

*Revive Us
Again*

**Advent 2021
Devotional**



Observing Advent at Home or in Your House Church

This devotional can be used individually, as a family, or as a house church. Each week follows the same structure and is best used alongside an Advent Wreath.

An Advent Wreath is a wreath that contains five candles—four in a circle, one in the center—each representing a different aspect of Advent (hope, faith, joy, peace, love). Three candles will be the color purple, representing personal preparation and royalty (the coming of a King). The color pink will be used once (3rd week) to indicate that the Advent journey leads to celebrating Jesus' coming. Lastly, the color white is used to announce that the Light has come.

Each devotional begins with a preparation time of your choosing, then a candle is lit on the wreath, and is followed by the following:

- Scripture reading from the Old Testament prophets
- Reflection questions
- Prayer for the week
- Daily reading for the week from the Gospel of Luke

Lastly, for families with younger children, consider using the Jesse Tree Devotional Guide and Symbols. The Jesse Tree is a tree branch decorated with symbols representing the stories of people in Jesus' family tree. Each day during December, a story from the Jesus Storybook Bible is read before a symbol is hung on the branch. The Jesse Tree devotional guide is available at cground.org/midtown-advent.

Week One: Hope

Prepare: Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God.

Candle: Light the first purple candle, the candle of Hope.

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16

“The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them.

15 “In those days and at that time

I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line.

He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

16 In that day Judah will be saved,

and Jerusalem will live in safety.

And this will be its name:

‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

Reflection:

The job of a prophet is to speak on behalf of God. The prophet’s main job is to give God’s perspective on current situations and call people to respond in a way that fits with the way God sees things.

Jeremiah lived at a pivotal time in Israel's history—the time of the exile to Babylon. This was the most devastating event in Israel's history, the invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. All this happened because God's people had broken the covenant they had with God, and it was Jeremiah's job to warn them. What makes this book, and Jeremiah's life so sad, is the fact that God's people did not listen. But, he was also given a message of hope for after the Exile. The most important of these messages was the prediction that God would make a new covenant with his people (Jeremiah 30-33).

As you ponder the Jeremiah verses, consider the following reflections:

- Recall a time when you needed hope restored in your life. What provided you hope?
- Imagine how the prophetic word given to Jeremiah gave Israel hope. Have you ever received a prophetic word that gave you hope? Where do you need hope?
- Consider a way you can revive hope in a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member.

Prayer for the Week: *Come, Holy Spirit. I ask you to revive hope in me. Thank you for seeing me and having words of hope for me. Help me hear your voice.*

Gospel Reading for the Week:

- Monday: *Luke 1*
- Tuesday: *Luke 2*
- Wednesday: *Luke 3*
- Thursday: *Luke 4*
- Friday: *Luke 5*
- Saturday: *Luke 6*

Gospel Readings Reflection Questions:

- How do these verses reveal that God is with us (Immanuel)?
- How do these verses revive hope in me?

Week Two: Faith

Prepare: Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God.

Candle: Light a purple candle and then another purple candle, the candle of Faith.

Read: Malachi 3:1-4

“Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

2 “But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. 3 He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord. 4 Then once more the Lord will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.

Reflection:

The job of a prophet is to speak on behalf of God. The prophet’s main job is to give God’s perspective on current situations and call people to respond in a way that fits with the way God sees things.

The prophet Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, and it deals with the fact that even after the Exile, the people of Israel are still struggling with the same unfaithfulness that led to the Exile in the first place. This is why the book also contains predictions of the real solution to the problem of sin. It contains prophecies that are fulfilled by John the Baptist and, ultimately, Jesus.

As you ponder the Malachi verses, consider the following reflections:

- Recall a time when your struggles or sin became overwhelming. What gave you faith during that time?
- Imagine how the Israelites received Malachi's words as they struggled in their unfaithfulness. How do the words from Malachi bring you faith for the things that seem overwhelming or the sin that weighs you down?
- Consider a way you can revive faith in a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member.

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit. I ask you to revive my faith. Help me trust that the things that weigh me down will one day be burned away. Help me believe that I'll live in the freedom you promise.*

Gospel Reading for the Week:

- Monday: *Luke 7*
- Tuesday: *Luke 8*
- Wednesday: *Luke 9*
- Thursday: *Luke 10*
- Friday: *Luke 11*
- Saturday: *Luke 12*

Gospel Readings Reflection Questions:

- How do these verses reveal that God is with us (Immanuel)?
- How do these verses revive faith in me?

Week Three: Joy

Prepare: Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God.

Candle: Light two purple candles and the pink candle, the candle of Joy.

