



2023 Advent Guide

From the Body & Soul[®] Fitness Spiritual Impact Team



Week #1 of Advent: **Focus on HOPE**

"The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who **hope** in his steadfast love." Psalm 147:11

Also see: Lamentations 3:25, 1 Peter 1:3 & Romans 15:13

The first Candle of Advent is purple and is often called the Messiah or Prophecy candle representing the prophets who foretold Jesus' coming. Lighting this candle helps Christians anticipate the celebration of the birth of Christ on Christmas and it also begins a new liturgical season. When the enemy tries to steal the joy of the Advent and Christmas season from us through worry and fearfulness, God promises that He is good to those who hope in Him. He causes new and living hope for all who would believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Suggested Hymn: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus by Charles Wesley

Question of the week: How can you curb worry and look to Jesus for hope this Advent season?



Week #2 of Advent: **Focus on PEACE**

"Peace I leave with you. My **peace** I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful." John 14:27 CSB

Also see: Philippians 4:7; Proverbs 12:20; Psalm 29:11; Isaiah 54:10

The second Candle of Advent is Peace. When Jesus was born, he brought about peace in many unexpected ways! The Jewish zealots expected the Messiah to overturn the oppressive rule of the Romans and bring about peace the same way the Romans did - through violence. But Jesus had something else in mind. He brought a peace that shows us His character and purpose for coming to earth. Our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) gives us the Holy Spirit who brings us inner peace. It guards our hearts and minds, brings us joy, and is a blessing from God. Regardless of what is happening in our lives, the peace of God is always available and brings us a peace that is beyond our understanding and joy!

Suggested Song: Glory (Let There Be Peace) by Matt Maher

Question of the week: Where do you need the "peace that passes understanding" in your life today?



Week #3 of Advent: **Focus on JOY**

"Shout for **joy** to God, all the earth!" Psalm 66:1

Also see: Psalm 16:11, 33:1, 47:1, 67:4, 90:14, 95:1, 98:4, 100:1-2, 126:3, Psalm 28:7

The third Candle of Advent is sometimes called the Shepherd's candle. In Luke 2:10 the angel spoke to the shepherds in the field the night that Jesus was born and said this: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." The pink candle reminds us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, and it encourages us to personally focus on the joy we have as followers of Jesus. Spend time this week thinking about all the things that bring you joy. And if your heart is heavy and joy is hard to find right now, remember the angel's words, do not be afraid, draw close to your Savior, and rest in His arms. Allow His comfort to enfold you with a deeper joy that can only be found in Him.

Suggested Christmas Carol: Joy to the World by Isaac Watts

Question of the week: What is bringing you the most joy right now?



Week #4 of Advent: **focus on LOVE**

"For God so **loved** the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Also see: 1 John 4:7, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Christmas is the celebration of God's ultimate gift of love to humankind. 1 John 4:16 says "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." The attribute of God's love is expressed in kindness, patience, and honor. It always protects, always hopes, and always perseveres. As we light the candle on this fourth week of Advent, let us think of ways we can reflect God's love in kindness, patience, and goodness. God so loved the world....that he gave and so let us share God's love in like manner as we give to others.

Suggested Hymn: How Deep the Father's Love for Us by Stuart Townsend

Question of the week: How can God's love transform the way you see people around you this week?



Family Advent Activity Resource

The Advent Wreath

The Advent season is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds as we look forward to the celebration of Jesus' birth. It is a time of waiting in wonder, focusing our hearts on the real reason for the season - Jesus. The candles we light represent Jesus' coming as the light in the darkness. He is the light of the world! As Christmas draws nearer, each candle that is added brings a little more light. Each week has a specific focus which we have highlighted in the devotionals we have prepared for you.

Join with us in making a family Advent Wreath! Each Sunday starting December 3rd, gather together, light the candle and worship as a family. Here's how:

- Gather greenery, pinecones, berries, etc. from your yard or select items from your own Christmas collection.
- Using a paper plate, regular plate, or round platter as a base, shape your items into a wreath. Include four votive candles or taper candles — the traditional 3 purple and one pink. You can even add a white candle in the middle, the Christ candle, to light on Christmas Eve. Be creative!
- Intentionally set aside time each week for your family Advent time.
- Gather around the wreath as a family, light the appropriate candles, read the weekly devotional we have provided here and have each family member share a prayer or praise. Add a favorite song, talk about the question of the week, take prayer requests, share your personal thoughts about Christmas. Make this a memorable time!

