

Advent



2025

Embracing the Season: Modern Advent Traditions

Christians around the world participate in different Advent customs. A couple of the most widely followed traditions involve Advent wreaths and Advent calendars.

Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath's circular shape symbolizes God's unending life (Ps. 90:2; Ps. 102:24-27). Lying flat, it supports four colourful (usually pink or purple) candles, each representing one of four focused Advent themes, such as hope, peace, joy, or love.

Participants (churches, families, or individuals) traditionally dedicate time each Sunday during Advent to meditate on that week's theme while also lighting candles. On the first week, they light one candle. On the second, they light two. And this continues until all four weeks have passed.

Then, on Christmas Eve, they light a fifth candle at the wreath's center. Often white in color and sometimes called the "Christ candle," its flame symbolizes God's light entering our dark world through the birth of Jesus (see John 1:5-9; John 8:12).

The traditional Advent season invites participants into four weeks of deep reflection on the advent, or arrival, of God in Jesus of Nazareth, as well as on his promised return. From focused prayer and Scripture reading, to candled wreaths and embellished calendars, Advent celebrations vary widely. But all Advent practices share a heightened anticipation for God's arrival. More than a countdown to Christmas, Advent embraces the way of Jesus and encourages hopeful waiting, courageous peace-making, resilient joy, and self-giving love in our still-suffering world.

What Is Advent?

The Advent season is a four-week period in the Christian calendar that prepares people for Jesus Christ's birth at Christmas, while also pointing ahead to his promised return. Each Sunday of the season traditionally spotlights a key theme like hope, peace, joy, or love to invite reflection, prayer, and expectant celebration.





The Meaning and Significance of Advent

For many, “advent” means a countdown to Christmas. Whether we envision candy-filled Advent calendars or lights draped over houses with nativity scenes out front, Advent marks a happy season of celebrating.

But the word “advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, which is about a “coming” or an “arrival.” The Latin translation of the New Testament uses *adventus* to describe God the Son arriving on Earth, born as Jesus of Nazareth during the 1st century C.E. (see [Acts 7:52](#)). Still, throughout Church history, Advent has more traditionally referred to Jesus’ future arrival, when he comes to complete his work of restoring all creation (see [Matt. 24:27](#); [1 Cor. 15:23](#); [1 Thess. 3:13](#)).

The Advent season leads to the celebration of Jesus’ birth and also emphasizes his future arrival. It’s a season that includes practices like prayer, giving to those in need, and worship (plus more, depending on the tradition). And it reminds us that we’re living during the time between Jesus’ first and second advents, leading us to lament the hardships we experience in a still-broken world, while also forming us into people who wait with longing for the renewed world to come.

Celebrating Advent also means living into it by practicing a generous way of love and care for our neighbors as we partner with Jesus to bring peace on Earth.

The Four Weeks of Advent

In most Christian traditions, Advent is a four-week season of celebration and observation prior to Christmas, each week often focusing on a particular biblical theme. Although the selection and arrangement of themes can vary, these are some themes commonly explored during Advent.

- Week 1: Hope
A feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.
- Week 2: Peace
A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended.
- Week 3: Joy
A feeling of great pleasure and happiness.
- Week 4: Love
Encompassing a deep feeling of affection and care.

This guide is intended to help you meditate on each of these themes so that you might deepen your understanding of Advent and experience the season in a new way. You'll also find an Advent calendar below with daily reflections that begin on the first Sunday of Advent.



Hope

Sometimes hope feels wishful, like crossing our fingers and dreaming of a better outcome. We might hope for better employment, healed relationships, or a brighter future. But that kind of hope is based on things that may or may not happen. When things don't go as we hoped, it can be crushing—our hope disappearing like vapor.

As a season of reflection and contemplation, Advent invites us to imagine a different kind of hope, rooted in the unchanging nature of God and his promise to restore every part of his creation. Advent hope does not minimize pain or difficulty, nor does it assume things will soon get better. Instead, it faces the darkness with courage and chooses to trust that God's promises will come to pass, guaranteed by his long-proven, faithful character.

In the Hebrew Bible, the words most often used for hope—*qavah* and *yakhal*—are also translated as “wait.” To hope in God means to wait with patient expectation, trusting that he will fulfill his promises. This kind of waiting leans forward, anticipating the day when Jesus will return to make all things new. Such hope empowers people to persevere, to act justly, and to serve others as a sign of the restoration that will arrive through Jesus.

Facing Darkness With Firm Hope

Isaiah 8:5-17

Hoping for Redemption

Psalms 130

Holding Fast to Living Hope When Suffering

1 Peter 1:3-9, Romans 8:18-25



Peace

We often hear that peace comes through strength. If our military is the most powerful fighting force, our enemies won't challenge us and we'll have peace. Taking the opposite approach, some try to "keep the peace" by avoiding conflict and ignoring problems, hoping they'll solve themselves. Like Israel's false prophets, they provide superficial harmony, saying, "Peace, peace!" But in reality, nobody is truly at peace ([Jer. 6:14](#)).