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-20

*Sing, O daughter of Zion;
shout aloud, O Israel!*

*Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!*

*15 For the Lord will remove his hand of judgment
and will disperse the armies of your enemy.*

*And the Lord himself, the King of Israel,
will live among you!*

*At last your troubles will be over,
and you will never again fear disaster.*

*16 On that day the announcement to Jerusalem will be,
"Cheer up, Zion! Don't be afraid!*

17 For the Lord your God is living among you.

*He is a mighty savior.
He will take delight in you with gladness.
With his love, he will calm all your fears.
He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”*
18 *“I will gather you who mourn for the appointed festivals;
you will be disgraced no more.
19 And I will deal severely with all who have oppressed you.
I will save the weak and helpless ones;
I will bring together
those who were chased away.
I will give glory and fame to my former exiles,
wherever they have been mocked and shamed.*
20 *On that day I will gather you together
and bring you home again.
I will give you a good name, a name of distinction,
among all the nations of the earth,
as I restore your fortunes before their very eyes.
I, the Lord, have spoken!”*

Reflection:

The job of a prophet is to speak on behalf of God. The prophet’s main job is to give God’s perspective on current situations and call people to respond in a way that fits with the way God sees things.

Zephaniah portrays the coming invasion of Babylon using big, cosmic imagery, describing it as “the day of the Lord” when God will bring his justice down on all the rebellious nations. In this case, this includes not just Judah’s enemies, but also God’s people themselves. This book describes God’s justice in strong terms, but God’s love in even stronger terms. The book’s closing description of the restoration God will bring to his people is one of the most beautiful in all of the Bible (Zephaniah 3:9-20).

As you ponder the Zephaniah verses, consider the following reflections:

- Recall a time when you experienced unexpected joy. How did that impact your life during that time?
- Imagine how Zephaniah’s words were received by the Israelites. How do you receive the promise of restoration and justice Zephaniah describes? What needs to be restored in your life? Where is justice needed in your life or our world?
- Consider a way you can revive joy in a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member.

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit. I ask you to revive my joy. I pray that the joy of the Lord would be my strength, even in a cultural moment that has been so difficult.*

Gospel Reading for the Week:

- Monday: *Luke 13*
- Tuesday: *Luke 14*
- Wednesday: *Luke 15*
- Thursday: *Luke 16*
- Friday: *Luke 17*
- Saturday: *Luke 18*

Gospel Readings Reflection Questions:

- How do these verses reveal that God is with us (Immanuel)?
- How do these verses revive joy in me?

Week Four: Peace

Prepare: Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God.

Candle: Light two purple candles, the pink candle, and then the third purple candle, the candle of Peace.

Read: Micah 5:2-5

*2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
are only a small village among all the people of Judah.*

*Yet a ruler of Israel,
whose origins are in the distant past,
will come from you on my behalf.*

*3 The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies
until the woman in labor gives birth.*

*Then at last his fellow countrymen
will return from exile to their own land.*

*4 And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord's strength,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.*

*Then his people will live there undisturbed,
for he will be highly honored around the world.*

5 And he will be the source of peace.

Reflection:

The job of a prophet is to speak on behalf of God. They give God's perspective on the current situations faced by the original audience, and they call people to respond in a way that fits with the way God sees things.

In the case of Micah, this means calling out God's people for their idolatry and injustice, and warning that if they do not repent, God would bring outside empires—first Assyrian, then Babylon—to punish them. These are serious warnings, but, along with them, Micah offers a future hope after God's judgment. This is why the book ends with this declaration of God's mercy: "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19)

As you ponder the Micah verses, consider the following reflections:

- Recall a time when you experienced an otherworldly peace, even in the midst of difficulty.
- Imagine receiving the words from Micah about a "ruler of Israel" that will be a "source of peace." Where do you need peace in your life? Ask Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to provide you peace.
- Consider a way you can revive peace in a friend, neighbor, co-worker, family member.

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit. Revive peace in me. Please guard my heart and mind with the transcendent peace of Jesus.*

Gospel reading for the week

- Monday: *Luke 19*
- Tuesday: *Luke 20*
- Wednesday: *Luke 21*
- Thursday: *Luke 22*
- Friday: *Luke 23*
- Saturday: *Luke 24*

Gospel Readings Reflection Questions:

- How do these verses reveal that God is with us (Immanuel)?
- How do these verses revive peace in me?

Christmas: Love

Prepare: Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God.

Candle: Light three purples candles, the pink candle, and the white candle, the candle of Love.

Read: Isaiah 9:2-7

*2 The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.*

*For those who live in a land of deep darkness
a light will shine.*

*3 You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.*

*They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.*

*4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.*

You will break the oppressor's rod,

just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.

5 The boots of the warrior

*and the uniforms bloodstained by war
will all be burned.*

They will be fuel for the fire.

6 For a child is born to us,

a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

And he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His government and its peace

will never end.

He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David

for all eternity.

The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies

will make this happen!

Reflection:

Isaiah's birth announcement of Jesus is like a punctuation mark to the bigger story of God's love for us. It reminds us that the longing of the original hearers of Isaiah's words is our longing too. The hopes and expectations for

God to act in the world in meaningful, reconciling ways are our desires as well. In the midst of the darkness of our days, we yearn for light to shine and to be fully embraced by God's love. And so we eagerly remember and anticipate the coming of a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit. I ask you to revive love in me. Help me love you and my neighbor as myself.*

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