

# *Advent Meditations*

A CHRIST'S CENTER DEVOTIONAL



# *Advent Meditations*

A DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR CHRIST'S CENTER CHURCH

November 29 - December 24, 2020

## About Advent

Advent is a word that means **arrival**. Advent season commemorates the *arrival* of Jesus Christ: not only of His coming to Bethlehem, but of his eventual second coming. For centuries, Christians around the world have taken the four weeks before Christmas to remember the birth of the long awaited Messiah, and to cry out for His return.

Advent, then, is all about looking backward and looking forward at the same time. It's about empathizing with the desperation of ancient Israel as they cried out for their Savior, and about coming to terms with our own cries as we endure our season of sorrow, trials, and injustice. We cry out with the saints of old, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Each week of Advent has its own theme, which we will commemorate on Sunday morning by lighting a candle. And on every day of the week, we will be reading and meditating on scriptures that correspond to those four themes:

Week 1: Hope

Week 2: Preparation of Peace

Week 3: Joy

Week 4: Love

## About this Workbook

This workbook presents an opportunity for our church congregation (or anyone else for that matter) to be reading and meditating on the same scriptures together. You don't have to use it, of course. Many people have their own preferred ways of spending daily time with God. But for those who would like to join us, we think this is a pretty good (and pretty easy!) way to do it.

## How to Use this Workbook

You'll be reading scriptures each day that correspond with those themes. Some will come from the Old Testament prophets, who were waiting and longing for the arrival of the promised Messiah. Others come from the Psalms, where honest men cried out to God for deliverance. There are New Testament scriptures, too, coming from the Gospels, where Jesus finally arrived in Bethlehem, and from the apostles who were encouraging God's people who were, like us, awaiting Christ's return.

Every day, we encourage you to begin by taking 2 minutes of silence before God. Then, dive into the scripture itself by using the S.W.O.R.D. Drill. (See the next page for details) After that, there is a new "Going Deeper" Section.

## Going Deeper

For those who want to go beyond the S.W.O.R.D. Drill and have a little more time, the Going Deeper section can serve as a helpful short bible study. For this part, you'll want to use your own bible, highlighters, and journal. The instructions in this section are just suggestions, of course. Sometimes we will encourage you to read the surrounding chapter for proper context, and draw your attentions to various ideas. Sometimes we'll encourage you to grab your highlighters and identify various themes. And sometimes we'll ask you pointed questions about the text, and how it might relate to you.

## What is The S.W.O.R.D. Drill?

The SWORD drill is a device for studying the Bible and incorporating it into our soul where it can be readily drawn upon when needed. This process involves the supernatural power of God's Word reaching our heart as opposed to simply floating as head knowledge. This practical tool can be used by anyone. The five steps are defined by the acronym S.W.O.R.D.

### **S** - Scripture

Read the **SCRIPTURE**. Then read it again, only slower. Don't rush through any of it. Let the words sink in. Then, write the verse out. Or if it's too long, write out the part that speaks to you the most.

### **W** - Wait

Read the passage a third time, then **WAIT**. Give your mind and your heart some space to process. What words seem most important to you in this moment? Write those down. Are there any parts that seem to be jumping off the page? Write those down, too.

### **O** - Observe

Okay, now it's time to pay attention not only the words themselves, but to how they are affecting your heart. Ask yourself, "where am I in these scriptures? Where am I in these words?" Can you **OBSERVE** what your heart is doing? Do these words make you anxious? Do they excite you? Are you uncomfortable as you read them? Write down these observations. Be honest with yourself.

### **R** - Request

Now that you've noticed what your heart is doing, it's time to invite the Holy Spirit to help you understand. It's time to **REQUEST** His input; His direction. What is He saying to you? Remember that we are not studying the Bible as if it were a textbook. You are asking for spiritual direction – and letting the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, lead you. So take a few moments and write down how you feel Him leading you.

### **D** - Dedicate

Based on what you've been reading and sensing, **DEDICATE** yourself to following where God is leading. Write down a prayer, or a response to His words. This is about taking action on what God has revealed to you through His Word.

