

ADVENT READING PLAN

# REDISCOVER *Christmas*

GOOD NEWS IN TROUBLING TIMES



REDISCOVERING

*Hope*

IN OUR  
UNCERTAINTIES

REDISCOVERING

*Peace*

IN OUR  
STRUGGLES

REDISCOVERING

*Joy*

IN OUR  
DISCOURAGEMENTS

REDISCOVERING

*Love*

IN OUR  
DIFFERENCES





ReDiscover Christmas: Good News in Troubling Times Advent Reading Plan

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# *Introduction:*

## GOOD NEWS IN TROUBLING TIMES

**We've made it!** We've made it to Advent and the Christmas season! And wow, can we certainly use some Christmas! It's been a year like no other, to put it mildly. Global pandemic, economic recession, mass unemployment, political division, cultural upheaval, racial reckoning, record wildfires, extra powerful hurricanes, devastating floods. Did I miss anything? Maybe whatever personal struggles you are facing are a result of those wide-scale events or completely unrelated. In whatever form they've come for you, the realities of life have been heavy and humbling. We have been aware of the darkness around us.

It's the ideal setting for some light.

It's just the kind of backdrop for a Savior to come.

It's the perfect time to rediscover Christmas.

Because no matter how troubling the times, and no matter how heavy our hearts, there is good news. The greatest news!

As the angels proclaimed it on the night of Jesus's birth long ago:

"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." (Luke 2:10-14)

This is the news of the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God. This is the news that drives away fear and fills us with joy and holds us in peace. It's news of the reality we are invited to step into and experience.



And Advent is the time of our journey into this rediscovery of hope, peace, joy, love, and of Christ himself.

Wherever you are this year on your level of anxiety, uncertainty, or pain—

Wherever you are on your own spiritual journey—

Wherever you are in the midst of holiday stress or pressure—

Let me invite you into this journey of Advent.

## HOW TO CELEBRATE ADVENT

Advent is a season that is officially observed in many churches. The four weeks before Christmas are set aside as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of Jesus's birth. The term advent is a version of the Latin word that means "coming." But Advent is not just an extension of Christmas; it is a season that links the past, present, and future. Advent offers us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, to celebrate His birth, and to be alert for His second coming. It is a season to explore and experience several key traits embodied in the arrival of Christ: hope, peace, joy, and love.

While the core concept of Advent remains the same, some traditions and practices vary. This reading plan is based on common practices, and we invite you to adapt it to match the traditions of your own church. One of the main traditions of Advent is the weekly lighting of the candles on an Advent wreath. A circular evergreen wreath represents God's unending love for us. And the lighting of five candles throughout the season represents Jesus's coming to a world lost in darkness. Isaiah 9:2 says, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." This can be both a meaningful and fun tradition for kids of all ages, and it can be easily adapted to fit individual, group, or family needs.

This reading plan contains devotions for each of the four weeks before Christmas. Based around the weekly themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, there are seven devotions for each theme. There is also a devotion for Christmas Eve and one for Christmas Day. These emphasize the rediscovery of Christmas in the practice and experience of each trait, and they lead us in reminders of good news in our troubles and uncertainties. Practical questions help to spur us toward ways to apply hope, peace, joy, and love in our own lives.



In addition, each weekly section contains an introduction page with a song to sing, verses to memorize, a question to ponder, and a verse to focus on throughout the week. We encourage you to use these sections as a guide for a weekly lighting of your own Advent wreath. Whether you do this alone, as a family, with friends, as a small group, in person, or virtually, the tradition of the lighting of the candles will add to the richness of your Advent experience. And singing the songs can make the experience especially fun and meaningful if you have kids.

In a season often marked by frenzied busyness, Advent is an opportunity to set aside time to prepare our hearts. The tradition and the devotions in this book are designed to help us place our focus on a far greater story than our own—the story of God’s redeeming love for our world. The story of His presence with us always.

So no matter what the department stores try to tell you, Christmas has not yet arrived. There is value as well as excitement in patient and expectant waiting. May this be a season of wonder for you. May it be a rediscovery of Christmas. And may the Holy Spirit lead you on a journey of peace, joy, and love—and ultimately to a deep encounter with Jesus.