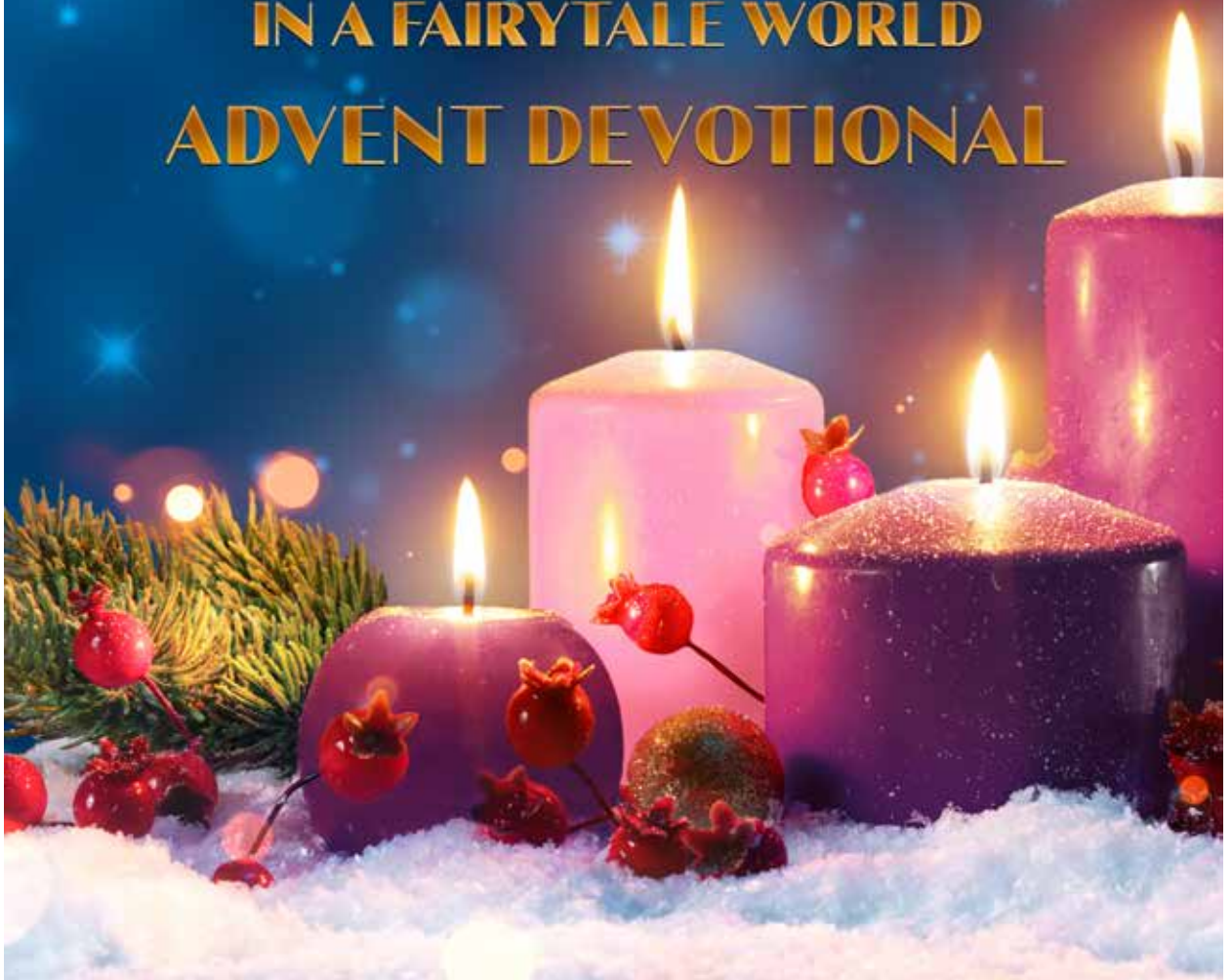




**A
REAL
CHRISTMAS
IN A FAIRYTALE WORLD**

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



What is Advent?

Advent is a time of holy expectation, waiting, and preparation for the coming of Christ the child.

The four Sundays before Christmas, we prepare our hearts for the season by recounting and remembering both the prophecies that foretold of Christ's coming and the gospel stories of his birth.

The Advent wreath is a circular garland of evergreen branches representing eternity. On that wreath, four or five candles are typically arranged. Each candle represents the different gifts that Jesus' arrival brought us: hope, peace, joy and love.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is meant to be a simple tool to help focus your heart and mind's attention on the things that matter most this season. As your family gathers around the Advent wreath each week, use the prompts to lead you through a simple devotion together.

How to Make an Advent Wreath



GATHER CANDLE HOLDERS

Baby food jars, mason jars, candle holders, etc.



GATHER CANDLES

After each Sunday Service of Advent you will receive a purple votive candle, a pink votive candle on week 3, and a white candle on Christmas Eve.



GATHER CONTAINERS

actual wreath, platters, baskets, etc.



GATHER ACCESSORIES

twine, greenery, ribbon, labels for each candle (love, peace, joy, and hope).



