

# The Bible in Advent



## LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Advent means “coming” in Latin. In the Christian Calendar, it begins four Sundays before Christmas, roughly the beginning of December. Advent is meant to be a season of preparation.

Yet, as we all know, Advent overlays what is perhaps the most packed month of the year. Every nook is filled with shopping and parties and family and travel. How often do we arrive at Christmas Eve and mark with sadness how difficult it was to prepare our hearts to wonder at the coming of Jesus?

We hope this guide will help you and your community engage Advent afresh.

We invite you to gather with your family, an existing group, or a new group for just this occasion, to open the Scriptures this Advent and delight afresh in the mysteries of anticipation and joy.

He has come! And he will come again!

## COACHING SUPPORT

We'd love to support you in the journey. If you would appreciate help talking through how to gather a group or how to lead the sessions, send an email to [staci\_wald@fuller.edu] and we'll set up a free 30-minute coaching call.

Also, we and our partners at the Grace and Mercy Foundation are excited to learn more about how the practice of the public reading of Scripture can grow and serve the church. If you complete a “Bible in Advent” group and return our survey by Jan 10, 2020, you will be eligible for up to a **\$50 stipend**. Email us for instructions at [staci\_wald@fuller.edu].

## OUTLINE

Each session is 30 minutes and is designed to be used for each of the four weeks of Advent. However, you could combine two sessions into one meeting if needed.

**Session 1:** “Come, Lord Jesus” | HOPE explored through Bible readings.

**Session 2:** “How long, O Lord” | FAITH explored through Bible readings.

**Session 3:** “You will have joy!” | JOY explored through a Bible discussion.

**Session 4:** “Blessed is the one who believed” | PEACE explored through Bible readings.

# Session 1 Guide

## INTRODUCTION

*To be read aloud:* Thanks for being here together to celebrate Advent!

Today, we begin the first of four gatherings to prepare ourselves for Christmas. We'll be remembering together what it means for us to wait for God and prepare for his arrival. Most weeks, we'll do this by simply reading selections from the Bible and listening attentively. We're listening to the words being read, of course, but at a deeper level, we're also listening for God's word to us today. We hope to experience God's presence in his Word and be empowered by his Spirit to respond to what we hear.

This practice is sometimes called the Public Reading of Scripture. This is not a new thing. In the Old and New Testament, God's people did exactly this; they gathered and listened to God's word read aloud. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, told him, "devote yourself to the public reading of scripture." (4:13) Today, even though we could listen or read on our own, there's something special about us being here to listen together.

Here is what we will do. After opening in prayer, we'll read and listen to eleven short readings. It'll take about 20 minutes. This might feel strange at first if you're used to experiencing the Bible a few verses at a time. That's ok. Don't feel pressure to understand everything you hear. Ask God to draw your attention to his voice and give you what you need today. At the end of the readings, we'll respond in prayer to where you sense God's invitation to you out of his word.

The theme for the first week of Advent is Hope. And the cry of the church is, "Come, Lord Jesus".

## OPENING PRAYER

This is best kept short and simple. Ask God to speak—and for you and your community to be able to hear and receive his word.

## READINGS

We recommend printing the readings (see accompanying document) one per person. If reading directly from a Bible, consider giving out the passage references before you start reading. You could ask everyone to take a turn reading or select two strong readers and have them alternate.

Gen 2:4-9;15-17 | Gen 2:18-24 | Gen 3:1-9 | Is 2:1-5 | Ps 122 | Is 11:1-10 | Lk 21:25-36 | Rev 21:1-14  
Rev 21:22—22:5 | Rev 22:6-13 | Rev 22:14-21

## RESPONSE

Invite your group to consider this question quietly: "How is God offering me hope, even during the waiting?"

Open a time for prayer, for the group to name aloud where God has given them hope or where they are still asking for hope.

Let them know there's no expectation for everyone to pray. If they feel led to pray, keep the prayer brief. If you like, as a transition between prayers, you can ask each person to end their prayer by saying, "together, we ask" and the whole group will respond together, "come, Lord Jesus."

## CLOSE

Close simply in prayer, thanking God for speaking and restoring our hope through his word.

## Session 2 Guide

### INTRODUCTION

The theme of the second week of Advent is Faith. And the cry of the church is, "How long, O Lord".

### OPENING PRAYER

As before, a simple opening prayer.

### READINGS

Ps 22:1-11 | Is 49:8-15 | Hab 1:2-4 | Is 40:1-11 | Job 21:1-9;13-15 | Mal 3:1-7a | Mal 3:7b-13a | Mal 3:13b-4:6  
Lk 3:1-9 | Lk 3:10-18 | Rom 8:18-25

### RESPONSE

Invite your group to consider this question quietly: "Where are you awaiting God's intervention?"

Open a time for response through prayer, inviting anyone who would like to ask God to arrive in a context in which they keenly await him.

Let them know there's no expectation for everyone to pray. If they feel led to pray, keep the prayer brief. If you like, as a transition between prayers, you can ask each person to end their prayer by saying, "together, we ask" and the whole group will respond together, "how long, o Lord?"

### CLOSE

Again, a simple prayer, thanking God for speaking and asking for him to arrive in our midst.

## Session 3 Guide

### INTRODUCTION

The focus of the third week of Advent is Joy.

This time, we will focus in on a specific part of scripture. We'll read it slowly and take some time to talk about it and let it sink in.

### OPENING PRAYER

As before, something simple.

### READINGS AND RESPONSE

Have the passage (Lk 5:5-25;57-80) read. Then, walk your group through the following questions. Try to keep the conversation to about 10-15 minutes. If your group is larger than 6, consider having them answer question 1 and 4 with just the person next to them.

1. Where do you see rejoicing? What causes it?
2. How does Zechariah's lack of faith (v 18) affect what happens in this story?
3. How do you see Zechariah growing? What changes for him?
4. Last time, we engaged the theme of waiting for the Lord. Drawing from this story of Zechariah, Elizabeth, and their community, what does it mean to you to wait with joy for the Lord?

### CLOSE

Again, a simple prayer, thanking God for speaking and giving us cause for rejoicing.

## Session 4 Guide

### INTRODUCTION

The focus of the fourth week of Advent is Peace.

This time, we return to a wider reading of Scripture and responding in prayer.

### OPENING PRAYER

As before, something simple.

### READINGS

2 Sam 7:1-7 | 2 Sam 7:8-17 | Mic 5:2-5 | Zep 3:14-20 | Ps 126 | Lk 1:26-56 | Lk 1:26-56 | Mat 1:18-24  
Gal 3:23-29 | Gal 4:1-7 | Is 52:7-10

### RESPONSE

Invite your group to consider this question quietly: "How else can I prepare my heart for Christ's arrival?"

Open a time for response through prayer, inviting anyone who would like to offer God worship or to ask for God's help preparing for his return.

Let them know there's no expectation for everyone to pray. If they feel led to pray, keep the prayer brief. If you like, as a transition between prayers, you can ask each person to end their prayer by saying, "Father of all" and the whole group will respond together, "hear your children's prayer."

### CLOSE

Again, a simple prayer, thanking God for speaking and asking for him to finish in us our preparation for Christmas.