The kind of peace envisioned during Advent comes not through military victory or avoidance of reality but through the way of Jesus. He brings true peace by honestly addressing and working to heal the deeper sources of division, such as fear and pride, that compel people to violence. Jesus reconciles all things to himself, offering healing and restoration through love and forgiveness.

As Jesus continues his work of bringing real, lasting peace throughout the Earth, we can participate in that work by living as peacemakers. We join with Jesus by embracing his non-violent way of forgiveness, caring for our neighbors, and extending generous love toward all people.

The Prince of Peace Who Ends Violence

Isaiah 9:1-7

How Jesus' Death and Resurrection Bring Peace

Colossians 1:13-23

Living Into Jesus-Style Peace

Ephesians 2:11-18, 4:1-6



Joy

We often think about joy as an experience of happiness based on favorable circumstances: a stroke of good luck, a personal achievement, or a long-held desire finally being satisfied. But when joy depends on circumstances, it fades fast when the good times end.

Advent joy is not about general happiness stemming from good times. It's a deep sense of safety and freedom people feel because of God's loving character, which remains constant through all circumstances, and because God can be trusted to ultimately bless and heal creation as he promised. Similar to the joy a friend's presence brings on good days and bad, we experience joy as God walks with us through the fluctuations of life's positive and painful circumstances. In the Bible, people express joy both when God delivers them from situations of oppression and while still in the middle of exile, persecution, and pain. As people remember God's loving, rescuing actions throughout history, they wait in joyful hope for him to act in the future, even when that waiting requires patient suffering.

This kind of joy is about being united with the God who walks with us and trusting that he will one day wipe away every tear. It looks to the future but also takes root in our present reality. The season of Advent invites us to experience joy not because everything is perfect but because God is with us and his joy is already breaking into the world.

Joy in God's Exodus Deliverance

Psalm 105:43; Isaiah 51:1-11

Joy in Jesus' Kingdom

Luke 2:8-14; John 15:9-17

Joy in the Midst of Sorrow

Matthew 5:11-12; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10



Love

Love is often seen as a force beyond our control, something people fall in or out of. Or it may seem like something satisfying that we can achieve, driving us to chase affection through relationships or status. “Love is all you need,” they say, because it’s the path to self-fulfillment.

But something is missing from that picture of love. The Bible invites us to see a kind of love that’s neither accidental nor driven by desire for self-fulfillment. Instead, it involves a steady commitment to care for the well-being of others—never self-seeking, always self-giving—even when it costs us.

Jesus shows this kind of love when he gives his life for friends and enemies alike. Dying on a cross, with his killers still laughing at him, Jesus cares for their well-being as he prays for their forgiveness ([Luke 23:34](#)). Living with this kind of love does not mean ignoring our own needs or devaluing ourselves. After all, Jesus says to “love your neighbor as yourself” ([Matt. 22:39](#)). But it means choosing to see all people as living miracles of God, each made in God’s image and deeply loved by him.

The Advent season leads us to reflect on the future God is bringing, where every interaction will be shaped and compelled by love. Even more, it invites us to live into that coming world right now by loving others the way Jesus does. As we give of ourselves in order to care for both friends and enemies, we demonstrate the love that Jesus shows to all people.

All the Laws Lead to Love

Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:27-36

Bright Reflections of Divine Love Everywhere

1 John 4:7-21

What True Love Looks Like

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The Fifth candle

- **Central Candle (Christmas):** A fifth candle, often white, is lit on Christmas Day to symbolize Jesus's birth and his role as the Light of the World.
- **Symbolism:** This candle is a focal point of the Advent wreath, representing the culmination of the season and the arrival of Christ.

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-20

Characters: Narrator, Joseph, Angel, Angel Choir, Shepherd

Narrator: Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman Empire. To take part in the census, everyone had to return to his or her hometown to register.

Joseph: Mary, we need to return to Bethlehem to register for the Roman census.

Narrator: Mary and Joseph left for Bethlehem. Mary was engaged to Joseph, and was pregnant with a child that had been prophesied to be born to her by an angel. When they arrived in Bethlehem, they found that there was no room at the inn, so they stayed at a stable. While there, Mary gave birth to her baby, and she named him Jesus. After Jesus was born, an angel went to shepherds who were tending to their sheep outside of Bethlehem. The shepherds were terrified upon seeing the angel.

Angel: Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Narrator: Suddenly a great company of angels surrounded the messenger angel, and sang praises:

Angel Choir: Glory to God in highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

Narrator: The angels then left the shepherds. Then one of the shepherds said:

Shepherd: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

Narrator: The shepherds hurried off, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. They worshiped him, and then spread the word to others about the child. Mary treasured up all of these things and pondered them in her heart.



Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some of the common questions people ask about Advent.

What is the difference between Advent and Christmas?

When does Advent start and end?

Other questions...