ASSEMBLE

all items into your "perfect" family advent wreath.

Hope

Light the first purple candle.

SAY When we look at the first candle, we remember God’s promise. God promised to send a Savior to the people. When we listen to our Scripture reading, we hear what David wrote about God. God watches over us. God is with us now and forevermore. God is loving and just. God brings peace. This gives us hope. We look forward to the time when everything is fair, when the world is at peace, and all people are treated justly.

READ Psalm 121 NRSV

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the
Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip— he who
watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your
shade at your right hand; the sun will not
harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm—he
will watch over your life; the Lord will watch
over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

EXPLAIN This Scripture teaches us
that our hope comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and Earth. It
includes the wonderful sentence, “...the
Lord will watch over your coming and
going both now and forevermore.”

ASK & APPLY Who are the people in our
world who need hope? What are the hopes
we have for our world today? What are the
hopes you have for your life today? How do
we help others know that God gives hope?

There are people in our neighborhoods, in
our church, and in our community who need
to know of God’s hope. Select someone to

reach out to today. Visit electronically or
by phone or in person. Go as a family or by
yourself. It doesn’t necessarily have to be
a visit to a home. Maybe there is someone
you always see at the library grocery store
or school. Stop by today and talk with
that person. Tell the person you visit one
way he or she helps you feel hopeful.

PRAY Maker of heaven and earth: We lift
our eyes up to the mountains, thanking
you for your son, Jesus. We thank you
also for these words of David Lord, which
remind us that you are the source of our
hope. Help us to remember to live our
lives in the hope of Christ Jesus. **AMEN**

WEEK ONE

First Sunday
of Advent

November 27, 2022

READ TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING MEDITATION

SAY This is the first
Sunday in Advent.
Today, we light
one purple candle.
This is the candle
of hope. Advent is
a time of waiting
and of hoping. We
wait for the day
when we celebrate
again the birth of
Jesus. We hope that
everyone will come
to know God and
to worship God.

Peace

WEEK TWO

Second Sunday

of Advent

December 4, 2022

READ TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING MEDITATION

SAY This is the second Sunday in Advent. In a moment we will light the second of the purple candles. The first Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. Today, we light the candle of peace. Our world is not always a peaceful world. People hurt other people. Countries are at war today. People don't take

care of the world. People yell and scream at other people. But God promises peace. During Advent, we pray that we, as well as all people, will seek God's peace.

Light the first and second purple candles.

SAY When we look at the second candle, we remember God's promise of peace. We recall the words of Jesus in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." In times of conflict, hardship and even just busyness, it's difficult to remember that Jesus is the one who brings peace. As we approach Christmas, let's remember that God's intention is a place of peace where people kind and compassionate toward one another, not anxious, fearful or aggressive toward others.

READ Luke 2:8-20 NRSV

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph

and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

EXPLAIN The shepherds may have not felt very peaceful when they heard the words of the angel. They were probably scared and confused. Yet they followed those words, trusting in God. Sometimes all we see around us gives a different message from the message of peace. Yet we, like the shepherds, can follow God's words and trust in God's promises.

ASK & APPLY Who are the people in our world who need God's peace? What are our hopes for peace in our world today? What are your hopes for peace in your life? How do we help others know God's desire for peace in our world? As we get ready to celebrate again the birth of Jesus, we sometimes get very busy. Today, take a ten-minute break. Sit quietly. If it helps you to concentrate, look at your Advent wreath. Pray, asking God's help to bring quiet and calm to a busy world. Then, think about what peace would look like in your family, in your congregation, in your community, in our nation, and in the world. Pray a prayer of peace asking God for what you have envisioned for your family, your congregation, your community, your nation, and the world, if it be His Will.

PRAY Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for those in our world today who seek to act for peace. Help us look for ways to be peacemakers at home, at church, at school, at work and in our community. In the name of Christ Jesus, we pray. **AMEN**



WEEK 3

Number Sunday
of Advent

December 11, 2022

READ TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING MEDITATION

SAY This is the third Sunday in Advent. Today we light three purple candles (OR two purple candles and the pink candle.) The first Sunday, we lit the candle of hope. On the second Sunday, we lit the candle of peace. Today, we light the candle of joy. One thing that sometimes happens as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth is we expect to be happy all the time. Joy is not the same as happy. Joy is a deeper feeling created by knowing that

God cares for us. Joy is remembering that God sent Jesus so we would always know of God's care. During Advent, we pray that we may remember again God's gift of Jesus to the world and know the joy that gift brings to all people.

Light the first and second purple candles. Light the pink candle as the third candle.

SAY When we look at the third candle, we remember God's promise of joy. God promised to send a Savior to the people. Today we read from the Gospel of Luke. In the Scripture, we read Mary's song of praise and joy. There must have been times when Mary was frightened, worried, fearful and sad. Just as for us and a variety of reasons, this season sometimes brings forth sadness and isolation, making the joy of Christmas hard to find. But we have Mary's words of joy even in a time when she was unsure of the future. Her words can guide us to look for the joy of God even when things may be uncertain for us.

READ Luke 1:46-55 NRSV

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to

Abraham and to his descendants forever."

