



Prepare Him Room: An Advent Study November 26-December 31, 2023¹

Overview:

Christmas can come upon us in a flurry, coming and going so quickly that we oftentimes get lost in the what of Christmas rather than focusing on the who of Christmas—Jesus. In this four-week Advent study, you will explore the tension found at the crossroads of ancient prophecy (Isaiah) and familiar narrative (Luke). We will also look at various ways John the Baptist *prepared the way* for Jesus. We will better understand hope, joy, peace, and love as we dive into God’s Word. Many Christians celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of the age.²

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purposes of community groups.

- To slow down and remember the reason for the season; to remember who God is, what he has done, and what he continues to do.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- Option: Have an advent wreath as part of your regular meeting time, lighting an additional candle each week until all four are lit. As you light them, pray to be filled with a spirit of hope, joy, peace, and love.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We encounter the Father daily:* God the Father speaks to us through the Bible, and we commune with him through prayer.
- *We are all for Jesus:* Jesus saves us from our past, remakes us to be like him, heals our broken places, and is coming back as our king.

Conversation Starters:

- How or where did you experience [HOPE] last week? (*insert theme word of the week*)

Listening to God:

- Where did you see God at work last week? How were you able to join him?

¹ This series resource guide was written by Rachel Vaughn and Teresa Baumbach and edited by Dawn Gentry.

² <https://www.learnreligions.com/meaning-of-advent-700455>

Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion

Traditional Advent celebrations focus on one key theme each week: Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love.

- **HOPE - Read Isaiah 40, Malachi 4:1-6, and Luke 1:1-38**
 - How would you define “hope”? Where do you see glimmers of “hope” in contemporary society?
 - Where do Isaiah 40 and Luke 1:1-38 intersect? How does reading them together alter the way you understand each?
 - Read Malachi 4. How might the “Law” and the “Prophets” prepare us for Jesus?
 - What promises of God have you seen fulfilled in your life? What promises are you still waiting to see fulfilled?
 - How might you experience the hope of God in a deeper way this Christmas? How might you share that hope with others?

- **JOY – Read Isaiah 55, Luke 2:1-20, and John 1:1-34**
 - How would you define “joy”? How might our culture define “joy”? Is it possible to attain and maintain joy? Why or why not?
 - Where do Isaiah 55 and Luke 2:1-20 intersect? How does reading them together alter the way you understand each?
 - Describe a time the reality of God’s fulfilled promise looked different than what you expected. How did you respond?
 - Why is it so easy to misunderstand God’s promises? What tools can we use to safeguard against misinterpretation or making assumptions about God’s plans?
 - How might you experience the joy of God in a deeper way this Christmas? How might you share that joy with others?

- **PEACE – Read Isaiah 52-53, Matthew 3:1-12, and Luke 1:39-80**
 - How would you define “peace”? How would society today define it? What is the tension (if any) between the two definitions?
 - Where do Isaiah 52-53 and Luke 1:39-80 intersect? How does reading them together alter the way you understand each?
 - How does your walk with Christ bring you peace? Where do you still struggle?
 - Describe a time in your life when you had to wait on God. If that time of waiting has ended, how did the end of the story change how you looked back on the waiting?
 - If you are still in the middle, what helps you endure?
 - How might you experience the peace of God in a deeper way this Christmas? How might you share that peace with others?

- **LOVE – Read Isaiah 42, Luke 2:21-40, and Luke 7:18-30.**
 - How would you define “love”? How does our society define and measure “love”?
 - How does God’s Word define “love”? What are some challenges in living this out?
 - Where do Isaiah 42 and Luke 2:21-40 intersect? How does reading them together alter the way you understand each?
 - How does understanding the love of God alter how you view God’s promises?
 - What is the difference in wanting God and wanting what God gives you? Give examples of this difference from your own experience.
 - How might you experience the love of God in a deeper way this Christmas? How might you share that love with others?

Leaning into Obedience: Specific Next Steps

During this season of expectation, consider one of the following practical ways to put feet to your faith.

- **HOPE** – Find one friend or neighbor to share “the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Invite them to join you at an upcoming worship service or fellowship event.
- **JOY** – Gather with your family and friends and go Christmas caroling in your neighborhood or at a care center. Share handmade cards or crafts with those you meet.
- **PEACE** – Practice Sabbath with your family this week. Choose one evening to turn off electronic devices as well as the TV. Share a meal and have each person share one thing for which they are grateful.
- **LOVE** – Find a way to share a random act of kindness with someone in need. Make it a secret event if you can and reflect on how the experience affected you.

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of your group to share personal prayer requests.
- Pray this benediction together, adapted from Romans 15:13:
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Other Resources:

- Watch the Bible project videos at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/advent-series/>
- Sing together: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” “The First Noel,” “Silent Night,” “Joy to the World”
- Family activity ideas: <https://thrivinghomeblog.com/15-advent-resources-for-the-whole-family/>
- Online devotionals, art, and music for the season of advent from Biola University.
<https://ccca.biola.edu/events/2023/dec/2/advent-project-2023-online-devotional-series/>
- Song by Sovereign Grace – *Prepare Him Room*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KO4a0ky0Kc8>