness forever?
- In what ways can we see God show his love and mercy to us?

Lord, we come to this Advent season with hearts full of love as we look to Jesus coming to earth as your Son. May we see you in this season, and may we show your goodness in everything we say and do. Bring to us opportunities to serve those who are suffering; open our eyes to the needs around us that we may bless others through your Name. Amen.



Definitions

Consequence: The sequence of events that follow an action or decision

Israelites: A nation of people (Israel) set apart by God to show His presence and salvation.

Week 3: Sunday, December 13

Virtue: Joy

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Story Summary

Have you ever seen a tree stump?
What did it feel like?
What did it look like?
Was it big enough to sit on?
Did the tree stump look alive or dead?

Did you know a tree stump can grow back to a full-sized tree? With the right root system in the ground and nutrient-filled soil, you might see small green leaves and branches poking through the hard stump (though it would take a really, *really* long time!). Let's wonder together: what does a tree stump have to do with Advent and the coming of Jesus?

When God laid out the consequences for the disobedience Adam and Eve chose in the garden, He also cursed the ground and the snake that had tempted them. In Genesis 3:15, God declares *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

He shall bruise your head. ... Who is he? I'll give you just a minute to think through who that might be. Did you think it was Jesus? If so, you're absolutely right! In the midst of the pain and brokenness of sin, God had already prepared a way for evil to be conquered forever and for **joy** to come into the world.

As the story between God and mankind continues to unfold, we see that God brings Jesus into the world through a chosen group of people—the Israelites. It is through this incredible group of people that God shows His presence and reveals His plan of redemption *to the world*. If the Israelites are the tree stump in the wilderness, Jesus is the new, living branch that grows out of it! The entire world receives redemption through Jesus and His living sacrifice.

Wonder Questions

For you:

- Why is it critical that Jesus came as a *living* sacrifice? Why couldn't He have simply taken care of our sin as the Son of God?
- When you think about your relationship with Jesus, what does it look like? Are there dead parts that Jesus can bring back to life?

For your family:

- How did God's declaration of Jesus defeating evil bring joy back to Adam and Eve?
- In what ways do you see joy in your life?

Lord, we come to this Advent season with hearts full of joy as we look to Jesus coming to earth as your Son. May we see you in this season, and may we show your goodness in everything we say and do. Bring to us opportunities to serve those who are suffering; open our eyes to the needs around us that we may bless others through your Name. Amen.



Definitions

Messiah: The promised Savior prophesied throughout the Old Testament.

Temple sacrifices: As the world awaited the coming of the Messiah to take the consequence of our sin forever, God gifted us a system of animal sacrifices and laws that, when followed, allowed us to be in relationship with Him.

Week 4: Sunday, December 20

Virtue: Peace

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-19

Story Summary

What is the longest you've ever waited for something? When Jesus came to earth as a baby, the world had been waiting for *thousands of years*. Thousands of years. Imagine what it must have felt like to wait that long. Could it have been frustrating, causing anxiety and increasing fear as the years went on?

Consider all of those anxious fears, and let's imagine we are the shepherds in this story. We've been told the long-awaited Messiah would come. Yet hundreds of generations have come and gone, and still we wait. One night while we're out protecting the sheep used for temple sacrifices, the glory of the Lord fills the dark skies with light and angels declaring the Messiah has come! Fears were quieted; **peace** had descended. Jesus was here, the prophecy would be fulfilled!

Wonder Questions

For you:

- Have you ever looked into the sky on a dark night? What did you see?
- What questions do you have about Jesus' birth and fulfillment of prophecy?

For your family:

- Would it have been difficult for the shepherds to hold onto hope and pass that hope to the next generation?
- How do we pass Jesus to the next generation in our modern times?

Lord, we come to this Advent season with hearts full of peace as we joyfully celebrate Jesus coming to earth as your Son! May we show your glory to those you've put in our lives; help us spread your gift of love to the world around us. We praise you for all that you have done through your Son throughout history and will continue to do eternally! Amen.