EXPLAIN How privileged we are to have this beautiful song of Mary. Can you imagine her singing the words written in Scripture? It is a testimony to her faith and joy at being chosen as God's servant.

ASK & APPLY Who in our world needs God's joy? What are our hopes for joy in our world today? What are your hopes for joy in your life? How do we help others know that God gives joy?

Think about your family. Some may live with you. Others may be far away. Who in your family needs God's joy? Send them a card and pray for this family member today.

PRAY Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the joy remembering Jesus' birth brings to us today. Help us live in such a way that our words and our actions help others know of the joy you give. In the name of Christ Jesus, we pray. **AMEN**



.....

WEEK 4

Fourth Sunday
of Advent

December 18, 2022

.....

READ TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING MEDITATION

SAY This is the fourth Sunday in Advent. The first Sunday we lit the candle of hope. The second Sunday we lit the candle of peace. Last Sunday, we lit the candle of joy. This Sunday, we light the candle of love. God enters the world in all its beauty and wonderment, in all its chaos and brokenness. God did not wait for the world to be perfect. Jesus arrived in the midst of fear and division, and to a world

in need of peace and love. In these final days of advent, let us remember there is no need to produce, perform, or perfect but to discover, encounter, and share the love that Christ brought into this world. Finally, may we remember that God's love for all people is the reason for this gift.

Light the first and second purple candles. Light the pink candle as the third candle. Light the last purple candle as the fourth candle.

SAY When we look at the fourth candle, we remember God's love. When we read the words of Isaiah today, we know of God's greatness and care. We remember God's love at Advent when we remember that God sent Jesus to us to help us know that God is loving and just.

READ Isaiah 11:1-10 NRSV

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the

ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

EXPLAIN When we think of God's love, we might not always think of the words of the prophets. But when we read this picture of the peaceable kingdom, we are amazed by God's love that allows a child to lead.

ASK & APPLY Who are the people in our world who need the message of God's love? What are our hopes for how people today can receive the message of God's love? What are some ways you see God's love in your life? How do we help others know God's love?

There are people in our neighborhoods, in our church, and in our community who need to know of God's love. Tell someone each day this week that God loves them.

PRAY Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words found in our Bible that help us remember your love and care. Help us see how we can bring God's message to the people we meet in our schools, at our jobs, and in our neighborhoods. Help us be messengers of God's love for everyone. In the name of Christ Jesus, we pray. **AMEN**

Christmas Eve

***Light the four candles
on your wreath.***

READ Matthew 1:18-25 NRSV

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: '

Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us.'

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

ASK & APPLY We sometimes forget about Joseph. Are there those in your home or community that you might be forgetting? Take a moment to pray for the forgotten people in your home, your church, or your community.

WEEK 4

Christmas Eve

Saturday

December 24, 2022

Christmas Day

WEEK 3

Christmas Day

December 25, 2022

READ TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING MEDITATION

SAY Today is Christmas. Today, we light the three purple candles and one pink candle. We also light the center white candle. The first Sunday, we lit

the candle of hope. The second Sunday, we lit the candle of peace. The third Sunday, we lit the candle of joy. The fourth Sunday, we lit the candle of love. Today, we also light the center candle. This candle represents Jesus. When we light this candle, we remember that the light of God has entered the world through Jesus' birth. Our waiting has ended.

Light the first, second, third, and fourth candles. Light the center white candle, which is called the Christ candle.

SAY When we look at the center candle, we remember that God sent Jesus to give hope, peace, joy, and love to all people. Outside of Bethlehem, the shepherds saw a great light and heard the voices of angels. They traveled to the manger and saw the baby Jesus.

Far away from Bethlehem, wise men saw a star in the sky. They followed the star and were filled with joy when they found Jesus. They remind us that the gift of Jesus was not just for the people in one place, but for all people.

READ Matthew 2:1-12 NRSV

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.'

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

EXPLAIN It's amazing to think of these persistent travelers who were determined to find Jesus. They traveled with hope and faith in the promise that they would find the new king.

ASK & APPLY Who are the people in our world who need to know of God's promises? What are our hopes on this Christmas Day for our world? How can we help people remember God's promises after Christmas Day is over?

Name one thing you are willing to do in the days following Christmas that will help you and others remember God's promises. Now plan to carry this out.

PRAY Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus for ALL people, not just those in one place at one time. On this Christmas Day, help us remember and rejoice again because Jesus was born. May we live every day remembering your love and care and showing that love and care to others. **AMEN**



A FAIRYTALE CHRISTMAS

DEBUNKED



Join our pastors for our Advent series *A Real Christmas in a Fairytale World* podcast each week! Scan here to listen at christunited.com/podcast or on your favorite app.



DUMAS WESLEY

TOY DRIVE

DROP-OFF

NOVEMBER 20 – DECEMBER 4

christmasinmobile.com



How Great Our Joy!

A Service of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 11 | 9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. | Christ United Sanctuary

ChristmasinMobile.com



CHRIST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

6101 Grelot Road
Mobile, AL 36609
christunited.com
251.342.0462