

# advent

DECEMBER 3 - 24

**Advent begins** on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Christmas (this year on December 3) and concludes on Christmas Eve. Advent has been observed since as early as the 6th century. Many Christians celebrate with the lighting of the 5 Advent candles – 1 per week and the final candle lit on Christmas Eve.

The word “Advent” derives from the Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival”. In this context, “the Lord is coming”. So, during this season of the year we celebrate His coming. Especially as believers we can celebrate His first AND second advent (or coming)! This preparation for the important day of Christmas allows us to “tune in” at a deeper level into what this day is all about. The day itself becomes more meaningful because of the invested focus into the theological and spiritual truth in the upcoming 22 days.

## THE ADVENT CANDLES

The tradition of Advent also involves the use of Advent candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the Light of the World (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9, 8:12). The Advent wreath with its five candles in the middle, one lit each week symbolizes the growing anticipation of the coming of Christ (represented by the center candle lit on Christmas Eve). As the candles burn a little each day it is reminder of and anticipation of Jesus’ coming. The Advent story is truly one of love coming TO us – a love of a kind that the world has never known before or since!

## ADVENT AT NEW LIFE CHURCH

Begin each week of Advent by reading and meditating on the short writing for that week. Use this with your family or as part of your personal quiet time. The point is simply to give you FOCUS through this season, letting God plant truth in the deepest part of you.

Even though the passages are short, take time in reading the Scripture, meditating on a probing question or thought and committing to obedience in a prayer. Each week there is also a special “Family Connection” to encourage you to go through Advent with your children or even with your Small Group.

**For Advent 2017**, a daily devotional text can be sent to encourage you throughout the season! Sign up by texting “@nladvent” to “81010”.

## FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

**1st CANDLE** (blue) **THE CANDLE OF HOPE.** We have hope because God is faithful and will faithfully keep His powerful promises made to us. Our hope comes from God and Him alone! We cannot find that hope in any other thing or any other person. He is our present, continuing and final hope for all time.

*“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ 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.” (Romans 15:12-13)*

## FAMILY CONNECTION

Our God is all powerful. Name the first thing that comes to your mind that is really powerful. Wrap a small present with something in it that makes the gift feel real when you shake it. Ask family members if they HOPE it is for them – and if it’s something really good. Have each person guess who the present is for and then have them guess who the present is from or what is inside. Allow time for responses. Then ask them what they think would be inside if the gift was from Jesus to them. Remind them that Jesus is the greatest gift of all and that His gift is for every one of us.

## SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

**2nd CANDLE** (blue) **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION.** God kept His promise of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Preparation means to “be ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD!

*“As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.’ (Luke 3:4-6)*

### **FAMILY CONNECTION**

Talk with your family about any guests you may have coming at Christmas. Perhaps your family will be the guests at someone else’s home. Discuss what preparations are needed to be ready for the arrival of guests. Explain that John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by announcing “One greater than He” was coming. He called for people to repent and believe the Gospel. The Bible says that Jesus will return to earth again. We must be prepared in the same way for Jesus’ return.

## **THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT**

**3rd CANDLE** (pink) **THE CANDLE OF JOY.** The angels sang a message of great JOY! Jesus is to be our joy! In Him and Him alone is full joy!

*“...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ (Luke 2:7-15)*

### **FAMILY CONNECTION**

Tell the family that you have purchased or have made a little special something that you know will bring them joy (cookies, a movie, etc.)

Explain that you have put it in a hidden location and they should draw a map on paper, or use the GPS on their tablet or phone to make the journey to its hidden location. Once they protest that they have no idea how to get there, pull out your map (drawn in advance) and ask them if they trust you to take them to the hidden location. [Allow for answers] Explain that Jesus is the only way to Heaven and we all must choose if we will trust in Him to take us there. Then lead them to the surprise!

## **FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT**

**4<sup>th</sup> CANDLE** (blue) **THE CANDLE OF LOVE.** The angels announced the Good News of a Savior. God sent His only Son to earth to save us, because He loves us!

*“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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17)*

### **FAMILY CONNECTION**

Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to take the punishment for your sin, so you don’t have to? For additional help in sharing the Gospel with kids, visit [www.enewlife.com/gospelforkids](http://www.enewlife.com/gospelforkids).

## **THE FINAL DAY OF ADVENT**

**THE CENTER CANDLE** (white) **THE CHRIST.** Jesus is the Christ, Our Deliverer from sin and death, the Son of the Living God!

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”  
<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:13-16)