\*(The S.W.O.R.D. Drill from Conquer Series Journal: Learn more about the Conquer Series Journal today @ [conquerseries.com](http://conquerseries.com))

## How do I pray The Prayer of Examen?

Review your day and ask:

- When did I sense the Lord's presence today?
- Is there any place where I missed it?
- Where did I feel the joy of the Lord?

Then, thank God for His presence, and ask him to be with you the next day.

Week 1 of Advent

Hope

Sermon Notes from Sunday, November 29

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# Monday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Jer 33:14-16 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Request

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** At the time Jeremiah gave this prophecy, Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonians, and was about to be destroyed. Read chapters 32 and 33, and consider what impact these prophetic words from God would have meant to Jeremiah himself, and to those who were suffering so greatly.

### Afternoon / Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Tuesday

**Morning Meditation**  
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Isaiah 11:1-3a There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read Isaiah 11 and 12, which prophecy about the reign of Jesus. One of the aspects Isaiah focuses on is the judgement Jesus will eventually bring. Why does he see that future judgment as reason to be hopeful?

**Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Wednesday

Psalm 89:102 I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness." You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: 'I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.'" Selah

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read all of Psalm 89. How would you describe the mood of the author? Notice how many times he reminds God of His promise to establish David's throne forever (through the coming of Jesus). Why does he urge God to be faithful in this way? And is it appropriate to remind God of his promises? Why?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.



# Thursday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Ps 33:20-22 Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Request

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** These verses come at the end of Psalm 33. They are the “therefore” section. Read through the Psalm, and take note of all the different reasons why the author comes to this hopeful resolution.

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

Friday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Psalm 43:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read Psalm 42 & 43 (which are two parts of this same song). How would you describe the mood of the Psalmist? What is causing that mood? Now, watch how he speaks to his own soul in order to find hope. How many times does he do it? What does he focus on? What does he choose to remember?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Saturday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Rom 5:2b-5 "...we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Read Psalm 5:1-11. Notice how Paul is drawing a direct connection between the love of Jesus and the hope that we can carry in the midst of suffering. Take some time to contemplate that connection. How does the love of Christ bring us hope, even while we're enduring dark days?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.



Week 2 of Advent

# Preparation of Peace

Sermon Notes from Sunday, December 6

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Monday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Isaiah 40:3-5 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** While this verse is foretelling how John the Baptist will prepare the way for the glory of Christ, the rest of Isaiah 40 is a magnificent expression of God's unfolding glory. Read the chapter, and highlight all the reasons for God's greatness. (There's a lot to highlight...)

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Tuesday

**Morning Meditation**  
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Luke 1:16-19 But the angel said to him, "...Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord... And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

## Scripture

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## Wait

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## Observe

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## Request

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## Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** It was an angel who spoke these words to Zechariah the priest, who was alone in the temple. Read the whole story (Lk 11-24). Why do you suppose he reacted the way he did? And why did Mary (who reacted in a similar way in verse 34) get treated differently by the angel than he did?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Wednesday

Lk 1:76-79 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read Zechariah's whole prophecy, starting in verse 68. Most of the passage talks about the many things Jesus will accomplish. In what way will John's ministry "prepare his way?" And according to this passage, what is it that illuminates the way of peace?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.



# Thursday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Matt 24:42-44 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Just as John the Baptist was called to help the people of God be ready for Jesus' first coming, so Jesus here calls us to prepare our own hearts for His second coming. Consider what this means. How can we, as His followers, keep our own hearts ready for His return?

Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

Friday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

*Ps 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Part of preparing our hearts means letting God's Spirit look inside us and convict us. In this wonderful Psalm, watch how David does this. Watch how personal and intimate he is being with God. Notice how he praises God with beauty, and also shows God his ugly thoughts. How can we follow that example?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Saturday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

*Ps 23:4-5 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Here, we see how God Himself prepares blessings of peace for us even in the midst of difficult trials. Read through the whole 23rd Psalm, stopping to analyze all the different images of calm, trust, and peace. What pictures resonate most with you?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

# Sunday: Looking Back

*What was God highlighting to you this week?*

*Take a few minutes to journal about your experiences this week.*

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Week 3 of Advent

Joy

Sermon Notes from Sunday, December 13

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Monday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Isaiah 9:2a,6-7 *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read Isaiah 9:1-11. This is a celebratory prophecy about the coming of Jesus. Why does Isaiah see this event as "a great light?" What reasons does he give that the reign of Christ will be reason for joy and celebration?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Tuesday

**Morning Meditation**  
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Luke 1:41-44 "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy"

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read the parallel stories of Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1. We've read many prophecies about the coming of Jesus, and how they brought hope and joy to those who waited for his coming, but here, we see the first reaction of His arrival. Was the joy the two women felt more personal or corporate?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Wednesday

Luke 1:46-48 "And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name'"

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read Luke 1:46-56. This prayer from Mary is often called "The Magnificat," and it's one of the most famous prayers in history. She has just been given the incredibly difficult task of delivering and raising the Son of God as her own son. So why is she so full of thanksgiving to the Lord?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.



# Thursday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

*Ps 30:4-5 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.*

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Request

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Read Psalm 30. Just as David's mourning turned to dancing, so Israel's long suffering turned to joy at the coming of Jesus. And today, even in our trials, we look forward to His return, when our joy will be made full. Take a highlighter and mark all the different ways God blesses David in this Psalm. Then, list some of the ways He has given you joy even while you wait.

### Afternoon / Evening Meditation

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

Friday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Luke 2:29-32 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** This was the prayer of Simeon. Read Lk 2:22-36. In what way did his prayer mirror the announcement by the angels to the shepherds? Specifically, who was this great joy intended for? Why is this so significant for us today? And why do you suppose he recognized this truth when so many others did not?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Saturday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Heb 11:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Read Hebrews 11, often called the "Heroes of the Faith" chapter. Notice how it begins with Jesus, who endured the cross for the sake of the joy that was set before him. What can we learn from his example, and from these other saints? What joy awaits us who wait for the promise of Christ's return?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

# Sunday: Looking Back

What was God highlighting to you this week?  
 Take a few minutes to journal about your experiences this week.

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Week 4 of Advent

*Love*

Sermon Notes from Sunday, December 20

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Monday

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

*1 John 4:8b-10 ...God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Read 1 John 4:7-21. Consider what John might mean by the phrase, "God is love?" Does he mean that love is, itself, God? And according to John, why can we, as lovers of God and followers of Christ, be confident today and in the day of judgement?

**Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

# Tuesday

**Morning Meditation**  
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Luke 2:10-14 "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the 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.' Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

## Scripture

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## Wait

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## Observe

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## Request

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## Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Read this whole familiar passage, starting in verse 1. Notice all the civic details: emperors, kings, policy decrees, etc. Now read the angel's proclamation again. What kind of person are they suggesting has just been born? A religious figure? Or something else? How do people see Jesus today?

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

**Morning Meditation**

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Wednesday

Luke 2:15-18 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

**Scripture**

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**Wait**

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**Observe**

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**Request**

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**Dedicate**

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**Going Deeper:** Why did God pick these shepherds to be witnesses of Christ's birth? We don't see them show up again in the New Testament. Why did they get that honor? Knowing what we know about shepherds, and about biblical imagery, it possible that God has a soft spot in His heart for shepherds? Why

**Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation**

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.



# Thursday

## Morning Meditation

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Matt 1:10-12. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

### Scripture

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### Wait

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### Observe

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### Dedicate

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**Going Deeper:** Matthew's account of Jesus' birth is much shorter than Luke's account. Read Matthew 1:18-2:23. What were the wise men risking with this visit? What does that say about their opinion of Jesus. Who did they think he was?

Afternoon /  
Evening  
Meditation

Pray the prayer of Examen tonight as you go to bed.

